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. The importance of the variables and actors underlying this investigation is presented first. Afterwards, various problems relevant to the notion and phenomenon are defined to find the subject of the study. Moreover, the research questions are also presented along with specific aims to be accomplished.

Background of the Study

Reading is one of the most significant skills to master in language learning. This statement is in line with Aripovna (2020) that stated reading as one of the significant skills that play an important role in teaching and learning foreign language. Moreover, reading a variety of topics would build knowledge about the world and language competence. Grabe (1991) pointed out that reading is interactive when the reader makes use of information from their background knowledge as well as information from the printed text. Based from the previous statements, reading plays an important role in language learning as one of the ways to obtain information.

However, most of learners are not interested in reading activities. This fact was revealed in a study by Central Connecticut State University in the US with the book titled "World Literacy: How Countries Rank and Why It Matters" (Miller & McKenna, 2016). Miller and McKenna (2016) placed Indonesia on

the 60th position out of 61 countries in terms of reading interest. The students avoid the books in fields like science, history, and math which carry the substance of education (Guthrie, 2012). They would read only because their teacher asked them to read and they read because the learning material is in the textbook.

Learners who are uninterested in reading activities barely reach a reading achievement while learners who are engaged in reading would develop their reading skill and achieve reading achievements. This is in line with Guthrie (2012) who stated that engagement in reading is crucial to the development of reading comprehension skills and reading achievement. Learners with high engagement level show more gain in reading competencies than students with lower engagement level. The learners with good reading engagement would find it easier to understand the material; thus, they would be more likely to attain reading achievement.

Nevertheless, a large number of learners did not enjoy their reading activity because they were unmotivated or disengaged in reading. Disengaged students were reported to feel anxious, bored, or frustrated (bad) (Skinner, 2008). Disengaged feeling could burden students in reading activities during the learning process that aims to gain accomplishment. Otherwise, students need to be engaged in reading to help them reach a satisfactory reading achievement.

Furthermore, engagement is a wide phenomenon that includes academic, non-academic, and social aspects of students' experience. At a specific level of analysis, engagement is taken to provide and qualify ways of examining

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whether students engage in their studies and learning community in some way. Moreover, reading engagement is defined as a combined function of reading elements which produces a reader who posesses the skill, desire, and ability to become deeply involved with a text (Whitaker, 2009). Students who engaged in reading activity would feel the enjoyment from their reading activity which would boost their reading behaviour towards improvement. From this statement, students who already considered their goals, expectations, and hopes would become engaged in English reading class; making it easier for them to be involved in their reading activity.

Students with high reading engagement might become readers who read with pleasure. According to Cullinan (2000), students who read with pleasure scored higher on standardized tests in all subject areas and developed more knowledge. Clark and Rumbold (2006) also stated that reading for pleasure is defined as reading done in anticipation of the satisfaction reading would bring, because the readers found that reading is interesting which leads to their engaging moments in reading. This condition is considered as important since students who engaged in reading activities would read with pleasure because they might find the subject matter interesting for them.

The importance of reading engagement has been discussed by different experts. First, a study by Vongkrachang and Chinwonno (2015) aimed to examine the effect of explicit reading instruction as an approach to Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) framework on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' engagement. The study found that the students improved their reading

comprehension and engagement after the implementation of CORI approach using the Reading Engagement Index which indicated positive changes in aspects of reading engagement. The study by Valenzuela (2015) aimed to analyse the Chile students' achievement with emphasis on analysing the roles that reading engagement can play. The result of this study explained that reading attitudes and engagement would provide a more accurate fit for explaining outcomes.

Another study by McBride (2017) aimed to see the effect of choice on children's reading comprehension and engagement. The research examined studies related to students' reading engagement and measurement of reading comprehension. The research showed that the participants who were given a choice in reading scored higher in reading comprehension than when they were assigned a reading and the students who felt enjoyment in reading activity would engage in reading and face less struggle in improving their reading comprehension. Previous three studies discussed reading engagement; however, none of them discussed the measurement of reading engagement.

