CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.0   Background

This study deals with investigation of the development of students'
autonomy in an English as a foreign language *reading* class at a tertiary level of
education in Indonesia, especially in non-English departments where these students
are expected to read ample English references. English is regarded as one of the
foreign languages as stated in the National Language Policy (2000) in Indonesia.
Among other foreign languages, it has a special position as it functions as a tool to
communicate with international society and to develop Indonesian, especially for
the terms in the fields of science and technology (Departmen Pendidikan Nasional,
2000: 220-221).

In response to the policy and the needs for English in national future
development, the Ministry of National Education of Indonesia has allowed schools
to offer learners English beginning from primary schools. English is a compulsory
subject in junior to tertiary levels. The English curriculum for primary to senior
high schools has been revised several times including in 2004 and 2006 (Departmen
Pendidikan Nasional 2006a, b, c; BSNP, 2008). These two curricula adopt learner-
centered learning process to achieve students' autonomy in learning.

The Ministry of National Education in Indonesia states that the teaching and
learning approaches are centralized to the learners' potentials, levels of
development, needs and environment. They are directed towards the process of
lifelong learning and learners' holistic development by integrating formal, non-
formal and informal education in line with developing environmental demands
(Departmen Pendidikan Nasional, 2004 and 2006 a, b, and c interpreted by
Merawati, 2009).

According to Little (2002), learning autonomy is one of the end goals of
education. Learning autonomy is to be enhanced and practiced at schools (Little,
1990) through learner-centered learning process (Nunan, 1996). When learners

leave schools, they are expected to have lifelong learning, helping themselves face their worlds and solve their future problems. To achieve this, the world of education is challenged with various learners' characteristics, learning environment and cultures; this is depicted in section 1.1. Some research findings in language learning autonomy are discussed in section 1.2 and the scope of this study in section 1.3. The research questions, purposes and the significance of this study are explained in section 1.4, 1.5, and 1.6 respectively. Finally this chapter is closed with a short explanation of some terms used in this study and the organization of the writing.

1.1   The World of Teaching and Learning English

Researchers in the world of teaching and learning English are challenged by various problems. The problems include the mismatches between students' and teachers' expectations and responsibilities.

Alwasilah finds that 65.8% of his respondents state that the students are not satisfied with English subject (Alwasilah, 2000: 106). Djiwandono (2008) also discovers that tertiary students of non-English departments get bored with reading comprehension classes, due to the fact that the teaching and learning process are monotonous, encompass teacher-centered teaching styles, and are conducted in large classes. According to Alawasilah' report (2000), the students are not interested in the teachers' selection of texts for practicing reading skills; they indicate that the texts are not useful and irrelevant to other activities in accomplishing their studies.

On the other hand, Merawati (2003), and Jati et. al. (2004) have attempted to provide texts dealing with various fields of studies; but unfortunately, most English lecturers encounter difficulties in following their attempt. The lecturers do not have time to develop the materials because they have to teach classes from various fields of studies and still have to collaborate with many lecturers because of their limited knowledge.

Djiwandono (2008) and Merawati (2003) discover a mismatch between students' and teachers' expectations. Most tertiary students learn English to

improve their speaking skills because they believe that these are the most important skills to master in their social lives and for their futures. By contrast, the teachers carry out the institutional curriculum focusing on academic reading and writing skills to help the students catch up with the development of science and technology and develop learners' autonomy.

These mismatch of expectations between the students and the authorities lead the students to blame the teachers and the learning approaches despite the teachers' efforts to provide the best materials for their students. These are only a few of the many challenges encountered in the world of teaching and learning English in Indonesia.

Philosophically, teaching and learning are very much influenced by the culture of the society (Benson, 2001; Press, 1996) and learning experiences. Papert (1994 in Little, 1998) also indicates that there is an imbalanced learning situation lying deep in the traditions of education. He claims that 'learning has traditionally been considered subordinate to teaching and it will automatically follow the right method provided by the teachers'. Moreover, researchers leave learning as an academic orphan and only few pay heed to the 'methods' of learning (Little, 1998).

