CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study attempts to present a thorough description of a web browser system, moodle platform, for facilitating educational collaboration in teaching reading comprehension activities, which is called blended learning, where face-to-face classroom management is still predominant method of administering students' reading comprehension activities, at one of senior high schools in Pangkalpinang. This chapter outlines eight elements. They are background of the study, research questions, purposes of the study, definition of terms, significance of the study, scope of the study, organization of thesis, and concluding remark.

1.1 Background of the Study

Reading receives great interest in foreign language teaching situation at senior high school actual curriculum implementation. "Many foreign language students often have reading as one of their most important goals. They want to be able to read for information and for study purpose," (Richards & Renandya, 2002: 273). Moreover, Harmer (2007) also states that there are many reasons for students to read English, either for careers or for study purposes. One of students' purposes in learning reading is comprehension. Reading without comprehension would be empty and meaningless (Casper et al., 2008).

At senior high school level, students experience reading material in terms of genre, such as, recount, narrative, descriptive, procedure, and exposition (Kemendikbud No. 64, 2013). They learn to read English for comprehension because they would like to succeed in state examination or to succeed in competing to enter higher educational level after graduation. In fact, to succeed to compete for their higher education admission, students are also often given reading comprehension of higher educational admission test. As Yeung (2012:140) states, students' determinations to learn English are "to obtain good examination results" and "getting accepted into universities."

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Previous studies in teaching reading comprehension have been conducted. Various techniques are administered to enhance students' reading comprehension. Empirical evidence from recent studies (Santoso, 2007; Susanti, 2009; Clarke et al., 2010; Wei et al., 2012), demonstrate that reading comprehension are administered as students' single classroom reading activities. Those studies examined various techniques to enhance students' comprehension of a text, such as, interactive reading-aloud, three phases of reading comprehension, three intervention designs, and guided reading. One of suggestions from those studies is that there opens up another strategy to enable students to act more reading comprehension practices and effective suitable teachings to enhance students' reading comprehension activities outside their classroom as an alternative strategy in teaching and learning reading comprehension.

Actually, students need to do more reading outside their classroom, because "any reading program that substantially increases the amount of reading will affect their reading achievement" (Routman, 2002:83). Nevertheless, it is warned, improving student' amount of reading activities by giving them more time to read, students will not have significance reading comprehension improvement when their progresses toward it are not monitored. Routman also says that there opens up computerized reading-incentive programs which it possibly monitors and works to enhance students' reading activities.

Based on the theoretical perceptions of Routman (2002), Santoso (2007), Susanti (2009), Clarke et al. (2010) and Wei et al. (2012) above, utilizing technology opens up a strategy to enhance students' classroom reading comprehension activities by enabling students to read outside their classroom where computerized reading-incentive program monitors students' outside reading comprehension activities.

Utilizing computerized program, moodle platform, in terms of blended learning, to enhance students' outside reading comprehension activities has been investigated by Brine et al. (2007), Mei et al., (2009), and Robb & Kano (2013).

First, Brine et al. (2007) examines moodle on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to promote group work at Japanese class to enhance students' reading comprehension. The study reveals that utilizing moodle platform has not only enabled teacher to structure individual and group tasks effectively but also given an account on effective contribution to EFL reading comprehension activities. Detail description of moodle implementation to enable teacher to structure individual or group tasks and to promote group work will be provided in chapter two.

Second, Robb & Kano (2013) investigate reading process at a classroom at a university setting in Japan where a group of students is required to read outside class time as part of their course requirement while another group is not, as will further be discussed in chapter two. A moodle platform is utilized to hold the students accountable for their reading. The comparative study shows that the implementation of moodle platform to those who read outside class time as part of their course requirement highly significant gains. As Lems et al. (2010: 88) state, "in order to develop reading, teachers enable students to read English outside the classroom."

Finally, Mei et al. (2009) propose three pedagogical phases in utilizing moodle for reading comprehension activities. They are online preview, onsite instruction, and online lab tutorial as will further be discussed in chapter two.

In other words, managing traditional reading as a classroom single reading comprehension activity is not enough as there opens up another way for teacher to enable students to read outside their classroom as an alternative strategy to enhance their reading activities by utilizing technology. Utilizing moodle platform to enhance students' outside reading activities is another strategy where moodle implementation has been proven that it can enhance students' reading activities and their comprehension (see Brine et al., 2007; Mei et al., 2009; Robb & Kano, 2013) in higher educational context.

