

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the general issues related to the present study. The first section starts with the background of the study. Then it is followed by research questions and the aims of the study. The next section presents the scope of the study, the significance of the study, and the organization of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the Study

Modern life and fast changes require today's adolescents to be more literate and to engage in more kinds of reading than what was required of their counterparts in previous generations. It is because the activity of reading is an essential tool for lifelong learning and it is regarded as the most important components in learning language (Pandian, 1997; Mokatsi, 2005 cited in Annamalai & Muniandy, 2013). Some previous studies have proven that reading is essential. It can enhance people's social skills, improve hand-eye coordination, and provide people with endless hours of fun and entertainment. It is an access to social, economic, and civic life (Clark & Akerman, 2006) and an underlying means of supporting the success of learning process (Broaddus & Ivey, 2001; Renandya, 2007 in Iftanti, 2012). It also has positive influence on academic performance (Adetunji and Oladeji, 2007). Without the ability to read, therefore, the opportunities for academic and occupational success are limited.

Moreover, for those who live in academic environment, such as students, reading is an imperative need. If students cannot read, they do not have the power to accomplish their study in all academic areas (Hasselbring & Dagget, 2007). So reading has become a necessity and basic tool of education and the ability to read is at the heart of self-education and lifelong learning (Mokatsi, 2005 in Noor, 2011).

For EFL learners whose exposure to English is quite limited, reading becomes one of the most crucial means by which academic knowledge is

transmitted. The ability to read academic texts is considered to be one of the most important skills that EFL learners need to acquire (Levine, Ferenze, & Reves, 2000 in Shen, 2013). However, many of the EFL learners entering higher education are under-prepared for the reading demands that are placed for them (Dreyer & Nel, 2003). A great majority of these students might experience “vicious cycles,” after entering the graduate program, if they had not learned how to read effectively and efficiently (Huang, 2006). They might dwell in their inappropriate reading habits without knowing how to read effectively.

A lack of vocabulary knowledge is one of the largest obstacles to efficiently comprehending academic texts in L2 (Levine & Reves, 1990). Chen (1999), in his empirical investigation, indicated that most college students in general universities in Taiwan have small vocabulary size of 2000-3000 words which is far below the requirement of 5000-7000 words in order to comprehend college English textbooks. Being unable to deal with large amount of text, they might painstakingly rely on word-by-word reading. As a result, most of the students had failed to handle the complicated texts and the huge number of reading assignments during a week.

Regarding the importance of reading, it is essential that students who learn English as a foreign language (EFL students) establish good English reading habits because the most spoken language of business, technology and research (Fortanet-Gomez & Räisänen, 2008 in Hussam & Al-Sadi, 2015) as well as the driving force behind and vehicle for knowledge transfer (Welch & Welch, 2008) thus English is widely viewed as a commodity for global communication (Crystal, 2003), and its acquisition is perceived as compulsory.

In the context of Indonesian education, the skill of reading English as part of English subject is taught integratedly with other English skills since the students study in Elementary school for 6 years. Some pre Elementary schools have also included English subject in their curriculum. However, as a matter of fact, many students seem not motivated to read which is shown by their participation and progress in reading classes and their efforts in fulfilling assignments that require

reading activity. It is assumed that the students face challenges in reading, generally the students were in the condition which is called aliteracy (Mikulecky, 1978 in Poppe, 2005), a condition when they actually have the ability to read but choosing not to. Goodwin (1996 in Burak, 2004), claims that aliteracy is an epidemic among college students. Aliteracy refers to the "lack of the reading habit in capable readers" (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p.6 cited in Burak, 2004). Some researchers and educators (Goodwin, 1996; Sheorey & Mokhtari, 1994) claim that students spend minimal time reading required, and even less time reading that which is not required. They also probably face difficulties in reading due to their low comprehension skill including lack of vocabulary knowledge which make it hard for them to read (Levine & Reves, 1990 in Shen 2013). Specifically this kind of problem related to the reading activity in English as the medium.

This problem of reading does not only happen in the context where the researcher is working, but also becomes problem in national level. In this case, the UNDP's Human Development Index in 2009 put Indonesia on the 111th position out of 173 countries in terms of literacy. It shows that the reading practice in Indonesia needs to be improved. Moreover, in literate societies such as university and college, reading habit should be prioritized. Despite the fact that reading is considered as important in literate societies, falling reading trends has been indicated (Chaudry & Low, 2009).

