CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study was intended to investigate the students' metacognitive reading strategies in comprehending reading test materials at one English Education Department in Bandung, West Java. This chapter describes the background of the study, the research questions and the purpose of the study. It also includes the scope of the study, the significance of the study and the clarification of terms.

1.1   Background of the Study

Reading is an important part of the four necessary language skills for acquiring knowledge and gathering information for those learning English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL), for academic success, and for professional development (Wei, 2005 in Aengpongpaow 2008). In the same view, Eskey (1986 in Sary, 2006: 29) and Grabe (1991 in Sary, 2006: 29) mention that the students' ability to read and understand English texts is an important skill in learning English as a second language around the world. Furthermore, grabe (1991 in Sary, 2006: 30) argues that "success in schools and academic institutions in often measured by performance or strandardized examinations that involve the reading materials written in English language".

Since the late of 1970's, reading strategies are considered as one of the fundamental factors that promote students' comprehension improvement in reading (Rong&Xiaomei, 2006). Furthermore, reading strategy "is the foundation of students' self-regulated reading" (Syafrizal, 2000:4). A motivated and self-regulated reader will encourage himself to set his own planning in

determining his reading strategies which contribute a great deal to the reading comprehension (Wenden, 1987:11). Gardner and McIntyer (1993 in Karballaei, 2011) argue that second language proficiency is determined by situational variables, language learner characteristics, and learning strategy used.

In the context of second language learning, learners use the strategies to make learning more effective and improve comprehension. According to Singhal (2001), reading strategies "indicate how readers conceive a task and help them to understand and guide them to comprehend". It is important for second language readers to be aware of their own comprehension processes during reading. In order to do that, strategies are selected to assist in getting at the meaning of what they read (Singhal 2001)

From all reading strategies, metacognitive strategies are regarded as a part of the effective strategies that enhance learners' reading ability (Cohen, 1998; Israel, 2007: 1 in Temur&Bahar, 2011). There are some theories that say like that. As previously stated by Devine (1993 in Anastasious, D &Griva, E: 2009), metacognitive strategy has been identified as a key factor in efficient reading. Furthermore, Auerbach and Paxton (1997 in Karbalaei, 2011) argue that strategic reading can only become efficient when metacognitive strategies are actively used. Then, Markam (1981 in Dhanapala, 2010) also says that metacognitive consists of self-regulatory mechanism that helps learners in effective reading. As Brown, Armbruster and Baker have argued, "metacognition plays an important role in reading" (1986: 49 in Karbalaei, 2011).

Moreover, Hammadou (1991 in Harrison, 2004) says that to be able to read effectively and intelligently, students need to refine their reading ability by integrating their prior knowledge, language proficiency, and metacognitive strategies with the understanding of words and sentences in a text. Metacognitive strategies should play their roles in reading tasks as they

can help learners plan, organize or control, and evaluate or remedy the reading process (Cohen, 1998). In a similar vein, Brown (1994) indicates that metacognitive strategies help readers monitor and regulate their thought. These strategies are skills that can be used voluntarily and consciously and can become automatic after repeated practice. Furthermore, Anderson (2002 in Ofode, et, al., 2011) states that the use of metacognitive strategies ignite one's thinking and can lead to higher and better performance. Students who demonstrate a wide range of metacognitive skills perform better on examination and complete work more efficiently.

Going through literature, Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) found that the better readers use metacognitive reading strategies more often than the poor readers (cited in Dhanapala, 2010). In a similar vein, studies on learners' metacognitive aspects of reading-strategy use have discovered that successful readers generally display a higher degree of metacognitive, which enables them to use reading strategies more effectively and efficiently than their unsuccessful peers (Carrel, 1989; Carrell et al., 1998; Hudson, 1998; Sheorey&Mokhtari, 2001; Zhang, 2001; Zhang et al., 2008 in Zhang & Wu, 2009). In short, metacognitive strategies are effective strategy and have significant role that skilled learners use to enhance their reading ability. These strategies may help readers to clarify their understanding about the text being read.

Regarding the good and struggling readers, metacognition enables and helps students to become successful learners, and it has been associated with intelligence (Naznean, A: 2009). It needs to be pointed out, however, that most of the comprehension activities of efficient readers take place at the metacognitive level, as shown by recent research on the reading strategies used by successful and less successful readers (e.g., Carrell, Gajdusek, & Wise, 1998; Hudson, 2007 in Zhang & Wu, 2009). Furthermore, Grabe and Stoller (2002) suggest that good readers have knowledge of cognition, and language which includes organization, patterns of structure and

using suitable strategies that help them process a particular text. They also search for specific information and are able to formulate questions.