The structure of present colonial education system has excessive workload, centralized curricula, expository teaching styles, concentration on knowledge acquisition, examinations emphasizing reproductive knowledge over genuine thinking, and overcrowded classrooms (Benson, 2001). This traditional teaching methodology produces more students who seek knowledge as containers (Benson and Voller, 1997 in Thanasoulas, 2000, Zhang, 2007). As a result, most students see knowledge as something to be transmitted by the teacher rather than discovered by the students. Finally, the students get bored and lose their interests and tend to learn without thinking, think without suspecting and suspect without questioning. Consequently, language learners apply limited strategies; they rarely ask for clarification, verification, correction, nor cooperate with peers or with more proficient English users (Little, 1994; Dam and Legenhausen, 1996).

Researchers from various Asian countries also find that teaching English as a foreign language in Asia is dominated by a teacher-centered, book-centered, grammar-translation method and emphasizes on rote learning (Liu & Littlewood, 1997 in Zhenhui, 2001). These teaching and learning processes lead Asian language learners to be passive as discovered by Chen (2008), Guo and Zhang (2004) from Taiwan, Akaranithi (2008) from Thailand, and Zhenhui (2001) from China. Chinese and Thai language learners are reserved and silent learners; they do not participate actively in the discussion, give responses nor ask questions (Zhang and Wang, 2008; Akaranithi, 2008), and they obey the elders and their teachers in the classrooms (Akaranithi, 2008) bringing about difficulties in changing their traditional learning habits (Li, 2008). These are also experienced by Indonesian learners; they perceive that too many questions to teachers or elders is assumed improper manner (Lengkanawati, 2004; Ivone and Mutmainnah, 2008).

In addition to shortcoming of the traditional teaching approaches and culture, English as a foreign language in Indonesia (Depdiknas, 2000) is not used for daily communication. Learners have limited exposure to English and therefore are not able to acquire it quickly. Most learners, especially those from remote areas, do not see English as their immediate needs, except for passing the tests. Lack of language exposure might also lead learners to apply receptive language learning strategies when they learn the language outside the classes as experienced by the students of language departments in Iran (Ghazanfari and Tarbiat, 2008).

The world of teaching and learning English faces the challenges of resolving the mismatch between the students' and teachers' expectations. English teachers are expected to bring about English proficiency and language learning autonomy within the limitation of the culture, learning experiences, teaching methodology and learning environment. They are expected to reconcile the expectations of students, institutions and societies. Experts in learning autonomy suggest the teachers and students discuss together to decide how the process of teaching and learning is to be carried out in order to enhance future problems solving capacities in the midst of various expectations surrounding them.

1.2 Some Research Findings in Language Learning Autonomy

An autonomous person is a fully functioning body (Roger,1969 in Benson and Voller, 1997). Many experts agree on the definition of learning autonomy as 'to take charge of one's own learning' (Holec, 1981 cited in Oxford, 1990; in Ridley, 1997 in Gardner and Miller, 1999). It is human rights (Palfreyman, 2003 in Palfreyman and Smith, 2003) and the product of interdependence rather than independence (Littlewood, 1999; Harmer, 2003; Palfreyman, 2003) and total autonomy is an ideal but rarely reached (Little, 1996; Nunan, 1997; Gardner and Miller, 1999) because of various influences such as time, context and moods (Benson, 2001).

It is said that 'you cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself' (Galileo Galilei, 1564-1642 cited in Benson, 2001: 23). Autonomous learners have willingness, and ability (Littlewood, 1996) and disposition to learn (Katz, 1987); they have the capability to regulate themselves in learning in two levels i.e. being proactive, and reactive learners (Littlewood, 1999) or collaborate and cooperative (Flannery, 1994). These two levels of self-regulation can occur simultaneously and dynamically (Pintrich, 2004) using various direct and indirect learning strategies (Oxford, 1990) to govern and regulate their thoughts, actions, and feelings (Littlewood, 1999; and Opalka, 2006).

