

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

With the constant evolving world advancement, the importance of mastering English skills, especially for non English speaking countries, is gradually demanding within all disciplines and practices. Reading as one of the four skills in language learning is always considered essential to master for it serves as a major and vital source of input for EFL learners before they start to produce the language (i.e. writing and speaking). In addition, it also serves as a consolidation and extension of one's quality and quantity of knowledge (Iftanti, 2010), besides as a sense of enjoyment (i.e. reading for pleasure).

Reading is an individually complex, interactive cognitive process between a writer and a reader, whose aim is to construct meaning as conveyed from the reading text. Gray (1960 as cited in Alderson, 2000) states that learners are experiencing three levels of reading, namely reading the lines, reading between the lines, and reading beyond the lines. The first refers to understanding explicit meanings as derived from the reading text (literal comprehension). The second, on the other hand, refers to understanding implicit meanings from the text. The third refers to understanding both explicit and implicit meanings of a text and making judgments and evaluation.

In the context of second language learning, it is a well-acknowledged fact that the level of difficulties of a reading text may be set differently in accordance to the

level of the learners. As an illustration, reading texts assigned to university language learners are far more complex and sophisticated in terms of its academic words, sheer amounts, topics and contexts compared with reading texts for high school students.

Reading within higher education level is demanding. According to Blue (1993) as quoted in Azis et al. (2011), tertiary level students are demanded to comprehend the overall content, main ideas, and supporting details by means of employing strategies such as skimming, scanning, questioning, and others. In other words, reading in university level may serve not only purposes such as acquiring new information or increasing understanding, but also it involves students to employ complex ways of learning such as analyzing the contents, identifying specific issues, and comprehending the overall content.

Consequently, learners having poor reading skill would stumble upon the fulfillment toward variety of demands of college courses (i.e. presentations, assignments, and passing grades). As for broader range of impact, reading may become a hindrance to their personal development process, particularly in career opportunities in the future. For this reason, due to the significance of reading in every aspect of our everyday life, it is essential to find ways how to help students to improve their reading skills.

For recent years, a great emphasis is laid on the use of learning strategies as the best way to help language learners to effectively learn the target language. Strategies defined by Winograd and Hare (1998 as cited in Anderson 1999; Azis et al., 2011) are “deliberate actions that learners select and control to achieve desired

goal or objectives” (p. 779). Not all learning strategies, however, are compatible to be applied for all language skills. For instance, guessing strategy will only be appropriate for listening, reading, and speaking, but not for writing. Accordingly, strategies for reading may be specific and distinctive in terms of its use compared with other strategies. Even though many studies have not been able to define reading strategies, yet there is a generally accepted notion that reading strategies may be referred to conscious reading behavior (Rraku, 2013).

The students in Widya Mandala Catholic University in Surabaya, must undergo reading subject as the obligatory requirement of graduation. Every student must take a reading subject since their 2nd semester until their 4th semester. As they are advancing to the next semester, the level and the sheer amount of reading texts are gradually increasing and demanding. Very often, students are made frustrated as they try to assemble their knowledge in order to comprehend reading texts. Moreover, the challenge is also laid on the success of doing the follow-up reading activities, such as reading comprehension or discussion questions. Hence, at certain points, students eventually fail to fulfill passing scores requirement and lose their reading interest.

Factors inhibiting students’ reading skill may be varied. One of the major problems faced by ESL/EFL learners during reading is the unfamiliar vocabularies in the reading text (Kiran, 2013). Most ESL/EFL learners in general believe that knowing the meaning of every word of a text would help them understand what they read. While it is generally true, yet, in some cases struggling to understand all words are not very necessary. Occasionally learners are assigned to read more than one

texts within a limited period of time, and to look up meaning of every unfamiliar words in a dictionary will be practically ineffective as it is very time-consuming.

The other possible difficulty which learners face during reading is the syntactic complexity. In general, the higher the level of learners the more complex the syntactic structure of a reading text will be. Sentences will not only be presented in a simple, short form, but in longer, joined compound and complex sentences. Failure to understand syntactic structure in a text may lead learners to a confusing state. Learners may not only fail to grasp the meaning, but also lose their sense of direction of who does what, or which refers to which. As a consequence, when FL/SL reading is found to be hard and unpleasant, learners will tend to avoid or show unwillingness to read. To help learners having difficulties in reading, teachers could introduce ways of reading strategies to assist learners when they are reading.

Cogmen and Saracaloglu (2009 as quoted in Chen & Chen, 2013) assert that simple strategies in reading, such as underlining, taking notes, or highlighting the text can help learners understand the content. Additional reading strategies which can be used are also mentioned by Carrel (1998 as quoted in Rraku, 2013) who points out that reading strategies may involve skimming, scanning, predicting, guessing, making inferences, etc.

