

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this introductory chapter, the background to the present study is provided along with a brief theoretical overview. This chapter also formulates the research problems into the proposed research questions that the study aims to answer. The scope of the study and the contribution the study makes to the field of educational studies are furthermore included.

1.1 Background of the Study

This study is concerned with investigating cognitive reading strategies used by first year EFL students in a university in Garut. It is commonly known that reading is an important skill in learning a language. The requirement of being knowledgeable in this global era can be fulfilled by reading. As stated by Wallace (1992), reading serves the wider role of extending our general knowledge of the world. This is also supported by Hood et al (2005) who state that the ability to read well in English will influence learning potential in all other areas. This can be fulfilled by the use of learning strategies which can also be applied in reading.

There are two kinds of learning strategies which can also be applied in reading, i.e. direct strategies and indirect strategies (Oxford, 1990). Direct strategies consist of memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies.

Meanwhile, indirect strategies are composed of metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. Among these strategies, cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies are the most popular strategies used in reading (see Richards, 1987 in Richards, 1990; Wenden & Rubin, 1987; Ozek&Civelek, 2006; Ghonsooly&Eghtesadee, 2006; Ming Xu, 2007, and Hamdan et al, 2010).

Metacognitive strategies in reading identified by Oxford (1990) are overviewing and linking with already known material, paying attention, finding out about language learning, organizing, setting goals and objectives, identifying the purpose of a language task, planning for a language task, seeking practice opportunities, self-monitoring, and self-evaluating. Meanwhile, cognitive strategies in reading identified by Oxford (1990) are repeating, getting the idea quickly (skimming and scanning), using resources for receiving and sending messages, reasoning deductively, analyzing expressions, analyzing contrastively, translating, transferring, taking notes, summarizing and highlighting.

The cognitive strategies mentioned above are also in line with those identified by O'Malley&Chamot (1990) which include resourcing, repetition, grouping, deduction, imagery, keyword method, elaboration, transfer, inferencing, note-taking, and summarizing. The use of cognitive strategies in reading can help someone to be a proficient reader. This is supported by the theories of cognitive reading strategies and the results of the study conducted by Ozek&Civelek (2006), Ghonsooly&Eghtesadee (2006), and Hamdan et al (2010).

Since the number of research on cognitive reading strategies is still rare in Indonesia, this study is important to do. Therefore, to investigate university students' reading strategies has raised the researcher's interest. The previous studies become parts of theoretical foundations the researcher uses in this study which is focused on cognitive reading strategies frequently used by university students to enhance their reading comprehension. In addition, this study also attempts to find out which cognitive reading strategies considered the most helpful to be developed by the university students especially when they answer questions in reading comprehension test successfully.

1.2 Research Questions

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

1. Which cognitive reading strategies are frequently used by the university students to enhance their reading comprehension?
2. Which cognitive reading strategies are considered the most helpful to be developed by the university students especially in answering questions in reading comprehension test successfully?

1.3 Purposes of the Study

In this very limited study, the study attempts to find out the answers to the problem stated above. The purposes could be classified into specific objectives as follows.

1. To investigate cognitive reading strategies frequently used by the university students to enhance their reading comprehension
2. To find out cognitive reading strategies considered the most helpful to be developed by the university students especially in answering questions in reading comprehension test successfully

1.4 Significance of the Study

From professional aspect, 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. In addition, the study is also expected to develop the awareness of reading strategies to enhance university students reading comprehension.

Then, from practical aspect, the findings are expected to have some practical implications in future instruction to help the students to improve their reading comprehension. By knowing what reading strategies students employ, lecturer can teach good reading strategies which should be developed more by students. In

addition, the findings of the study can give information to reading lecturers to teach cognitive reading strategies considered the most helpful to be developed by the students in order that they can be good readers.

Finally, from theoretical aspect, 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.

1.5 Scope of the Study

Due to the limitation of time, cost and energy in conducting the study, the scope of the study was delimited into cognitive reading strategies used by the first year students of STKIP Garut English program in their academic studies.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

There are some terms used in this study as follows:

1. Reading is a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency, and motivation (Leipzig, 2001).
2. Reading is a complex process of problem solving in which the reader works to make sense of a text not just from the words and sentences on the page but also from the ideas, memories, and knowledge evoked by those words and sentences (Cziko et al, 2000)

3. Reading strategy is the mental activity that readers use in order to construct meaning from a text (see N. J Anderson et al., 1991; Devine, 1993; Hosenfeld et al., 1981 in Aebersold&Field, 1997).
4. 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).
5. Cognitive strategies are specific learning tasks which involve more direct manipulation of the learning material itself (Brown, 1994).
6. Cognitive strategies are strategies in which learner interacts with the material to be learned by manipulating it mentally (as in making mental images, or elaborating on previously acquired concepts or skills) or physically (as in grouping items to be learned in meaningful categories, or taking notes on important information to be remembered (O'Malley&Chamot, 1990).
7. Cognitive reading strategies such as getting the idea quickly help learners locate the main idea through skimming or the key points of interest through scanning (Oxford, 1990)
8. Reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning from text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible (see Grellet, 1986; Lenz, 2005).
9. Reading comprehension is the ability to understand information in a text and interpret it appropriately (Grabe&Stoller, 2002).

10. Reading comprehension is a process in which a reader constructs meaning, while or after, interacting with text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, the stance she or he takes in relationship to the text, and immediate, remembered, or anticipated social interactions and communication (Rudell et al, 1994)

1.7 Outline of the Thesis

The subsequent chapters are framed as follows. Chapter 2 explores relevant literature concerning the theories that have given shape to this study, particularly to do with reading purposes, the models of reading, reading strategies used by good readers, cognitive reading strategies and previous studies in reading strategies. Chapter 3 outlines the design and methodology of the study. This includes the research design, restatement of the problems, data collection method, and data analysis. Chapter 4 presents the discussion of research findings which are dealing with cognitive reading strategies frequently used by the students in their academic studies and cognitive reading strategies used by the students to answer questions in reading comprehension test successfully. This chapter also offers further discussion analysis for cognitive reading strategies used by the students when they should identify the topic or the main idea of the passage, guess the meaning of the unknown word, comprehend the text, understand what implies in the text or infer from the text, predict the preceding paragraph, identify the tone of the passage and the author's purpose. Finally, the thesis is concluded with chapter

5, providing conclusions drawn from discussion in chapter 4 as well as recommendations for further research.

