

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

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1.1 Background of the Study

The need of having broad valuable knowledge and information in education has been proposed by the Indonesia government to improve people's quality of life in facing the globalization era. In achieving this goal, the educational minister has placed reading as the main skill that should be acquired by students in order to have a wide horizon of the world. In the teaching of English as a foreign language, reading also has the biggest portion in the learning activities. Students are provided with facilities and services to explore the world of knowledge and technology through their reading skill. The idea of placing reading as the major skill in education has been supported by Wood (1980) who says that reading is the most important skill to teach since the majority of students who learn English as a foreign language may never speak English, but most of them still have to read English. Having the same opinion, Williamson (1988) states that reading is good for better acquisition since it promotes better spelling, better writing skill, higher reading comprehension, and more advanced vocabulary.

The success of reading can be achieved by having the ability to understand and comprehend the reading text thoroughly. In understanding a text fully, readers should not only be able to understand the literal meaning written on it , but also be able to interpret and comprehend the implied meaning hidden behind the

written statements. As Wood (1980) states that in reading, the reader should know the explicit ideas, the detailed information, the implied meaning, and also the author's intention. Reading in college will be different from the one that students have in senior high school. In college students will find more kinds of reading materials such as reports, journal, articles, essays, advertisements, and editorials. Those kinds of reading materials often contain implied meanings of the writers in persuading or arguing opinions. Therefore, the skill of reading in college doesn't consist of an ability to understand the written text only, but it also requires the capabilities to understand the unwritten ideas, to infer the meaning, to judge or to evaluate opinions, and also to solve the stated problem. In other words, a reader can not just move his/her eyes across the lines of prints and then accept all written information directly. He/she needs to understand and evaluate what is read.

In fact the writer realizes that most college students who study English as a foreign language ignore the truthfulness of what is read. They just read the passage, try to understand the literal meaning and then accept all the information in the text as it is. This is because most students believe that the key to reading is just learning how to decode words. They don't learn how to comprehend what they read, how to make inferences, how to give responses, or how to make judgements about the text. As a result, those students have problems in expressing their own ideas about the text, understanding the author's implied meaning, and can not judge the content of the text without considering it further whether it's worth reading or not. This may not be a problem if the author writes the text based on the real evidence that can be accounted for its truth. However, authors

are humans. They can make mistakes, exaggerate, over generalize or sometimes just include their influences or emotion in writing a text without considering the truth of what they write. These authors just want the readers to know and accept their ideas, opinion, or arguments. If readers just read and take the ideas of the text without considering them further, it won't be impossible that those readers will have the wrong perception about something.

Based on this condition, the writer proposed a reading technique namely, critical reading that was aimed to help college students improve their reading ability through making inferences, analyzing, judging, and evaluating the author's opinion on something. This technique had been technically applied in the previous experimental study (in 1998) conducted by the writer and had scientifically proved to be able to improve the students' reading achievement. However, the writer has recently observed that the application of critical reading technique in the reading classes nowadays doesn't optimally reach the expected goals. Some students who receive this technique in class are having great improvement in their reading skill. However there are also some other students who do not get meaningful improvement in their reading ability. This second part of students, still face difficulties in understanding a text and have problems in answering critical questions. Viewing this condition, the writer is eager to find out what makes different students get different results. According to Spolsky (1988:386) what makes the second language learning successful is both the linguistic and nonlinguistic capabilities owned by the learners. The non-linguistic capabilities of language learners such as learning aptitude, learning style and

learning strategies are factors that are mostly overlooked by language teachers but play an important role on their success. This author's statement becomes the writer's starting point to investigate what cognitive learning style and what reading strategies that learners use in reading. A study about learning style was also done by Diptoadi (1991). This study showed a significant correlation between students' learning style and their reading achievement. This means that learning style has an influence on students' reading ability. Another factor that makes reading achievement different for every student is his/her reading strategies that are believed to have a relation with his/her learning style. Reading strategy is also one of the non-linguistic capabilities that have a role in reading. It is adopted and developed by learner from previous training that certainly influences the reading achievement.

Having this basic interpretation about the influence of learning style and reading strategies on the students' reading achievement, the writer intends to conduct a study in finding the truth that different Cognitive Learning Styles enable students to have different Reading Ability. In another point, the writer is also eager to find out the types of Reading Strategies used by different types of learner in their reading activity.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

Reading the background information above, the writer would like to investigate some major and minor problems as stated as follows;

The first major question

1. Do Cognitive Learning Styles give an effect on the Reading Ability of the fourth semester English Department students?

