

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the background of the study, the research question, the purpose of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the terms used in the paper, and the organization of the thesis.

1.1. Background of the Study

It is well known that the quality of reading interest of both children and adults in Indonesia is very low. It was reported by several international and national surveys, one of them was reported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2012. It was found that reading interest index in Indonesia only reached 0.001. This means that in every 1,000 people, there is only one person who has an interest in reading. While the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) released that the literacy rate of Indonesian adults only reached 65.5 percent, while Malaysia reached 86.4 percent (Hazliansyah, 2012). Based on a survey conducted by the International Education Achievement (IEA) in early 2000, it was identified that the reading quality of Indonesian children ranked 29 out of 31 countries studied in Asia, Africa, Europe and America. Thus, it is not surprising that the Human Development Index (HDI) in Indonesia is also low. This is in line with a survey conducted by UNDP in 2005 that HDI in Indonesia ranked 117 out of 175 countries (Bimba, 2013). However, educators and teachers must wonder why it could happen to Indonesian especially students. Why is students' reading interest in Indonesia low? What are the factors of the low interest of reading in Indonesia? Why are they reluctant in reading? Are they anxious? What are the factors of students' reading anxiety?

In relation to reading skill, Sellers (2000) defined it as a cognitively demanding process which involves the organization of memory, attention, perception, and the process of comprehension. Therefore, it cannot be denied when students show the low interest in reading for several reasons. First, the lack of motivation in reading. This problem is mostly experienced by students at

university level when they have to read a thick text book that is uninteresting to them since motivation supports their concentration and helps them in comprehending the text both logically and emotionally. The lack of motivation will arise when they want to read a book but they do not really know what the book is about. Without motivation, students are impossible to do reading comprehensively. Another consideration is that worried and anxiety in comprehending the text. There are some students who are anxious when they see a text in front of them. They think that the topic of the text is too hard and difficult to be understood. The process of reading then becomes more complicated when students have to read a foreign language text. There are some additional factors that must be taken into account such as the cultural background of text, the ability of language being read, the unfamiliarity of scripts, and the writing systems of text (Saito, Horwitz, & Garza, 1999). Based on the explanation above, it clearly shows that anxiety is indicated as one of the problems that students mostly experience in EFL reading.

The phenomenon of anxiety in EFL reading can also be seen when students are asked to read unfamiliar text, they tend to spend too much time on things that are not related to the reading activities. For instance, consuming much time on thinking about difficult vocabularies they found during reading rather than using specific reading strategies necessary for their efficient reading and spending too much mental energy completing the reading task which is consequently frustrating. It simply can be said that in most cases, highly anxious readers do not use sufficient strategies beneficial for their reading comprehension such as guessing the meaning of unknown vocabularies, rereading the text to improve the comprehension, or using supported tools (for examples: using dictionary, taking notes, underlining, and highlighting useful information in the text). In another hand, Arnold (2009) and Nuttall (1982) further explained that students need to master specific reading strategy as it is necessary and efficient for their reading, if they do not, reading problem can occur. Schiff and Calif (2004) contended that reading problem may be experienced by EFL students if they do not have knowledge of reading strategies and awareness of applying the strategies into a text. In line with that, Young (1992) supported that reading is one of the

anxiety provoking skills among the four skills for students who have reading difficulties due to the lack of having appropriate reading strategies. From those perspectives, it can be concluded that EFL students may encounter anxiety in reading a text. However, they need to master sufficient reading strategies to overcome their anxiety in EFL reading.

In an attempt to understand why some students have difficulties in learning a new language, investigating the foreign language anxiety has increasingly attracted many researchers' attention in the field of foreign language learning, for example: Horwitz et al. (1986), Horwitz (1986), Aida (1994), Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, and Daley (2000), Horwitz (2001), Burden (2004), Casdado and Dereshiwsky (2004). The result of those studies indicated that speaking is the most provoking skill causing anxiety among the four skills. Although not much attention paid to the other skills, anxiety does affect these skills. It was proven by a recent study of Al-Shboul et al. (2013) revealed that not only speaking but also other skills such as listening, writing and reading can cause students anxious. It is supported by Wu (2011) saying that reading is one of the anxiety provoking skills to the students who learn a foreign or second language. Thus, Matsuda and Gobel (2004) concluded that reading anxiety in foreign language context does exist and is considered as a distinct phenomenon from a general type of foreign language anxiety.

Based on the phenomenon, this study investigated the sources of Foreign Language Reading Anxiety (FLRA) in EFL classroom and the use of reading strategies to overcome the anxiety. Since it is considered as the most powerful predictor on students' reading comprehension, it is necessary to identify the students who experience anxious in EFL reading and how they overcome their anxiety.

1.2. Research Questions

In line with the background of the study, this study attempts to address the following questions:

1. What are the sources of students' reading anxiety in EFL learning?

2. What kind of strategies students used for their EFL reading to overcome their anxiety?

1.3. Purpose of the Study

This study attempts to:

1. Find out the potential sources of reading anxiety among EFL students.
2. Identify strategies students used for their EFL reading to overcome their anxiety.

1.4. Scope of the Study

This study was conducted to undergraduate students in one of English dormitories in Bandung who learn English as a foreign language. It aimed to analyze the potential sources of students' reading anxiety and the use of reading strategies to overcome the anxiety in EFL reading. EFLRAI (English as a Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Inventory) adopted from MasoudZoghi (2012), RSQ (Survey of Reading Strategies) adopted from Oxford et al. (2004), and semi-structured interview were attempted to find out the answer to the research question.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study is significant in terms of the results of the study can provide information that is important for the development of theory, practice, and profession.

For theoretical development, it is expected that the results of this study can enrich the literature on reading anxiety and strategy in EFL context.

For practical and professional developments, the results of this study may provide educators with additional information on how to best support and facilitate students with an effective method of teaching and overcome students' difficulties in EFL reading since reading anxiety has negative effects on many aspects of students' reading comprehension.

1.6. Clarification of the Term

1.6.1. Foreign Language Reading Anxiety (FLRA)

It is defined as a distinct phenomenon but related to foreign language anxiety in general (Saito et al., 1999). FLRA in this research is related to the students in the beginning of their study who commonly experience anxiety.

1.6.2. Reading Strategies

It is problematic but oriented techniques and actions to accomplish comprehension (Wenden, 1987). The reading strategies in this study refer to overcome students' reading anxiety.

1.7. Thesis Organization

This paper is organized into five chapters. Chapter one is a general introduction. It consists of the background of the study, the research question, the purpose of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the terms used in the paper, and the organization of the paper. Chapter two discusses the relevant literature on reading anxiety and strategy. This is considered as the conceptual context about how literature talks about the issue. Chapter three delivers the methodology used to conduct this study. It presents the research design, the data collection methods, and the data analysis. Chapter four illustrates and analyzes the data collected in an attempt to answer the research questions. Chapter five summarizes the findings, specifies how these answer the research questions, points out the main limitations of the study and recommends propositions for further research in the future.