Autonomous language learners are concerned with the language system, pay attention to meaning and construct it, seek opportunities to engage in real communication, identify problems and pursue learning goals, and make conscious decisions (Ellis, 1994). When reading, they are good guessers, construct meanings maturely from texts and continuously monitor their comprehension. They have clear reading purpose (Nuttall, 1989: 2; Paris, Wasik, and Turner, 1991: 611; Aebersold and Field 1998: 65) and they always refine and revise and evaluate their ideas as they crunch the data to find the gist (Paris, Wasik, and Turner, 1991). They apply 'top-down and bottom-up strategies' interactively and simultaneously (Mikulecky, 1990; Barnett, 1988; Brown, 1994; Aebersold, 1998; Nuttall, 1989)

using various strategies (Paris, Wasik, and Turner, 1991). These processes allow them to either acquire naturally or learn the language analytically (Littlewood, 1996; Krashen, 1981 as cited in Ellis, 1994; Brown, 1994).

In a language class, a teacher may teach the language and provide strategy training to develop students' learning autonomy as proposed by Cohen (2003) and Dam (1998). The language is taught either analytically or naturally and the strategies are presented by individualizing strategy training through modeling, explaining the benefits, practicing extensively (Pearson and Dole, 1987 cited in Cohen, 2003; Cohen, 2003), sharing strategies, and writing journals in the target language (Kent, 1997 and Moon, 1999 as cited in Little, 2007).

Learners need these strategy trainings because recent research shows that the lack of learning strategies impede learners from achieving the expected English proficiency. For example, learners of English as a foreign language in Iran tend to apply receptive learning strategies when they learn the language outside the language class (Ghazanfari and Tarbiat, 2008). The undergraduate Taiwanese students mostly apply translation strategies as they did in high schools (Chen, 2008). In Turkey, the teacher-centered language instruction leads the first-year student teachers in the English Language Teaching Program to be passive, and they are unlikely to develop the skills necessary to learn how to assess and control their own progress (Sert, 2006).

Korean students have limited English proficiency even though they have good problem-solving skills in reading and mathematics (Lee, 2008). Further, Griva and Tsakiridou (2006) find that non-English department students have applied various learning strategies but they often select the inappropriate strategies either for a particular text types, situation or a task. Pakasi (2008) has endeavoured to develop language learning autonomy of a group of Medical students in Manado through writing journals from any texts they read outside the class. These students seem contented but they do not have clear understanding of the rationale behind the activities. They wrote their journals by copying their friend's, selected inappropriate reading materials, and demanded teachers' correction.

However, there are researchers who have succeeded in developing language learning autonomy by encouraging learners to apply some learning strategies and assigning tasks to enhance their learning responsibility. For example, Guo and Zhang (2004) have encouraged and assisted their learners to apply learning strategies efficiently and effectively in the classroom; and it rerults in improved EFL outcomes for this group of students in Chinese tertiary education. The Taiwanese Non-English major students improve their metacognitive awareness and are able to orchestrate their listening strategies after having strategy trainings to regulate their metacognitive strategies (Chen, 2008). This shows that process-based instruction can be integrated successfully in the EFL listening classroom and lead to positive effects on learners' self-efficacy.

Maryanto (2008) succeeds in increasing vocabulary levels of the students in extensive reading programs of English language education in three universities. He provides strategy training in guessing meaning from context, then allows them to select reading materials outside reading classes and practice meaning guessing. He also encourages the students to present orally, and develop vocabulary tests in reading classes. This program has improved learners vocabulary levels, reading strategies, developed social strategies and lowered learning anxiety.

