

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher will focus on several aspects including: (1) Background of the Study, (2) Statement of the Problem, (3) Theoretical Framework, (4) Objectives of the Study, (5) Significance of the Study, (6) The Scope and Limitation of the Study, (7) Assumptions, and (8) Definition of Key Terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

I have been keen on reading since I was a little girl. My mom used to be my favourite story-teller at night and brought those joyous moments back when I had my very precious childhood. There was not much that I could recall except how excited I was to be able to hear interesting stories; usually the ones from Barbie, BoBo, or even Disney Princesses books which I used to cling on to. This memorable habit particularly became my witness of how my reading hobby developed as it grew bigger over the years. Perhaps, my notion of how interesting reading was because I used to read those special books and figured out all the plots and imageries in my head. To that point, I learnt that there were stories and facts that revealed whilst reading some books and so, my little thought wander at life mystery and other possibilities that could come from certain book or encyclopaedia, therefore I found that being a child who was fond of reading during bedtime was truly beneficial to my reading ability. Apparently, during my elementary school, I noticed that many students were not engaged in reading as their favourite hobby during their spare time; instead, some of them were more intrigued by playing video-games or physical activities. Throughout my higher-educational levels in junior and senior high school, the intensity of reading increased specifically in English. That is why I am also interested in learning English as my second language. For instance, I practice my reading proficiency with some sort of classic novels and fiction; I find it pretty amusing to connect and feel as if I am stepping outside of the world.

As I grew older, I found myself deliberating on such ideas of how reading could be more appreciated. Frankly, during my senior year back in 2018, I was stunned by how dull it was for some of my classmates to sit and answer all the reading questions, formally known as “reading comprehension”. This observation brought me to this time-frame kind of *Deja-vu* to repeat those lingering thoughts in my elementary school and found that no matter the time or circumstance, it, somehow, did not alter a learner’s reading habit.

Having some sort of self-talk, I then convinced myself to dig deeper and started to acquire one or two reasons why students were still low in reading. Now, after reflecting on my past experience of how I got acquainted with reading, I then, desire to know the topic in theoretical ways. To explore this issue further, I equipped this research with evidence of how reading is crucial for students.

As a starting point, we are accustomed to reading activities since it is one of the English language skills-along with listening, speaking, and writing. Students learn to read for varied purposes, not only for English subjects, but also for other subjects ranging from science, geography, to advanced research studies. Unlike writing and speaking skills, reading has its own characteristics. As an example, it is reflected as a passive activity. In which, students are not required to produce something, rather they need to understand and obtain certain information acquired from the reading passage. In order to apprehend reading, Nunan (refering to Ismail et al., 2017), states that reading has its purposes, including (1) to obtain information or purposes, (2) to gain information related on daily life, (3) to act in a Play, (4) to understand business letter or to keep in touch with relatives, (5) to know something that is available or know when something will take place, (6) to know what is happening from news sources (such as newspaper, magazine, news report), and lastly (7) to have enjoyment.

Starting from these purposes, it is naturally known that every educational level is also familiar with this type of learning. Besides, having reading activities can also become students’ experience (as cited in Ismail et al., 2017), where learners can develop their knowledge from the authors’ mind, especially

to broaden their English proficiency in reading. Indeed, despite the level differences, they still need proper reading skill to gain sufficient educational perspectives. Hence, it can be considered as one of the most difficult skills to learn. The factual case that could show the challenge of reading can be seen from this example-in most schools, students have the same difficulties where they might be able to read, but, they do not fully apprehend the contextual meaning of what they are reading. This situation also occurred during my elementary and senior high school, where reading activity displayed an inconvenient circumstance for students whilst answering the questions.

It can happen for some causes, mostly because reading subject requires a long thinking process-especially when it comes to reading comprehension. Therefore, there might be some steps that are not fully understood by students or teachers. Having this issue stated, can reflect how reading has not yet reached its goals.

To give a concrete example of the national reading average score, I provide PISA 2015 reading test results. Here, it shows how Indonesian students' reading ability is still low. Referring to (Argina et al., 2017), despite the improvement of Indonesia's results out of 72 countries and finally risen from the bottom two, we are still left hundreds of points behind Singapore. Based on the statistical facts, we can conclude that students might not be fully prepared to read, which also correlated with Indonesia's educational system. Although teachers, on one hand, are doing their best to engage students in reading, there might be some possible factors that become the reason why students still do not realize the core point of reading. On the other hand, students might not be interested in reading. This little situation can surprisingly affect students' learning, which also stops them from providing new opinions or thinking during the reading process. Thus, it cannot help learners to become creative readers.