The aim of this research is to find the best ways of reading effectively and to specify which metacognitive reading strategies students employ while reading. It also seeks to find out the correlation of metacognitive reading strategies and reading comprehension. The students participated in this research were semester IV English

Department students. At the moment this research was conducted, the semester IV students were taking Reading III.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

- 1) What metacognitive reading strategies (Global, Problem Solving, and Support reading strategies) do the students use in the reading process?
- 2) What is the correlation between Global Reading Strategies and reading comprehension?
- 3) What is the correlation between Problem-Solving Reading Strategies and reading comprehension?
- 4) What is the correlation between Support Reading Strategies and reading comprehension?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

Derived from the statement of the problem, this research aimed to investigate:

- 1) To find metacognitive reading strategies (Global, Problem Solving, and Support reading strategies) that the students use in the reading process.
- 2) To find the correlation between Global Reading Strategies (GLOB) and reading comprehension.
- 3) To find the correlation between Problem-Solving Reading Strategies (PROB) and reading comprehension.

- 4) To find the correlation between Support Reading Strategies (SUPP) and reading comprehension.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The theory underlying this research is the theory of metacognitive reading strategies which states that metacognitive reading strategies interrelates with students' reading comprehension. The interrelation infers that the degree of metacognitive reading awareness students use exerts substantial influence in the reading comprehension process. Readers with stronger metacognitive awareness of reading strategies are more likely to do reading tasks effectively and monitor their process of comprehension than readers whose metacognitive awareness are less strong. It is believed that the more metacognitive reading strategies are used, the better the reading comprehension is, meanwhile the less metacognitive reading strategies are used, the lower the reading comprehension is.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

The result of this study is expected to serve as additional knowledge contributions to language teaching concerning metacognitive reading strategies and reading comprehension. Moreover, it is expected to provide comprehensible input for language teachers, particularly in reading skill, in terms of teaching, guiding, and assisting students. Also, this study is expected to increase students' understanding of types of metacognitive reading strategies, which could assist them in reading.

1.6 Limitation and Scope

This research is a quantitative correlational research, and its discussion is limited to the correlation between students' metacognitive reading strategies and reading comprehension, and students' use of reading strategies.

The subjects of this research are 31 semester IV English Department students in one of universities in Surabaya. Since this research is about reading comprehension, the class of Reading III was specifically chosen. Sampling was also constituted in this research in order to examine the validity and reliability of the instruments. Ten out of thirty-one students served as the samples of this research. The samples were selected through convenience sampling method – a non probability sampling technique where subjects are selected due to their convenient accessibility to the researcher.

A reading comprehension test, the first instrument of this research, was employed to investigate students' reading comprehension. It comprised a reading passage and comprehension questions. The passage was adopted from TOEFL reading tests. Some of the comprehension questions were adopted from the source of the reading passage respectively, while some others were generated by the researcher. It is worth noting that the reference of the passage adopted by researcher in the test was in line with the material determined by the university.

A metacognitive reading strategy survey, the second instrument of this research, was administered in order to elicit information on the learners' use of metacognitive

reading strategies. The items in the instrument were adapted primarily from MARSI by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002), and from SILL by Oxford (1990).

1.7 Hypothesis

Due to the fact that this study aimed to find out the relationship between metacognitive reading strategies and reading comprehension, hypothetical answers deduced from the statement of the problem can be formulated. These hypotheses are:

- Ha : There is a positive correlation between metacognitive reading strategies and reading comprehension.
- Ho : There is no correlation between metacognitive reading strategies and reading comprehension.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misinterpretation and misunderstanding, the writer defines the following key terms related to this study.

1. Reading strategies: conscious or unconscious procedures, actions, techniques, or behaviors readers use when they encounter problems during reading (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990).
2. Metacognitive reading strategies: planned, conscious, goal-oriented reading techniques students use before, during, and after reading.
3. Reading comprehension: a complex interaction involving automatic and strategic cognitive processes which enables readers to create a mental representation of the text (van den Broek & Espin, 2012).

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consisted of five chapters, namely Introduction, Review of Related Literature, Research Methodology, Findings and Discussion, and Conclusion. Chapter one covered the background, the statement of the problem, the objectives, the significance, the limitation and scope, and the definition of key terms used in this study. Chapter two dealt with the related literature and previous study which are relevant to this study.

Chapter three discussed the research methodology including the research design, validity and reliability of the instrument, the procedure of data collection, and the procedure of data analysis. Chapter four underlined the findings from this research and the discussions regarding the findings. Chapter five presented the conclusion as drawn from the previous chapter and suggestions for further research.