

# **Chapter 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Language is an important tool of communication used by people whether it is spoken or it is written. In this globalization era, English is an international language and it is used as a language to communicate around the world. In Indonesia, English is still known as a Foreign Language that makes learning English not an easy task. In learning English, students have to master four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and three language components (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation). In order to master English Language, one of those important skills is reading.

Reading is considered as one of the most important skills that students of English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) need to acquire, especially reading for academic purposes. Reading is a cognitive activity in which the reader takes part in a conversation with the author through the text. In reality, reading is a multifaceted process and involves the integration of many literacy skills. In addition, many studies have shown that factors such as reading fluency, vocabulary knowledge, verbal working memory, and reading strategies play significant roles in reading (Johnston & Kirby, 2006; Macaruso & Shankweiler, 2010; Ouellette & Beers, 2010). Of these factors, the one that has received the most attention within the field of reading comprehension is reading strategy.

In order to approach a reading text, students may use reading strategies to help them understand the text. Thus, reading strategies are considered as one of the features of cognitive psychology which are essential for a successful comprehension (Zare, 2012; May, 2001; Walker, 2000). Research studies on second/foreign language reading have consistently confirmed the importance of reading strategies on developing language learners' reading comprehension skills (Zare & Nooreen, 2011; Brantmeier, 2002; Slataci & Akyel, 2002; Song, 1998; Carrell, 1989).

The use of reading strategies has often been correlated to reading performance although the systematic connections between sets of strategies and reading performance have not been fully discovered (Koda, 2005). Anderson (1991) suggested that readers should not only know what reading strategies to use but also how to use them effectively to make them proficient readers. Some studies in second language reading (Anderson, 1991; Koda, 2005; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001), tend to show that high and low proficiency English learners use strategies differently and the variety of strategy use correlates with reading performance (Koda, 2005).

In general, reading strategies show correlation with reading comprehension, and studies also show that low and high proficient students may use different strategies to comprehend a text, students may not know how to use strategies effectively, or some strategies are just not effective to help the reading process.

Thus in this study, the writer was interested to explore the use of reading strategy by English Department's students, especially in Widya Mandala Catholic University. The writer was interested in finding out what reading strategies the higher-proficiency students and lower-proficiency students applied in Reading C Course.

## **1.2 Statements of the Problems**

In line with the background above and the concept of what reading is, the study aimed at exploring the reading strategies and reading proficiency levels of Reading C Students of English Department in Widya Mandala Catholic University. Thus, the study tried to answer the following questions:

1. What reading strategies did the higher-proficiency students apply in Reading C course?
2. What reading strategies did the lower-proficiency students apply in Reading C Course?

## **1.3 The Objectives of the Study**

The study aimed at identifying :

1. The reading strategies use by higher-proficiency students of English Department Students in Reading C Course.
2. The reading strategy used by lower-proficiency students of English Department Students in Reading C Course.

#### **1.4 Theoretical Framework**

Reading strategies, according to Barnet (1988), are conscious techniques or unconscious processes employed by readers in their attempt to make sense of the written text.

The classification of reading strategies in this study are proposed by Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001). According to them, reading strategies can be categorized into three strategies: metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and support strategies.

#### **1.5 The Significance of the Study**

This study expected to be a basis for selecting the right strategies for reading the English Academic Materials to help the students become effective, independent readers.

Reasearchers, like Anderson (1991), Koda (2005), O'Malley & Chamot (1990), Sheorey & Mokhtari (2001), etc, find that high and low proficiency English learners use strategies differently and the variety of strategy use correlates with reading performance. This findings are expected to support the previous findings which states that high achiever students and low achiever students are different in use the reading strategies.

#### **1.6 The Scope of the Study**

This was a quantitative investigation. The study is focused on reading strategy use of high proficiency students and lower-proficiency students and it's

relation to the scores of reading C takers of the even semester of the academic year 2017/2018.

## **1.7 Definition of Key Terms**

To avoid misunderstanding that might happen to the readers, some key terms used in this study are defined as follows:

### **1. Reading**

Reading is a passive process, primarily a decoding process of the author's meaning through the printed words (Carrel, Devine, & Eskey, 1988); in this study, reading refers to reading for meaning or reading comprehension.

### **2. Reading Strategies**

Reading strategies are defined as specific, deliberate, goal-directed mental processes or behaviours, which control and modify the reader's efforts to decode a text, understand words and construct the meaning of a text (Garner, 1987); in this study, reading strategy refers to action taken by readers to enhance reading comprehension.

### **3. Proficiency**

Proficiency is defined as a level based on a test score at which students are ranked at below, on, or above grade level; in this study, proficiency refers to a level based on the reading score of students' latest mid term test

#### **4. Reading Proficiency**

Reading proficiency refers to all of the thinking behind reading; what happens in our brains before, during, and post reading; in this study, reading proficiency refers to student's ability to comprehend the text measured by the reading score of students' latest mid term test.

#### **5. High Proficiency Students**

High proficiency students refer to students who have high scores in reading test; in this study, high proficiency students refer to students who scored 70 to 100 in their latest mid term test.

#### **6. Low Proficiency Students**

Low proficiency students refer to students who have low scores in reading test; in this study, low proficiency students refer to students who scored 40 to 49 in their latest mid term test.