Moreover, good readers adjust their strategies to the type of text and to the purpose of reading. They distinguish between important information and details as they read, and are able to use clues in the text to predict new information and relate it to previous knowledge. Research has also shown that more effective readers employ metacognitive strategies before, during and after their reading in order to enhance comprehension. In a recent study added that good readers are active participants. On the other hand, the primary difficulty for struggling readers is lack of coordinating thinking processes. Low-achieving readers need to acquire strategies that will result in comprehension, through assisting, motivating and building confidence which are essential in improving the performance of these students (Grabe&Stoller, 2002).

Furthermore, research on reading development has shown that good readers use strategies that are not used by poor readers (Grabe&Stoller, 2002 cited in Lavadenz, 2003). In the same vein, according to Chamot (2004), more and less proficient language learners are different in number and range of strategies used, in how the strategies are applied to the task, and in the appropriateness of the strategies for the task (cited in Tarkomani, 2010). Then, research in L2 and FL contexts has focused much on the differences in reading-strategy use among high and low achieving students (see Chapter II for charecteristics of high and low achieving students). Moreover, based on Oranpattanachai (2010), it should be useful to know the difference in the reading strategy use of the high reading proficiency students and the low reading proficiency students in order that it can make the latter aware of the reading strategies of the former and learn how to use them while reading to improve reading comprehension. Thus, these findings have

encouraged researcher to investigate the metacognitive reading strategy used by high and low achieving students.

Because metacognition has a crucial function in successful learning, it is essential to study about it (Livingston, 1997; Naznean, A: 2009). Knowing the students' reading process or what reading strategy they use and how they use it when they encounter their reading difficulties can help teachers to know how to assist students to improve their abilities in reading (Aebersold& Field, 2000 in Oranpattanachai, 2010). Further, Oranpattanachi (2010) says that if a teacher knows that metacognitive strategies will help students become better learners, then the obvious classroom implication is that he or she needs to incorporate explicit teaching and implicit use of these strategies into the everyday classroom activities.

However, in the research site, there are no studies that investigate metacognitive reading strategies in the third year students of English Education Department in STKIP Siliwangi. The current study was therefore conducted with the third-year students to investigate the metacognititve reading strategies employed by high and low achieving students in comprehending reading test materials.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the description above, the researcher processes the questions to be investigated which are formulated as follows.

1. What metacognitive reading strategies are frequently used by high and low achieving students in comprehending reading TOEFL test materials?

2. What are the similarities and differences between high and low achieving students in their reported strategy use?

3. Which metacognitive reading strategies are considered the most helpful to be used by the university students especially in answering questions in reading comprehension test successfully?

4. Why do high and low achieving students employ those strategies in comprehending reading TOEFL test materials?

1.3. Purpose of the Study

1. To investigate the metacognititve reading strategies which are frequently used by high and low achieving students in comprehending reading test materials.

2. To investigate the similarities and differences of metacognitive reading strategies which are frequently used by high and low achieving students in comprehending reading test materials.

3. To investigate the metacognitive reading strategies which are considered the most helpful to be used by the university students especially in answering questions in reading comprehension test.

4. To investigate the students' reasons in using those reading strategies to comprehend reading test materials.

1.4 The Scope of the Study

This study was conducted to investigate metacognitive reading strategies which were frequently employed by high and low achieving students in comprehending reading TOEFL test materials, metacognitive reading strategies which were considered the most helpful to be used

by the university students especially in answering questions in reading comprehension test and the reasons why they used those strategies.

The study was focused on the metacognitive reading strategies based on the classification of Cohen (1998) and Kummin&Rahman (2010) who used the theoretical foundation based on the well known classifications of Adamson (1990, 1992), Block (1986, 1992), Carrel (1989) and O'Malley and Chamot (1990). They are previewing, repetition, self-questioning, self-monitoring, problem solving, paraphrasing, using contextual clues, skimming, comparison & contrast to L1 domain, picking out key words, looking specific for purposes, visualizing, using background knowledge, translation, summarizing, and self-evaluating.

1.5.Significance of the Study

The findings obtained from this study provide information about the metacognitive reading strategies which were used by high and low achieving students in comprehending reading test materials. Such information can be used as a guideline for teachers to find good technique for teaching effective reading.

