CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with investigating the problem of the study. It starts with the background of the study, which describes the contextual issues related to the students’ reading engagement in literature circles and the gap between those issues with what the researcher wants to achieve through this study. Next, the background of the study is followed by two research questions, purposes of the study, significance of the study, definition of key terms, and organization of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Reading skill is needed by the students for their academic and personal development. In reaching better academic achievement, students need to have a good reading skill. For example, students who want to pass the national examination are supposed to have a good reading skill in comprehending different kinds of texts for the exam. That case shows that reading is one of the crucial skills for students’ academic achievement. Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988) added that reading is the main factor that determines students’ success in their learning. It means that the lack of students’ mastery in reading will influence their whole learning.

Besides, reading also influences students’ personal development. In To read or not to read (2007), the National Endowment for the Arts explained that “once students have mastered the ability to read they will be able to have access to a wider breadth of language that they can use in their oral and written communications”. Clearly, by mastering reading skill students will
have a better chance in developing themselves. Moreover, reading skills are thinking skills. They help students activate prior knowledge, apply what they know to new situations, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize. In other words, the better reading skill is the better thinking skill of the students, while thinking skill is needed in every aspect in students’ self-development.

However, teaching reading is not merely to help them to achieve a certain score to pass the exam. It also includes maintaining students’ interest to the process of reading itself and to make students engage to what they read. To keep students’ engagement in their reading process is challenging. The level of students’ engagement, especially for teen and young adult reader has been struggling. Teachers have to make students love reading, in order to get the students familiar with reading. By loving the book, they will get the enjoyment in reading. Then, enjoyment will lead them to engage to the reading itself.

Willms (2003:28) stated that students who have better literacy skill will be more engaged to any school activities. However, by conducting this study, the researcher wants to see students’ engagement in reading by using one chosen activity to facilitate and help them. Guthrie et al (1996) stated that engagement refers to the integration of motivations and strategies in literacy activities. It means that the engagement in reading can be produced by conducting an activity which builds students motivation and strategies in their interaction with the text.

One of the reading activities which can be done by teachers to maintain students’ engagement in reading is literature circles. Literature circle is mainly reading activity done by the students in which they discuss one book in a small group. In addition, literature circle is a student centered structure which promotes various reading activities for students across all different grade levels. This activity encourages peer sharing along on what literature is being

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read along with receiving positive feedback and support from teachers. Teachers facilitate the students in terms of providing lists of books which suit their ability, age, and knowledge. Teachers also organize the students into small, peer-led book discussion groups (Daniels, 1994).

Research shows that literature circles have been a valuable addition to many students’ experiences, helping to grow more self-sustaining, lifelong reader (Daniels, 2006). Daniels also stated that literature circles challenge the students to be actively involved in the group discussion. Discussion one book in a smaller group gives the students less risk than in a whole-class discussion. Students feel more relax to give their opinion and to show their work based on the role they have taken in front of their own group. Literature circle includes the process of reading, analyzing, creating, writing, discussing, and presenting. That is the reason why literature circle is significant and plays an important role or students’ development.

Some researchers discussed the implementation of literature circles in their research but unfortunately only a few studies that explored the reading engagement in literature circles in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Therefore, the researcher conducted the study to explore the way students engage with reading using literature circles in the EFL classroom.

This research began by assuming that literature circles can give positive effects on the reading engagement of the students. The researcher is interested in exploring how the literature circle influences students’ reading engagement because engagement seen as an indicator of successful classroom instruction, and is increasingly valued as an outcome of school improvement activities (Kenny et al, 1995: 37). Student engagement also refers to a student’s willingness, need, desire and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in, the learning process.
Referring to explanations above, this study is aimed to explore the way students engage with the text using literature circles, and also to find out the obstacles in reading using literature circles.

1.2 Research Questions

To elaborate the process of literature circle and its influences to the students’ reading engagement, some research questions are raised as follows:

1. How do the students engage with reading using literature circles?
2. What are the obstacles in reading using literature circles?

1.3 Purposes of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to document students’ engagement in reading using literature circles. The purposes of this study are elaborated in the followings:

1. To explore the way students engage with reading using literature circles.
2. To find out the obstacles in reading using literature circles.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study conducted in one of the classrooms at public junior high schools in Bandung to the eighth grade students. This study focuses on the way students showed their reading engagement in literature circles, and the
obstacles in reading using literature circles. The literature circles conducted in this study were adapted from literature proposed by Daniels (2002), Morris and Perlenfein (2003), and Moen (2004). The implementation of literature circles were modified by the teachers as they were new for the students and several adjustments were done to meet their level and needs.

1.5 Significance of the Study

By conducting this study, the results found were expected to give theoretical, professional and practical contribution in the development of language learning in Indonesia, especially English.

Theoretically, this study provides some information concerning the students' reading engagement in literature circles. The previous studies were dominated by the use of literature circles in enhancing students' literacy skills. Moreover, there are a few researches about literature circles were done in Indonesia. Therefore, the result of this study is aimed to fill in the gap of the previous studies.

For professional contribution, this study is expected to be beneficial for language teacher in general, and for English teacher in particular. This study is expected to give practical information on how to implement literature circles in the classroom and provide teachers with information about the use of literature circles in teaching reading as well as to build the positive atmosphere for teaching reading by involving students in reading for pleasure.

Practically, this study is expected to give students opportunity to develop enthusiasm in reading and to lead the improvement of students' reading comprehension which fulfills students' need to understand the text.
1.6 Definition of Key Terms

- **Reading Engagement**: levels of interest in and attitudes toward reading (Kirsch et al. 2000).
- **Engagement**: a reflection or manifestation of motivated action and noted that action incorporates emotions, attention, goals, and other psychological processes along with persistent and effortful behavior (Skinner, Kindermann, Connell, and Wellborn, 2009a).
- **Student Engagement**: a psychological component pertaining to students’ sense of belonging at school and acceptance of school values, and a behavioral component pertaining to participation in school activities (Finn, 1989, 1993; Finn and Rock, 1997; Goodenow, 1993; Goodenow and Grady, 1993; Voelkl, 1995, 1996, 1997; Wehlage et al., 1989 cited in Willms, 2003).
- **Literature Circles**: small, heterogeneous groups of students who have chosen to read and discuss the same book together (Whittaker, 2011).

1.7 Organization of the Paper

This study will begin with preface, abstract and will be divided into five chapters, namely (1) Introduction, (2) Theoretical Foundation, (3) Research Methodology, (4) Findings and Discussion, (5) Conclusion and Suggestion.

Chapter one provides the background of the study, research questions, purpose of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, definition of key terms, and organization of the paper.

Chapter two focuses on the review of related theories and literatures related to reading engagement and literature circles.
Chapter three explains the research methodology that elaborates about the description of the research, the research design, the setting and participants of the research, data collection techniques and data analysis.

Chapter four covers data from classroom observation. It includes the teaching program as implemented by the teacher.

Chapter five covers the discussion of data from questionnaire and interview.

Chapter six is the last part of the paper. It explores the conclusion, the limitation of the study and also the suggestion for further study related to literature circles implementation.