Fostering reading habits among students is not an easy task. The investigation of reading habits of EFL or ESL learners can raise educators' awareness about the reading tendencies of the learners. Thus, if problems are identified and understood, then possible solutions can be provided to find solutions in the effort to leading learners to search, understand and get information through reading. Therefore, studies on reading practices and habit are required to see what actually happen among people, in this case the students, in terms of their reading habit and attitude.

Several questions then emerged on students' reading practices, how often they read, what preferences they have in reading, what factors motivate them to

read and obstacles they face, and what attitudes they have toward reading. Those big questions lead to two research questions on students' reading profile on how it relates to students' reading performance.

To date, there have been many studies focusing on reading profile, practice, habit and attitude (see Annamalai& Muniandy, 2013; Burak, 2004; Chaudhry & Low,2009; Hasselbring & Dagget, 2007; Kirsch& Guthrie,1984; Loan, 2011; Noor, 2011; Partin& Hendricks, 2002; Toit, 2001). The studies investigated students' reading practice and habit in various contexts. However, most studies on reading profile, practice, habit and attitude listed above were conducted in ESL (English as Second language) environments. Therefore, this study is expected to fill in the gap of previous studies by investigating students' reading profile and attitude in Indonesian context, specifically in a private college in Subang.

1.2 Research Questions

Given with that context, this study attempts to answer two research questions:

1. What is the reading profile of the EFL undergraduate students?
2. How is students' reading profile in relation to their reading performance?

1.3 Aims of the Study

Relevant to the research questions, this present study aims:

1. To investigate the reading profile of the EFL undergraduate students.
2. To analyze how students' reading profile is in relation to their reading performance.

1.4 Scope of the Study

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READING PROFILE OF EFL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS: (A CASE STUDY OF EIGHTH SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH EDUCATION PROGRAM IN A PRIVATE COLLEGE IN SUBANG)

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The scope of the study is investigation of EFL undergraduate students' reading profile and attitude in one private college in Subang. The participants were 65 students of eight semester of English education program. It also analyzes the implication of students' reading profile and attitude toward their reading performance.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is potentially significant in two aspects of contribution. The first is its theoretical contribution to research in reading practices in Indonesia. The second is its practical contribution as information to make several policies on supporting students' reading habit. The third is its professional contribution for the teachers and educators as a reflection on the current situation of students' reading practices.

Theoretically, this study offers some data on students' reading profile and attitude. The result of this study can be used to enrich the data of students' reading practices among undergraduate students in Indonesia. It also digs more on how their reading habit and attitude manifest students' reading achievement. The data and analysis hopefully give some valuable contribution for the researchers who are interested in this field of study.

Practically, this study is significant and valuable since identifying reading profile is beneficial for the EFL lecturer and other Educational practitioners to help them design learning materials and make policies on education. In this case, this study is expected to enable teachers and educational practitioners to see the real situation of the students' reading practices and encourage significant efforts to improve the situation.

Professionally, this study can be a reflection for the researcher and other teachers to improve their teaching practices by encouraging students to read more and give the students reading skills that they need. The skill of recognizing

students' reading problem and needs can positively improve the teachers' way of giving task.

1.6 Organization of the Paper

This paper consists of five chapters. Chapter I provides a general description for the present research. This introductory chapter consists of background, research questions, aims of the study, significance of the study, definition of key terms, and organization of the paper.

Chapter II deals with literature review concerning several theories underpinning the study. It covers the definition, categorization, and discussion of reading profile, attitude and achievement.

Chapter III elaborates research method of the present study. It presents research questions and develops research design for this study. It also explains data collection for the present study by means of questionnaire and interviews. Lastly, it explains the analysis process of the collected data to answer the stated research questions.

Chapter IV presents and analyzes findings from the result of questionnaire and interview. The findings are discussed to find out the students' reading profiles and attitudes. Finally the findings and analysis are synthesized to answer the research questions.

Chapter V elaborates conclusion, limitation, and recommendation. It concludes the synthesis of data analysis and discussion in the previous chapter. It also presents the limitation of the study. Lastly, it mentions several potential topics for further research in the same vein of study and several suggestions for teachers in applying oral corrective feedback in the classroom.