These findings show that even though EFL learners have high motivation to learn English for socio-cultural and economic reasons, it does not automatically develop learners' language learning strategies. Good learners are not automatically good language learners and therefore need strategy training in language courses. Limited English exposure also impede inexperienced learners from recognizing their immediate needs which can result in diminished motivation and limited language proficiency; they need abundant English exposure and learn it through using it.

To enhance learning autonomy, teachers are advised to conduct need analysis (Hutchinson and Waters, 1989; Nunan, 1996). Learners have various learning characteristics, experiences and goals. For example Akaranithi (2008) has conducted research dealing with self-directed learning using computer programs in

the classrooms of engineering and architecture students. The engineering students prefer to study writing and reading; while the architecture students like to study listening and speaking. This is due to the nature of their study that leads them to focus on developing certain skills. The engineering students have to write reports and experiment while the architecture students have to present their design orally. This depicts that learners of various fields of studies have their own needs and goals depending on the requirements of their majoring subjects and learning environment. However, Alwasilah finds that the need analysis is often neglected and the curriculum and the materials are applied on all students in an institution (Alwasilah, 2000: 119).

In addition to the need analysis, to enhance learners' autonomy in language learning, a language teacher is expected to be interpretive (Voller, 1997), and to act as a scaffold (Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976 cited in Hammond, 2001), a guide, a facilitator of learning, a counselor, and as a resource (Benson, 2001; Little, 2002; Gardner and Miller, 1999; Sheerin, 1990; Allwright, 1991 cited in Little, 1995). The course is carried out based on learner-centered approach; the teacher negotiates the program and conduct action research together with the learners (Sheerin, 1997; Nunan, 1996; Hutchinson and Waters, 1989; Aebersold and Field, 1998; Roe, Stoodt, and Burns, 1986).

In addition to providing strategy training, a teacher needs to provide various facilities and learning environment with the aim of encouraging and stimulating learners to apply and enrich various learning strategies using various means and various language exposures. The self-access language learning (SALL) can be one of promising facilities to promote autonomy in language learning (Sheerin, 1991 as cited in Gardner and Miller 1999).

However, all of these facilities do not automatically promote learners to develop their learning autonomy (Sheerin, 1997) as discovered by Ivone and Muthmainnah (2008). These researchers have encouraged their fresh language students in Malang to develop their independent learning habits by allowing them to work on their weaknesses or learn for pleasure in Self-Access Center (SAC).

They discover that these learners do not learn in SAC seriously. The probable reasons are firstly, the learners might be accustomed to test-driven learning purposes and learn only when the subject is tested. Secondly, they do not know how to make use of these facilities to improve their English.

This finding demonstrates that learners need trainings and control to make use of these facilities in enhancing their autonomy in language learning as stated by Sheerin (1997). This strategy has been successfully carried out by Kim (2008) who has improved the students' motivation to the point that they are willing to continue their self-study after the training ends through Blogs in Self-Access Center in Korea. He has helped students apply their metacogntive strategies - setting up their own language goals, facilitating planned daily study, accessing appropriate language learning materials based on their own needs, and retaining what they have learned.

SAC does not only have computers with various required programs but also various other facilities and learning programs such as reported by Wu, Lin and Chen (2008). The materials in SAC, both original and specifically designed for self-instruction, have important roles in fostering autonomy in language learning (Dickinson, 1987 cited in Benson, 2001; Gardner and Miller, 1999; Sheerin, 1990).

Nowadays, many language centers establish SACs of various sizes, from modest to very extensive ones. They provide ample English exposures through various means so that learners may select the appropriate materials and means to accelerate their language proficiency and learning strategies.

However, observing a few SACs in Bandung in 2004 - 2007, the researcher found many irregularities. These facilities did not have clear programs and the teachers often abused these facilities. One of the SACs was used to punish learners whenever they broke class rules. Some teachers allowed their students to study in SAC only at the end of the semesters and only to provide these students with different learning situations allowing them to play with games or watch TV programs. Moreover, there were teachers who sent their students to study in SAC

because they were not able to teach for some reasons. The teacher did not give any guidance to make use these SAC facilities to learn the language efficiently.