This first major question has some minor questions as elaborated below;

- a. Do Cognitive Learning Styles give an effect on the Reading Ability of the fourth semester English Department students in answering knowledge question?
- b. Do Cognitive Learning Styles give an effect on the Reading Ability of the fourth semester English Department students in answering comprehension question?
- c. Do Cognitive Learning Styles give an effect on the Reading Ability of the fourth semester English Department students in answering application question?
- d. Do Cognitive Learning Styles give an effect on the Reading Ability of the fourth semester English Department students in answering analysis question?
- e. Do Cognitive Learning Styles give an effect on the Reading Ability of the fourth semester English Department students in answering synthesis question?
- f. Do Cognitive Learning Styles give an effect on the Reading Ability of the fourth semester English Department students in answering evaluation question?

Besides finding out the effect of Cognitive Learning Styles on the students' Reading Ability, the writer would also like to know about the reading strategies that are used by the students. Therefore the second major question is;

2. Do the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use different reading strategies?

The minor questions of the second major question above are;

- a. Do the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use Resourcing strategy?
- b. Do the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use Imagery 1 strategy?
- c. Do the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use Imagery 2 strategy?
- d. Do the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use Elaboration strategy?
- e. Do the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use Note Taking strategy?
- f. Do the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use Key Word Method 1 strategy?
- g. Do the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use Key Word Method 2 strategy?
- h. Do the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use Grouping 1 strategy?

- i. Do the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use Grouping 2 strategy?
- j. Do the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use Inferencing 1 strategy?
- k. Do the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use Inferencing 2 strategy?
- l. Do the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use Inferencing 3 strategy?
- m. Do the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use Deduction 1 strategy?
- n. Do the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use Deduction 2 strategy?
- o. Do the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use Transferring strategy?
- p. Do the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use Translating strategy?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the research questions above, the research objectives of this study are :

- 1. To see whether Cognitive Learning Styles give an effect on the Reading Ability of the fourth semester English Department students.

2. To see whether the fourth semester English department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use different reading strategies.

1.4 Hypothesis

There are two research hypotheses that can be drawn from the problems above. They are;

1. It is said that Cognitive Learning Styles give an effect on the Reading Ability of the fourth semester English Department students.
2. It is said that the fourth semester English Department students who have different Cognitive Learning Styles use different Reading Strategies.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study is limited to find out the effect of cognitive learning style on the students' reading ability. Besides, It is organized to know whether the learners that have different Cognitive Learning Styles are using different reading strategies. The populations of this study are the fourth semester English department students of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya. The writer chooses the fourth semester students as the population of this study because those students are considered as advanced learners who have acquired enough vocabulary in English and have got some reading subjects. From the six classes of the fourth semester students, the writer takes several classes as the pilot and sample of the study. As the fourth semester students, these students are having their Reading C subject which also uses critical reading technique in their reading

classes. In getting the data of this study, the subjects are given a set of tests (GEFT, a reading test, and a self-reported survey) which are analyzed using certain statistical tools. (as explained in chapter 3). There will be only two types of groups used for this study. One group is used as a pilot group which is used to measure the reliability and validity of the test items and the other group is used as the subject of this study where the main data are taken to answer all of the research problems.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The results of this study are expected to give theoretical contribution to the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia. In getting the scientific results that deal with learning style and reading strategies, further researchers are expected to use these findings to conduct or support studies which investigate other language skills such as listening, writing or speaking. The ways students use their logical thinking, experiences, or ideas which may be related to their learning styles are later expected to become another theoretical support for other studies.

The results of this study are also expected to give practical contribution to the learning teaching practice for reading classes in colleges. For the students, the study is expected to help them realize their own learning style, understand their characteristics in reading that enable them to choose the best reading strategies. In doing this, students are expected to improve their ability in mastering reading texts and enable them to give response or judgement on author's opinion

appropriately. While for the teacher, this study can be used to improve his/her way of teaching reading by understanding that different students have different ways of learning. Teachers are also expected to apply the best approach to learning and help students to readjust themselves to the learning condition in which they work best.

1.7 Assumptions

Learning from many theories of reading, cognitive learning styles and reading strategies, there are some assumptions can be drawn for this study. The students' reading ability seemed to be directly influenced by the individual learner's characteristics. Learner's characteristics that has become a style in learning will influence their way of doing something, in this case is reading. Therefore it's no doubt that students' reading ability is not always determined by the technique applied only, but also by the learning style that students have.

Since every individual is different, his/her way in facing something is also unique in some ways. The same technique that we introduce to them is not adopted exactly the same way. This is because each learner has a learning style that characterizes his/her ways in doing something. In reading, each learner has his/her own strategies to understand the passage which results differently. The assumption which says that learners use different strategies in reading based on the learning style they have are stated by some authors as found in chapter two.

