Chapter One

Introduction

The contents of this chapter focus on discussing the background of the study, identification of the problem, delimitation of the problem, formulation of the problem, objectives of the research, and significance of the research. It starts with the importance of the variables and actors underlying this investigation. Various problems relevant to the topics of reading strategies are defined to find the subject of the study. The research questions are also systemized, and this analysis offers a specific aim to be accomplished.

Background of the Study

In the past forty years, reading activities in second or foreign language have taken place and become an important component in the language learning process (Zoghi et al., 2010). This importance has made reading an important topic in education policy and practices for English-speaking learners. (Slavin & Cheung, 2005). Maarof and Yaacob (2011) define reading as a cognitive and complex process where the main activity is extracting meaning from text into a form of understanding to be stored in student memory. Reading also is an individual work, where each reader will have a different interpretation of the text from other readers. They added if the student is an active participant in the reading process and creating meaning from the details in the reading text.

Apart from the statements that have been stated by the experts above, Foertsch (1998) stated that there are three basic concepts of reading skills that encourage literacy programs in America. In the first concept, Foertsch's study

said that learning to read equals learning how to pronounce words. Then, according to the second concept, learning to read means learning to recognize words and to get their meaning. According to the third concept, learning to read means learning to add meaning to a text in order to get meaning out of it (as cited in Akarsu & Harputlu, 2014, p. 61-62).

Of the three basic concepts proposed by Foertsch (1998) in this study, the researcher focused on the third concept, which is 'learning to read means learning to add meaning to a text in order to get meaning out of it.' This happens because this study used academic texts as the main variable. The academic texts here is referred to textbooks, research proposals, journal articles, conference papers, blog articles, essays, reports, reviews, thesis, and other academic texts as learning media in the classroom. In reading academic texts, students must understand the meaning and context as a whole in order to get the intended knowledge, and it fits in with the third concept.

Many people are aware, in reading, especially in reading academic texts, learners have goals that must be achieved but do they know if this goal can only be reached if the learners use reading strategies? As stated by Poole (2010), "Learners must use reading strategies in order to plan their reading activity and improve their reading comprehension" (p. 55). Reading strategies are important because they can help learners read and give them a clear sense of direction about what they are actually digesting when reading (Aziz et al., 2011). Similarly, they believed that students had used their own reading strategy without them knowing

it. However, most of the students who do reading activities do not know what reading strategies they used because they might not know what kinds of reading strategies.

Based on the researcher's personal experience, the use of different reading strategies occurred based on gender differences. In fact, researchers can see those female students sometimes have intense reading strategies, such as reading before class starts and underlining important sentences. Meanwhile, male students prefer to read impromptu and interpret English reading into Indonesian to make it easier to understand. Saengpakdeejit (2014) in his study found that gender played a role in affecting the frequency of strategy use; female students used problem solving strategies and support strategies significantly more frequently than male students. From the result based on other research, the researchers have the interest to explore more deeply the use of reading strategies of each gender and prove it quantitatively.

Talk about reading strategies, Winograd and Hare (1999) described strategies as deliberate acts that learners choose and manage to achieve the desired goal or objectives (as cited in Aziz et al., 2011). Finding reading strategies that can be used effectively to improve or assist students in understanding reading materials, such as academic material, can be very helpful in determining which strategies can be suggested for students. Cogmen and Saracaloglu (2009) said that simple methods such as taking notes, underlining, or highlighting the text could help readers understand the content or context of reading better. From their research, it was found that good readers use effective reading strategies to increase

their comprehension. Therefore, having a reading strategy is needed so that understanding of English texts increases, especially academic materials.

There has been a myriad of studies investigating the use of reading strategies by students in learning English as a foreign language. This research study brings several conclusions that are the same as each other, as in the research of Chen, K. T. C., and Chen, S. C. L. (2015) study, it is shown that Taiwanese high school students often use reading strategies when reading English texts and Global-Reading Strategies are the dominant strategies used. Then study conducted by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2001) revealed that non-native readers frequently used reading strategies; thus, their metacognitive awareness was high. On the other hand, Yuksel (2011) found that Turkish EFL students at the university level usually applied reading strategies in academic reading. However, this study investigated the attitudes of Indonesian EFL students majoring in English Language Education regarding the use of reading strategies. This is supported by the consistent use of academic English texts such as textbooks, journal article and other in each subject or class as learning material. The researcher also considers the development of technology that makes students rely more on search engine tools to translate or finding information rather than reading English textbooks independently. Whereas stated by Kahraman (2017), in modern time, one can access thousands of reading sources on almost any subject using only a search engine compared to reading physical books, which may have limited resources, using a search engine is felt to be much more practical and efficient because when reading books, students will come into direct contact with piles of paper where

most students do not have the patience to read each word one by one. In addition, this research is conducted on prospective English teachers who are still relatively rare in Indonesia. Then, the researcher also wants to know what the most used reading strategies are perceived by each gender and find out if there are differences in the strategies used by male and female students. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate three of them.