Practically, the findings are expected to have some practical implications in future instruction to help the students improve their reading comprehension. By knowing what reading strategies students employ, lecturer can teach the reading strategies which should be used more by students. In addition, the findings of the study can give information to reading lecturers to teach metacognitive reading strategies considered the most helpful to be used by the students in order that they can be good readers.

Theoretically, this study is expected to give contribution to the field of teaching reading comprehension in university. Hopefully, the study is valuable for lecturers in teaching reading program to the students, and for students of English Education Program especially when dealing with the text they read to enhance reading comprehension. Finally, the study is expected to enrich the literature review for other researchers who want to conduct the study of the same field interest. The results of this study can also be used as reference to compare and support the results of further study.
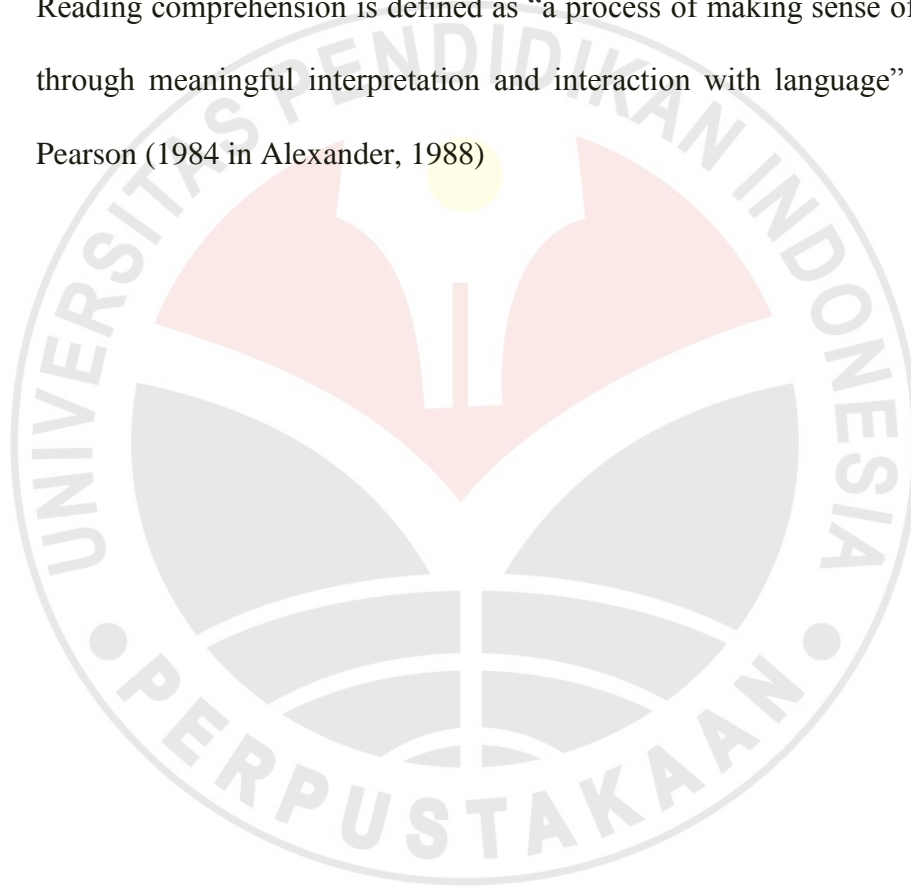
1.6. Definition of Key Terms

There are some terms used in this study as follows:

1.   Reading is an active cognitive process of interacting with print and monitory comprehension to build up meaning (Carrel, 1989)

2.   Reading strategy is the mental activity that readers use in order to construct meaning from a text (N. J Anderson et al., 1991; Devine, 1993; Hosenfeld et al., 1981 in Aebersold&Field, 1997).

3.   Reading strategies involve ways of processing text which will vary with the nature of the text, the reader's purpose and the context of situation (Wallace, 1992 in Torkanmani, 2010.).

4.   Metacognition is defined as knowledge about knowledge or thinking about thinking. It refers to one's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes and products or anything related to them (Flavell, 1976, cited in Temur&Bahar, 2011).

5. Metacognitive strategies are higher executive skills that may entail planning for, monitoring, or evaluating the success of a learning activity (Brown, 1994).

6. Metacognitive reading strategies refer to the strategies that are used to ensure or evaluate one's understanding of the text (Livingston, 1997; Dhanapala: 2010). It also occurs when cognitions fails (Livingston, 1997; Cohen, 1998)

7. Reading comprehension is defined as "a process of making sense of written ideas through meaningful interpretation and interaction with language" (Anderson & Pearson (1984 in Alexander, 1988)