Learning from the characteristics, FI learners are believed to have different strategies from FD learners. Analytical learners (FI) are believed to be good at

analyzing, organizing, looking for details from certain concepts, and retaining prior knowledge. However global or holistic learners are assumed to be better at viewing something as a whole, remembering things from pictures, using imagination, discussing social problems. However, to have scientific and trustworthy proof on this assumption, therefore the writer needs to conduct the study.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

In completing this study, the writer uses some major theories, they are theories of reading, schema, metacognitive, cognitive learning style and also reading strategies. The writer chooses reading as the underlying theory because reading is the main language skill discussed in this study. Reading as supported by many authors is mainly an interacting process between the reader's understanding on the written text and the author's stated idea. To enable readers comprehend what the author means, they should not just translate and construct meaning of it. By reading, students should derive its constructed and reconstructed meaning which include the author's intended messages, their intentions, and inferences.

Besides reading, the other basic theory that will be used in this study is schema theory. It is a theory that has the main role in reading comprehension process. A schema is a structured prior knowledge in the brain that has roles in reading comprehension. It has function to activate appropriate memories of past experiences and relate them to the new information in text. The opinion of some authors such as Pirozzolo and Wittrock (1981) stated that there are two important

role of schema in reading comprehension. The first is to provide some organization to the past experience or information that will be used in understanding the text. This organization enables readers to retrieve stored information easily and place it into the new text information. The second important role of schema is to provide an incoming information that is not given by a text. This means that the readers should make inferences by getting the information from memory and try to have an understanding that goes beyond the text itself.

Other theory that is discussed in this study is metacognitive theory. It is related to the ideas of how readers use his abilities in understanding the text being read. The objective of reading is to understand the text thoroughly. In achieving this, therefore an effective and mature reader always has an awareness and a conscious control of his own learning. He knows about the text he reads, the task he has, the strategies he applies, and also the learning characteristics he has. When a reader has applied those things in his reading, it means that he has used his metacognition. However we have to realize that not all readers are good or mature, there are also readers who have no awareness or conscious control upon his metacognitive activities. Those readers may have problems in understanding the text they read.

Cognitive learning style is also one of the basic theories that needs to be discussed in this study. It is an individual characteristic of responding to and processing learning events as he/she experiences them. It reflects on one's mode of perceiving, remembering, and thinking which is originally adopted when he/she

is brought up. Based on a certain research on learning style, Reid (1995) purposed an interpretation that there are two dimensions of learners, they are Field Independent and Field Dependent. Those two dimensions reflect to different characteristics of each learner. Field Independent learners tend to approach things analytically. They are likely to either analyze a field when the field is organized or impose structure on a field when the field lacks organization of its own. They are prone to be impersonal and have self-defined goals or reinforcements. This kind of learner has more intrinsic motivation in learning and learns concepts more rapidly when the salient cue is irrelevant to the definition of the concepts. Field Dependent learners tend to approach things globally or holistically. They are more likely to go along with the field as it is without using process of analyzing or structuring. However this kind of learner is more attentive to social cues and interested in interacting, socializing with other people. They tend to be better at learning and remembering social material but really uninterested in learning complicated structures. Since the two styles above have become ones' characteristics in learning, they also become a factor in the way ones read and comprehend things differently from others.

This study also discusses some theories of reading strategies. As elaborated in chapter two that learners need certain reading strategies to reach comprehension. Some reading specialists have indicated the use of reading strategies by every learner as stated by Barnett (1989:66) that second and foreign language readers tend to improve their reading abilities with strategies they apply in reading. Barnett also defines the term strategies as "... the mental operations

involved when readers purposefully approach a text to make sense of what they read...” These may be either conscious techniques controlled by the reader or unconscious processes applied automatically.

1.9 Definition of the Key Terms

There are some important key terms used to understand this study, they are;

1. ***Reading Ability*** is reading critically with deep understanding to obtain thorough comprehension about the ideas stated and unstated on the text. To show an understanding, the readers should be able to express and to give response to the content of the text through interpreting, evaluating, synthesizing and reacting.
2. ***Schema or schemata*** are functions in the brain that store, infer, interpret, organize and retrieve information in the past and connect it to the present information exist in order to get an overall understanding.
3. ***Cognitive learning style*** is an individual’s characteristic method of responding to and processing learning events as he/she experiences them. It reflects on one’s mode of perceiving, remembering and thinking. There are two main types of cognitive learning styles, they are; Field Independence and Field Dependence

Field Independence (FI) is a style of learning which tends to approach tasks analytically.

Field Dependence (FD) is a style of learning which tends to approach tasks holistically or globally.

4. **Reading Strategies** is an individual way that a learner has to manage the interaction with written text using the new concepts and prior knowledge he /she has in order to get comprehension.

1.10 Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. The first chapter discusses the background of the study. The second chapter deals with some related literatures that support the writer's study. The third chapter contains detail information about methodology of the study. The fourth chapter consists of the presentation and the discussion of the data findings. And as the last chapter, chapter five, the writer gives conclusion and suggestions of the study.