Identification of the Problem

According to the researcher's previous experience, many students in the English Language Education Department have problems in reading English texts because they do not have the specific strategies needed for efficient reading. When students read texts that are not in their native language, many students stated that reading is a very tiring, unpleasant, and unsuccessful activity, no matter how much they try. Then it is getting worse when most EFL learners feel if they have difficulty reading academic texts or materials. As written above, most EFL learners do not like to read in English, and it is especially when reading academic materials. Simply because students just cannot understand what they are reading.

Based on the researcher's informal observation, students do not know anything about reading strategies. They only thought that reading English academic texts means read the texts, and if they do not understand it, they will repeat reading the text or translate it until they have the knowledge they need. It can be understood if the students find it difficult to read academic texts that are not in their first language. They do not know what strategies suit them since their knowledge of reading strategies is low, and even if they know, students still have

problems deciding what strategies they belong with. Interestingly, if we talk about reading strategies, there are many factors that influence it. Anderson (1991) stated that some factors like age, academic discipline, sex, level of readers' proficiency, type of text, and task demands also might affect their preferences on reading strategies (as cited in Akarsu & Harputlu, 2014). Hence, in this study, the researcher believed with the variation of the gender of the students, the reading strategies must be varied.

In the English Language Education Department (ELED), used as a research site, all students learn from reading-based English textbooks without the use of suitable reading strategies. It is known based on the experience of the researcher where during her study in the ELED, she used textbooks to learn without using proper reading strategies. Moreover, she felt that other students felt the same way as her. In addition, several studies in recent decades have analyzed reading strategies, but none of them have used specifically English Language Education students as respondents. The present study examines the current use of reading strategies among university students, especially students of the ELED, and identifies gender-specific differences in the use of strategies.

Delimitations of the Problem

This research study was only carried out within the scope of fifth-semester students of the ELED. The setting of this research study is in one of the private Universities located on the side of Yogyakarta city. This research focuses on investigating the strategies of reading used by fifth-semester students of English language education, especially in the term reading academic materials. The

purpose of this study also to discover the variation of reading strategies regarding the learner's gender.

The reading strategies have been studied previously and have been divided into three categories, namely Global Reading Strategy, Problem Solving Strategy, and Support Reading Strategy by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002). This research is conducted to analyze which of those three categories that the learners used the most while reading academic materials. In addition, this research also focuses on investigating whether there are variations in reading strategies used by male and female students.

Any factors such as students' previous academic discipline, motivation, attitude, personality traits, cultural contexts, and other factors were not included in this study. Therefore, the researcher suggests other studies to conduct research by correlating reading strategies with the factors previously mentioned. It is hoped that this research will bring benefits and add insight both to the departments or educational institutions concerned so that they can help improve their learning.

Research Questions

Based on the research background above, the researcher concludes the research questions as follows:

1. What are the ELED students' most used reading strategies when reading academic texts?

2. What reading strategies are most commonly used by male and female students in ELED when reading academic texts?

3. Do different gender use different strategies when reading academic texts?

Research Objectives

Based on the objectives, the purposes of this research study are:

1. To show what reading strategies are most used by ELED students when reading academic texts.

2. To show the most used reading strategies based on male and female students' attitudes when reading academic texts.

3. To discover the variation of reading strategies on reading academic texts based on the learner's gender.

Significance of the Research

The result of the study is hoped to benefit the following parties and might be helpful for:

Students

All the students in the intended department are expected to be able to identify what reading strategies that suit their preferences. Also, the students will be able to identify the reading strategies that other students use in the department mentioned. The researcher hopes students will have a plentiful knowledge of reading strategies, which will help the students use suitable reading strategies in learning the language. Moreover, by knowing the gender preferences on reading strategies, students are expected to have a recommendation on what strategy they will use according to their gender.

Lecturers

The lecturers will receive an insight into the language reading strategies that most of the students use in their department so that they can adjust their teaching strategies based on their students' reading strategies. Moreover, the information on gender differences in reading strategies may help the lecturer to differentiate the students' reading strategies based on gender, which will lead them to make a different approach to male and female students.

The Department

This research is expected to provide insight into student reading strategies and help departments to adjust and provide appropriate learning facilities and policies. Thus, students can improve their learning process and provide significant achievements for the department.

Other Researchers

Research might help other researchers researching with the same variables. Other researchers can consider this research as a comparison in previous studies of students' perceptions of the reading strategies used and whether these strategies vary by gender.