Considering the findings of various studies and theories presented by various experts of language teaching and learning, the present study attempts to investigate the development of learners' autonomy in reading class as well as Self-Access Language Learning (SALL). The underlying theories of this study will be explored in detail in Chapter 2.

1.3 Scope of The Study

Assuming that experienced learners apply better learning strategies than the novices, this study focused on the developments of language learning strategies of the non-English department learners when they solved their problems in reading at Politeknik Negeri Bandung, Indonesia. The developments of the students' learning autonomy were explored through the developments of the four components of learning autonomy i.e. learning purpose, knowledge, skills, and willingness in an English reading class where the lecturer collaborated with the learners and the managing staff of SALL. Since this study focused on the students' developments, the discussion were focused on the students' matters.

1.4 Research Questions

This study was conducted to seek answers to the question "what is the trend of development of the learners' language learning autonomy in the reading class?" This question was, then, further elaborated into the following questions:

1. What are the students' problems when reading English texts?
2. What instructional decisions are taken as a result of the collaboration among the related parties?
3. What are the students' strategies and skills to solve the problems?
4. What are the developments of students' learning autonomy in reading class?

The data to answer these questions were mostly gathered from closed and open-ended questionnaires, learning journals, students' reflective journals, tests,

thinking process journals, and field notes. These data were analyzed qualitatively and the findings were confirmed with some observations, interviews, especially informal interview.

The data were collected from a study which had a framework of inductive action research (Wallace, 1998) which had one diagnostic phase and three cycles conducted in two semesters in collaboration with the students and the managing staff of SALL at Politeknik Negeri Bandung. This study required the teacher and the students to negotiate, plan and set goals, act and evaluate results together which was in line with learner-centered approach and allowed the students to learn and practice their learning autonomy (Oxford, 1990; Nunan, 1996; Chamot, *et.al* 1999; Little, 1995, Voller, 1997; Cohen, 2003).

One of autonomous learners' characters and good readers is the ability to identify and solve their problems (Holec, 1979, Ridley, 1997; Pintrich, 2004; Pearson, 2004; Wenden, 1987). Therefore, this study concerns with the students' problems and their strategies to solve their problems.

The first question was to identify the students' problems either perceived by the students or the teacher. The students' perceived problems were collected from the students' journals. The teacher identified the students' problems by analyzing the students' journals based on the four components i.e. purpose, knowledge and skills or strategies, and willingness which was explored from the students' motivation or affective response (Littlejohn, 2008) and confidence. The second question explored the treatments decided after a collaboration among the lecturer, the students and the staff of SALL was conducted in the planning stage. The third question was to identify the students' strategies to solve their perceived problems which were analyzed from those data collected. The identified problems and the strategies applied, then, became the basis of the next plans and treatments. The fourth question was to find the stages of learners' autonomy which was analyzed from those four components and students' perceived problems by means of comparing achievements of these students cross-sectionally and longitudinally.

1.5   Purpose of The Study

The main purpose of this study was to discover the problems and the learners' strategies to solve their perceived problems when they are reading English texts. It was to document the development of learners' autonomy in EFL reading class conducted in the classroom and self-access language learning in tertiary level of education. These purposes could be translated into these specific objectives:

1. to find the first-year students' perceived problems in reading English texts.
2. to obtain some ideas of the students' handling their problems in response to the teachers' treatments to enhance their autonomy in language learning.
3. to find the developments achieved by the students after some treatments, and finally
4. to have some ideas and ways to help and guide the students of non-English department to learn English autonomously either inside or outside the classroom by encouraging them to find their own learning strategies, practice, and acquire these strategies.