From the cases that I have mentioned, it is quite clear that reading is important for students. Hence, I desire to do research based on A Narrative Inquiry of Learners' Critical Thinking Skills in Reading Comprehension: Learning Forward, with the hope that students who can use critical thinking during

comprehension can encourage themselves to learn forwardly and reflect to the critical thinkers who are eager to experience something new. This research will discuss further on how the criteria of critical thinking are seen through reading activities and I also wish that this reflective study will become a way to enhance students' reading skill in the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University.

1.2 Statements of The Problem

Considering the background of the study, I want to know how students can reflect critical thinking skills in reading comprehension. Specifically, this problem can be analysed through these research questions:

1. What factors hinder students in reading comprehension?
2. What are the benefits of critical thinking skills for students in reading comprehension?
3. How can students perceive themselves as critical thinkers?

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The study is based on two essential points, known as critical thinking skills and reading comprehension, that are briefly explained in the provided paragraphs below:

To start with, referring to Kintsch (as cited in Kirby, 2007), comprehension can be defined as an activity where the readers use two or some pieces of information that are obtained from the reader's background knowledge.

In order to equip the research in critical thinking skills, (Din, 2020) conducted an evaluation study which involved students of Punjab University to explore their attitudes towards critical thinking skills and their critical reading. The author decides to choose this study as one of her theoretical frameworks since it strengthens critical thinking in varied views. Although I do not put critical reading as my study, the organizational writing that has been done by Din could complement the critical thinking theory as well. In fact, he believes that this skill can promote learners' cognitive thinking system as one of Bloom's learning domains. Furthermore, critical thinking skills can be reflected as the educational foundation.

Moreover, Wallerstein (as cited in Haji & Ph, 2014) viewed critical thinking as a way for someone to take responsibility for their thinking-actions. In other words, one person should comprehend the logical reasoning throughout analysing, internalizing, and offering new knowledge process. Hence, it is important to note that critical thinking skills can indeed help students to broaden their reading ability.

1.4 Objective of the Study

In this research, I focus on the narrative inquiry study of critical thinking skills in reading comprehension in Widya Mandala Catholic University. Furthermore, I would like to find out some of the objectives stated below:

1. Factors that hinder students in reading comprehension
2. The benefits of critical thinking skills in reading comprehension.
3. Students' views of being critical thinkers in reading comprehension.

1.5 Significance of the Study

In order to develop students' reading skills, I hope that this study will give some contribution to English Department development-especially in reading subject.

1. Lecturers of English Department:

I hope that this narrative inquiry study will broaden the lecturer's insights in critical thinking skills in reading comprehension. Therefore, lecturers can see students' experience in reading activity and can encourage them to enhance their aptitude for being a critical thinker.

2. Students of English Department:

This study aims to encourage students of the English Department in exploring their skills of becoming a critical reader. Besides, the research will also help them to evaluate their skills in applying critical thinking, so that they will be more proactive in providing new concepts or arguments whilst answering a passage.

1.6 The Scope and Limitation of the Study

In order to conduct this study, I will search for deeper information and self-experience towards students' critical thinking skills during reading comprehension. Furthermore, to make this narrative inquiry study more valid, 3 students from batch 2018 will be asked to do some interviews and fill out a questionnaire based on how they experience these two important terms.

1.7 Assumption

This study will answer the following assumption:

1. Students know the factors that can prevent their ability in reading comprehension.
2. Students are using critical thinking skills in reading comprehension, as it is beneficial for them to become critical thinkers.
3. Students have different experiences that will be beneficial for the development of critical thinking skills in reading comprehension.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

To give a clear concept of some terms used in previous point, I provide important definitions as follows:

1. **Narrative Inquiry** is a qualitative study which uses some stories as the raw data (as cited in Brown & Thompson, 2013).
2. **Reading process** is an interaction that happens between the text and readers, as mainly stated in (Sangia, 2018) where he explains that it needs some continuous aspect regarding treatment, development, and improvement.
3. According to Bloom Taxonomy **Cognitive process** can be seen as a mental thinking process, which involves six levels of cognitive, including; knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (referring to Hoque, 2016).

4. **Reading C** is one of the English department's series courses starting from Reading A to Reading D, where students are required to identify certain text's main idea, find supporting details, and generate new ideas in a passage. This course can only obtain in the 4th semester.