In this context, Indonesia is known as a country with a dissatisfactory predicate in terms of reading interest. The study by Iftanti (2015) explained that the EFL students' showed positive beliefs about reading English. However, most of them are indicated not to have good English reading habits. Hence, if they posses low interest in reading, their chances of feeling engaged in what they read is also limited. To avoid said problem, several teachers attempt to cultivate students' reading interest in their teaching practice.

In a more specific context, which is in a private university in Yogyakarta,

Indonesia, the researcher observed that teachers put effort to engage students in reading activity. On the first semester, the teachers implemented free reading approach in which students were allowed to choose English books to read. One particular class that allowed students to choose their book was the Basic Reading and Writing course. After reading, the teachers gave students activities such as creating poster, creating comic strips, taping book recommendation video, and other fun activities. One of the teachers also mentioned that the strategy of using free reading and fun activities after reading aimed to motivate students to read so they would be ready to enrol next semester courses that mostly demand students to read academic texts such as journal articles and textbooks. Based on a preliminary interview with students who joined the course, it was revealed that the teachers' efforts gained positive responses. The students enjoyed most of the activities they did after reading. Thus, said positive feeling might indicate their reading engagement to be probably high.

However, that statement was only derived from two students. Hence, the researcher was intrigued to obtain quantitative result that could depict the real condition regarding students' engagement in the institution by conducting this current research.

Identification of the Problem

Several problems related to reading engagement were identified from preliminary observation conducted by the researcher in the reading and writing course. First, the problem deals with teachers' strategies to engage students to read. It has been discussed that the teachers applied several strategies to attain

students' motivation and engagement in reading English books. From all of the strategies, it has not been revealed which ones were more or less effective.

Second, in the implementation, students read their selected books. This indicated that students could choose the books that were comfortable to read. However, choosing own book was not that easy because not all of the students successfully found books that engaged them. Some of them even got lost when deciding the books to read.

Third, students' engagement in reading English books with a particular treatment from the teachers had not yet identified. There were still lack of knowledge regarding reading engagement in EFL context. In fact, the level was a predictor for students' reading interest and motivation which should be improved to help students for their next semesters filled with reading activities using more challenging materials.

Delimitations of the Problem

This research study was only executed within the scope of first semester students of the English Language Education Department (ELED). The setting of this research study was at one of the private universities located in Yogyakarta. This research focused on measuring the reading engagement level of first-semester students of ELED on English books that they chose themselves.

Reading engagement had been previously studied and had plenty of aspects to be observed. However, the researcher delimited this study by only percieving the engagement through three aspects namely task value, anxiety, and

flow. Other categories such as behavioral, emotional, and cognitive, which were based on some experts, would not be discussed in this study.

Research Questions

Based on the research background, the researcher concluded the research questions as follows:

1. How are the first-year students' reading engagement level?

2. What aspect of reading engagement would be the highest, moderate, and the lowest in the sequence?

Research Objectives

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

1. To reveal the ELED students' reading engagement level.

2. To reveal the aspects of ELED students' reading engagement classified as the highest, moderate, and the lowest level.

Significance of the Research

The result of the study was expected to benefit the following parties:

Students

Students in the intended department are expected to be able to identify the level of their reading engagements as well as other students in the department. Students are expexted to posses a broader knowledge of reading engagements which will help them to understand which aspects that they use; thus, they will be more engaged in the reading activity. By knowing their reading engagement level,

students are expected to increase their reading engagement to help them obtain reading achievement. Moreover, students are expected to recognize what aspect that mostly helps them to engage in reading activity.

Lecturers

Lecturers will receive an insight towards the reading engagement level of the students in their department; hence, they can identify which students are struggling or those who are at risk regarding reading disengagement and academic failure. Moreover, the information of the sequence of reading engagement level can be used by lecturers to examine students' involvement, attitude, and anxiety in reading activity. Therefore, lecturers can look for suitable teaching strategies for their students which will lead them to make different approaches.

Other Researchers

This research is expected to be a reference to help other researchers to conduct studies using similar or same topic. Other researchers can consider this research as a previous study to compare the measurement of students' reading engagement level and to know whether each student's engagement is varied.