Accordingly, the literatures show that studies of utilizing moodle as blended learning for reading comprehension activities has not been paid attention at senior

high school level in Indonesian context, especially at the research site. This study seeks to examine the implementation of moodle in terms of blended learning to support face-to-face classroom reading-comprehension activities at a senior high school level in Indonesian context. A descriptive case study at one of senior high schools in Pangkalpinang is administered. Describing the implementation of moodle in blended learning environment, this study contributes to support previous theories, provides enlightening inputs for further research, and gives practical source in teaching profession at the school, which in turn becomes an informative contribution to teachers who consider utilizing moodle platform in blended learning to support their face-to-face classroom reading comprehension activities.

1.2 Research Questions

a. How is moodle developed to facilitate students' reading comprehension activities in blended learning context?

b. How does moodle shape students' learning environment for reading comprehension activities in blended learning context?

c. What are the strengths and the weaknesses of moodle for reading comprehension activities in blended learning context?

1.3 Purposes of the Study

a. To describe how moodle is developed to facilitate students' reading comprehension activities in blended learning context.

b. To describe how moodle shapes students' learning environment for reading comprehension activities in blended learning context.

c. To describe what the strengths and the weaknesses of moodle are for reading comprehension activities in blended learning context.

1.4 Definition of Terms

a. Blended Learning

Blended learning is learning and teaching process which combines the features of face-to-face traditional instruction and the advantages of e-learning where part of learning opportunities are created online and are

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accessible by using web browser system online (Mei et al, 2009; Latchem &Jung, 2010).

b. Moodle

Moodle is an open source software, which stands for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment as a Course Management System (CMS), which is running on server and is accessible by using a web browser system online (Nedeva, 2005; Cole & Foster, 2008).

c. Moodle Development

Moodle development refers to activities of developing and administering standard moodle features (forum, quiz, and grade) for facilitating students and teacher to support face-to-face classroom reading-comprehension activities.

d. Features of Moodle

Features of moodle refers to modules within a course, such as, forum, quiz, grade, etc. (Cole & Foster, 2008; Wikipedia, Free online encyclopedia, 2014).

e. Reading Comprehension

"Reading comprehension is an active process, directed by intentional thinking that allows readers to make connections between their thinking processes, the textual content, and their own knowledge, expectations, and purposes for reading," (Block et al., 2004: 3)

f. Learning Environment

Learning environment is a condition where there is social interaction in teaching and learning process realized through language as vehicle for the realization of interpersonal relation and for the performance of social transactions between individuals. It is in terms, such as; learners engage in stimulating and interesting experience that is active and interactive learning, learning provides opportunities for assessment and build opportunities and capacity for online discussion with others in a

safe and secure environment (Musthafa, 2003; Thorne, 2003; Richards & Rodgers, 2006; Latchem & Jung, 2010).

1.5 Significance of the Study

The result of this study (blended learning; incorporating moodle into classroom reading-comprehension activities) contributes to three following aspects: theories, practices, and further studies, as follow:

First, the result of this study can be used to support previous theories underpinning this study about incorporating moodle for reading comprehension activities in blended learning context and to enrich the existing literatures on blended learning implementation.

Second, utilizing moodle at the school where the study takes place has never been evaluated before. The report, therefore, contributes to practical source in teaching profession at the school and particularly adds to English teachers, which in turn, becomes an enlightening input to teachers who intend to utilize moodle in blended learning for reading comprehension activities.

Finally, this study is helpful for researchers since the result of this study provides some enlightening inputs to carry out another exploration in a different context at the same field.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study is intended to portray the English Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning process by utilizing standard moodle platform for reading comprehension activities in blended learning environment at a senior high school in Pangkalpinang.

The limitation to this qualitative study is that the findings are to be true only to the respondents involved in this study. It means that there is not an attempt to generalize the research findings to broader context. Therefore, there may be different additional interpretation to the issue raised in this study.

1.7 Organization of Thesis

This thesis organization covers subsequent chapters as follow. Chapter 1 presents a general description of introduction to the topic of the research, the

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background of the study, the research questions, the purposes of the study, the definition of terms, significance of the study, scope of the study, organization of thesis, and concluding remarks. Chapter II explores conceptual frameworks that shape this study. The conceptual frameworks deal with the concept of reading comprehension, blended learning and moodle. Chapter III describes research methodology that covers description of research design, research site and participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures. Chapter IV focuses on describing research findings and analyzing data from observations, questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis to portray how moodle is developed for reading comprehension activities, how moodle shapes students' learning environment for reading comprehension activities in blended learning context, and to describe what the strengths and weaknesses of utilizing moodle are for reading comprehension activities. Chapter V draws some conclusions of this study. This chapter also provides recommendations relating to the research findings in this study.

1.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has presented a general description of the introduction of the whole study, which includes the background of the study, the research questions, the purposes of the study, the definition of terms, significant of the study, scope of the study, and thesis organization. The next chapter discusses literature review of related theories to reading, blended learning, and moodle.