

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter elaborates the background of the study, research question, purpose of the study, significances of the study, definition of key terms, and the organization of the thesis.

1.1. Background of the Study

Reading is an important activity. Through reading, someone will have knowledge about many things in the world. The more someone reads the more he/she will get knowledge. Reading lets people know other countries without physically visiting them. In education, the mastery of reading skill is important. Reading success is the key to educational success (Adams, 1990; Honig, 1996; Snow et al., 1998 in Wood & McLemore, 2001: 1). The students from the elementary level to the university level are required to master this skill. A student who likes reading usually will pass the exam well. It is supported by Pretorius (in <https://utahcharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Interesting-Reading-Facts-1.pdf>) who found “a strong correlation between reading proficiency and academic success at all ages”.

Reading is important as it becomes one of means of communication. Regarding this, Hood et al. (1996: 2) say that reading is used in the daily communication. In a similar vein, Wallace (1992: 4) states that reading is “interpreting which means reacting to a written text as a piece of communication”. People can communicate through letter, message and email by reading. They can also get pleasure through reading (Satariyan, 2010). When people read a comic, novel, newspaper or magazine, they can get pleasure from it.

In Junior High Schools in Indonesia, reading is one of the important skills that should be taught in English teaching learning process. According to School Based Curriculum (KTSP/Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan 2012), English

materials taught to the students are based on genre. Hyland in Emilia (2011: 18) states that genre is one the most important and influential concepts in language education. Genre describes how an individual uses language to get involved in a certain communication situation. According to the English syllabus for junior high school level, students should be able to read the words, phrases, and sentences with the correct intonation. Besides, they also need to understand the meaning and identify the information in the text (BSNP, 2007: 11-14).

Still in Junior High School context, the importance of reading skill for students can be traced in the National Final Examination (Ujian Akhir Nasional). At that event, the students should understand the text to answer the questions well. However, most of the students fail in the examination because they do not fully understand what they read. In reading, the students are required to be able to read texts. There are five kinds of texts that should be mastered by junior high school students: procedure, descriptive, recount, narrative and report (BSNP, 2007:31-90).

Based on the researcher's observation in one of Junior High Schools, most of the students faced difficulties in answering the reading questions because they did not understand the text. They needed to understand the text both explicitly and implicitly. Here, the CT in reading is very crucial. The students need to understand the content of the text, the writer's purpose in writing, the moral value from the text, the topic and main idea from the text. The students cannot get these informations by looking at and reading the text only. They should know what is behind the text.

CT in reading is the approach to reading that involves an in depth examination of the text. Kurland (2000) states that critical reading is a way of getting information from the text. The reader should be able to figure out the context of the text and try to understand the text including the important details about the text.

Some studies in Indonesia context have been conducted in the field of CT in reading. A research conducted by Rugaiyah (2008) covered the implementation of critical reading questions in developing students' critical reading ability. The next study is Kustini's (2010), which investigated CT in the teaching of reading. The case study design was employed in her research. The two studies mentioned before were conducted at the senior high schools level. To this day, only limited research about CT was conducted at junior high schools level. So, this is one of the reasons why this study needs to be conducted. Another reason is that investigating junior high school students' ability in CT in reading is very important. The investigation can show what ability that the students have already had in critical reading, based on the aspects of CT as the basis for their critical reading ability at the higher level of education. Those aspects, as demonstrated in students' reading, are important to be studied because the teacher will be able to identify which aspects most students achieve and which aspects still need improvement. It would give valuable input for teachers to design the teaching activities that can promote students' aspects on CT. In addition, the teacher will be able to identify the obstacles faced by the students when implementing CT in their reading activities. After the teachers identify the obstacles, they can formulate the solutions to overcome those problems.

1.2. Research Question

The problem of the research is elaborated in the following question:

What aspects of critical thinking are demonstrated by the students in the process of teaching reading and in their reading tests?

1.3. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the aspects of critical thinking (CT) as demonstrated in students' reading.

1.4. Significances of the Study

The results of this study have theoretical and practical significances.

a. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, the result of this study can hopefully enrich the literature about CT in reading, especially in Junior High School context.

b. Practical Significance

Practically, the result of this research is expected to be beneficial for the teachers. This study will help them have more knowledge about students' CT in reading and how to analyze students' CT, especially in reading tests. This understanding can also lead the teachers to have information about how to teach critical reading. In addition, it can help and inspire teachers to develop students' CT in reading.

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

There are some terms that should be clarified to avoid misunderstanding and misconception of the research.

The first term is critical thinking (CT). It is the ability to reason in an organized way and to systematically evaluate the quality of one's own reasoning and that of others (Johnson, 2002: 100).

The second is reading. It is a tool for getting critical awareness, a comprehension of the authority and ideologies that form someone's life (Freire in Emilia, 2010: 6). In reading, someone tries to get the message or meaning that the author has intended.

Third is CT in reading. It is the skill that will enable the readers to interpret and evaluate what they read (McWhorter, 1992: 377). The readers who read critically will have deep understanding of the material so that they can analyze and evaluate what they are reading.

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1.6. The Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consist of five chapters. The first chapter is introduction. This chapter elaborates the background of the study, research question, purpose of the study, significance of the study, definitions of key terms, and the organization of the thesis.

The second chapter is review of related literature. It includes the discussion of critical thinking (CT), the aspects of CT, characteristics of critical thinker, the nature of reading, CT in reading, activities that make up CT, and previous research.

The third chapter discusses aspects related to research methodology. It covers the research purpose, research question, research setting, participants, the research design, data collection techniques and data analysis.

The forth chapter reveals findings and discussions. This chapter presents and analyzes data obtained in the study. Finally, the last chapter draws the conclusions and recommendations of the study.