

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Reading comprehension is a very basic skill that students must master because it is such a bridge that connects the incoming written knowledge or information and the mind's capability to master it. Without the ability of reading, there would be a gap between the two things above and they would never be connected. According to Rutzler (2020) without proper comprehension skills, students cannot understand what they read. Mostly, students read a lot of text but barely catch the point from the text especially when reading foreign language text. It needs much more effort to catch the point of the text compare with reading native language text.

Some students with a learning difficulty in reading comprehension can read aloud with little or no difficulty pronouncing words, but they do not understand or remember what they have read (Logsdon, 2019). The problems of reading comprehension affect further academic areas. It can transform into much more complicated problems. Lack of interest and attention to the materials is an example of the impact. Lack of interest and attention is another word of having no passion or motivation where it is a tool that helps us to reach our aims in the study. As Slavin (1997, p.345) described in a general sense, motivation is what gets you going, keeps you going, and determines where you are trying to go. As it is obvious, motivation gives us a direction to follow.

Reading comprehension is considered a major problem of students worldwide especially for EFL learners. Several studies have shown that most EFL learners often have difficulties in comprehending English texts. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) stated that reading difficulties among primary school learners are an issue of concern in any society. Chawwang, (2008) investigated English reading problems among Thai EFL learners, and he found that most of the students face difficulties in reading English texts. Vogel (1998) as cited in Chen and Chen (2015) stated that about 52% of adults with L2 reading comprehension problems had difficulties in learning a foreign language. The results of these studies show that there are numerous problems in reading comprehension faced by EFL learners.

The researcher took some study results in several countries as examples to support the theories above. In Indonesia, according to the result data of the 2019 National Final Examination published by the official website of the Indonesian Education Ministry, the percentage of Indonesian junior high school students who failed in the social function aspect is 46.89%. Meanwhile, 51.81% reported failed in the aspect of the structural text. The rest, as much as 56.63% failed in the linguistic elements aspect (Kemdikbud, 2019). Overall, nearly half of this nation's students are failing in English typically in reading comprehension. The similar results of students' failure in reading comprehension also occur in Thailand. According to the reading test results conducted by The Office of the Basic Education Commission (Obec), from the 444,000 sixth grade students who took the test, 7,880 (1.77%) were unable to read, 6,750 (1.52%) students were able to read but need improvement, 14,600 (3.2%) were able to read but failed to understand, and 51,580 (11.6%) were able to

read but understood only a little (Bangkok Post, 2013). The high numbers of bad study results among these countries' students proved that poor reading comprehension is such a fundamental problem in learning achievement.

Based on the results of the data above, English reading comprehension is considered as a difficult skill to master even the teaching-learning process are commonly provided with their native languages to make them easy to understand and receive the incoming English materials. We can conclude that learning a foreign language would be much harder if we learn it through another foreign language. That is what is experienced by international students. The majority of students have to cope with the problem of language adaptation during their first year of study (Ibragimova & Tarasova, 2017). It is not easy for international students to adapt to a new language, which is completely different from their native language, to be spoken daily and frequently. As Arthur (2004) discussed, issues such as culture shock, alienation, and even simple things in daily life that may have a psychological impact on international students, which in turn may cause them to experience serious problems related to their academic and social experiences.

In this respect, the researcher found a phenomenon where several international students from Thailand learning English in Indonesia, more specifically at the English department of the University of Muhammadiyah Jember. The researcher took two samples of those international students from Thailand. They are studying at the English Department of the University of Muhammadiyah Jember. The taken samples are in the sixth semester.

A previous research with the same purpose was already conducted by Cahyono (2018) from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences of the University of Muhammadiyah Jember. The research aimed to find out what the barriers of intercultural communication among the Thai students and how they overcome the barriers. The research took 31 samples consist of Thai students of various faculties of the University of Muhammadiyah Jember. In general, the barriers were grouped into two types; academic and non-academic barriers. The barriers of academic aspects make impacts on subject matter mastery, book/reading comprehension, assignment skills, and information technology application. Moreover, most of them barely speak and understand Indonesian fluently. The research resulted that language differences became the main barrier of these students on academic aspects, which makes the difficulties of their learning achievements, including reading comprehension, harder than the domestic students.

Based on the consideration, the researcher is interested to conduct a research with the title “The Analysis of Thai Students’ Difficulties in Learning English Reading Comprehension in Indonesia at the University of Muhammadiyah Jember”.

1.2 The problem of the Research

Concerning the conditions where the students are involved in this situation and the area of effects, some questions come up.

1. What are the difficulties of Thai Students of the University of Muhammadiyah Jember in learning English reading comprehension in Indonesia?
2. What factors caused the difficulties?

3. What are their techniques to overcome the difficulties?

1.3 Purpose of the Research

Concerning the problems above, the researcher stated the purpose of the research. Those are:

1. To describe the difficulties of Thai Students of the University of Muhammadiyah Jember in learning English reading comprehension in Indonesia.
2. To expound the factors that caused the difficulties among those Thai Students.
3. To find out the Thai Students' techniques in overcoming the difficulties.

1.4 Significance of the Research

This research can be a reference to understand the difficulties faced by foreign students such as in this case. It is expected to be useful for the development of teaching-learning that involve international students theoretically and practically. Furthermore, this research is expected to get the attention of any other researchers to create or complete the existing formula or techniques for foreign students.

1. Theoretical significances

The results of this research are expected to be useful to the development of educational purposes especially for institutions that involve international students. It is expected to get attention from any other researchers in developing future research. Furthermore, the results of this research can be a reference to conduct teaching-learning activities that involve international students.

2. Practical significances

a. For The Lecturers

It is important for the lecturers to measure the ability of the students in receiving the lesson materials. By doing so, the lecturers can give the proper materials for the students by choosing the right techniques or improving their ways of explaining to the International students, which have different abilities in receiving materials compare with the domestic students. The results of this research are expected can be guidance for the lecturers in mapping the exact barriers of those International students and providing what they actually need for a more effective learning process.

b. For The International Students

This research aims to ease the barriers of these students in learning. By giving more attention and proper treatment, it will be easier for them to understand the lesson and achieve their goals. They also can improve their techniques in learning most effectively.

c. For The Domestic Students

Domestic students are expected to know the difficulties faced by international students. By knowing the problems, they can give favors to their international student friends to ease the difficulties and language barriers. Friendships play a pivotal role in developing self- confidence and social skills and are known to impact the academic

success (Laurie Futterman, 2016). In this case, domestic students are expected to become a supportive environment for effective learning for international students.

1.5 The Operational Definition

The following terms were defined to avoid misunderstanding and misconceptions.

1. Reading comprehension is a further ability of reading. It is more than just ordinary reading which not scanning the messages of the text deeply. Reading comprehension is an ability to process text, understand its meaning, and to integrate with what the reader already knows. In this research, reading comprehension refers to the way the samples comprehending the text related to their English study, significantly in reading skills.
2. International students are the students who left their country and move to another country for the purpose of studying. In this research, the international students refer to Thailand students who are learning in Indonesia, more specifically at the English Department of the University of Muhammadiyah Jember.
3. Students' difficulties are barriers that are faced by students in receiving and understanding the incoming information or lesson materials during the learning process. In this research, the reading difficulties and barriers experienced by international students such as adapting new language, vocabularies, sentence structure, and decoding.

1.6 Scope of the Research

This research limited the area to two Thai English Department Students of the University of Muhammadiyah Jember. Both of them are in the 7th semester. The researcher conducted an analysis of reading comprehension difficulties and their currents techniques in overcoming the difficulties of those international students.