1.6   Significance of The Study

This study offers some contributions to English teachers, the students, the language center, or the institution staff and authorities, and other researchers. The results of this study might give a light of the developments of learners' learning autonomy to the English teachers and researchers, so that they were be able to anticipate and reflect their own practices and develop their language teaching techniques. They could also put their capacities into practice and gain experience to facilitate and guide their students in self-access language learning.

The students of this study are expected to be aware of and improve their language learning strategies and their English proficiency. Hopefully, the treatments will develope their learning strategies and study skills as well. For the language center and the institution staff and authorities who have spent lots of fund and energy to setting out SALL, this study provides some feedback of having self-

access language learning in their institution and sheds a light on directions to develop this unit. The findings of this study were also useful for other researchers to conduct similar research in order to obtain deeper and better results.

1.7   Key Terms

This section clarifies seven key terms used in this report. These terms are as follows:

Learning autonomy in this study is defined as the students' ability to make decision about what to learn and how to manage their learning to achieve their objectives. Learners will make decision to what they learn when they have the ability and willingness (Littlewood, 1996). Students who have learning autonomy are those who are able to decide their learning objectives and they also have knowledge, skills, motivation, and confidence to learn either inside or outside the classroom to achieve their objectives. This definition will be explained in detail in chapter 2. This study explored the development of students' learning autonomy in EFL reading class. The development were analyzed from four components i.e. learning purposes, knowledge, skills and willingness which was explored from the students' motivation and confidence.

1. Learning purpose was the students' learning purposes when they were learning in reading classes and in self-access language learning.

2. Students' knowledge was explored from the students' learning benefit. This was the benefits perceived by the students from their learning activities. This is to analyze the students' awareness of some knowledge obtained from the treatments or their learning activities.

3. Skills or strategy adopted was the strategies adopted or employed by the students as a result of their learning activities. The strategy adopted was classified into two types of strategies i.e. indirect and direct strategies. The indirect strategies or metacognitive strategies were to explore the methods applied by the students to manage their language learning. Other strategies included in indirect strategies were social and affective strategies in addition to

how they set their learning purposes. The direct strategies or cognitive strategies explored the qualities of the students' mental learning processes. These strategies were further classified into strong and weak direct strategies.

a. Strong direct strategy is the strategy involving high level cognitive strategy or deep thinking process or deep mental processing of the language such as translation, summarizing; taking note using learners' words, describing the meanings of words using learners' words, etc.

b. Weak direct strategy is the strategy involving low-level cognitive strategy or superficial thinking process, such as consulting bilingual dictionaries, word-for-word translation, copying sentences or descriptions. It does not include social and affective strategies to learn the language.

4. The students' willingness was explored from the students' motivation and confidence. Their motivation was evaluated from their affective response or the students' response towards their learning activities. The students' confidence was explored their feeling of success.

5. Self-Access Centre (SAC) in this study is limited to those which mostly used for learning languages or similar to Self-Access Language Learning (SALL) where this study was conducted.

1.8   Organization of The Writing

To communicate this study with ease to the audience, this report is written relatively consistent with the writing organization suggested by Paltridge & Stairfield (2007 cited in Emilia, 2008). Chapter 1 describes the background of the study, the challenges of teaching and learning EFL, some efforts and research findings in response to the challenges, the scope, the research questions, the purposes and the significances of the study. Chapter 2 discusses some theoretical concept and some findings underlying this study. This chapter presents the concept of autonomy and the characteristics of good learners and novice learners; reading and characteristics of good and novice readers. It also discusses some teaching and learning theories and findings underlying the treatments and learning context that

may influence the results of this study. Chapter 3 presents the methodology of this study, the designs, brief environment where this study is conducted, the instrument used and how to analyze the collected data to answer the research questions. Chapter 4 is devoted to describe the three cycle treatments which each is directly followed by the analysis under themes emerging from the data, under the first and second research questions. This chapter is closed by a discussing answers to the third research questions. Chapter 5 contains the summary of the reports from the research problems, treatments, and results. Finally, the conclusion in relation to the study, the suggestion and limitation of the study are presented.