

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the components that underlie the research consist of research background, research questions, research purposes, research significances, research framework, limitation of the problem and previous researches.

1.1. Research Background

Today the use of technology in learning activities becomes one of the purposes of language teaching. Facing the digital era, integration to technology becomes one of the purposes of learning approach since it provides the opportunity to prepare ICT (Information, Communication and Technology) skills for students as one of 21st century skills (Johnson, et al., 2012; National Educational Technology Standard, 2012; McDermott and Gormley, 2016). In line with that, Scott (2015) argues that ICT literacy skill is needed to prepare students in 21st century in their workplace and life. Hence, students will thrive and success in their future world. One of the uses of technology in the educational context is online learning.

Online learning increasingly has become the current issue on some recent researches in the context of language learning. It provides the opportunities for the teachers and students to develop language learning environment that is accessible everywhere and anytime. Khaddage et al. (2016) mentioned that online learning promotes learners' mobility and engagement in learning so they will not be restricted to physical location. It becomes an advantage since Blake (cited in Xodabande, 2017) mentioned integrating digital technologies such as online learning is very essential since the process of language learning is time-consuming. Its process needs a large input and interaction. Therefore, online learning can be a solution for this problem.

The use of online learning recently is believed that it can increase language learning especially reading as one of the important skills that should be

mastered in foreign language learning. In fact, reading becomes the problem of EFL class because it requires complex activities and many metacognitive aspects of a reader (Moore, 2016). The complexity of the reading process to produce meaning representation consists of processing the word visually, identifying the structure of language, connecting to syntax rules and integrating the prior knowledge to create the meaning representation (Kendeou et al., 2016). Thus, it makes the EFL learners are not easy to read academic texts. Those factors lead to an unsuccessful EFL reading class and become unsolved problem in Indonesia. Students are assumed that reading class is uninteresting and stressful since they face long reading text, unfamiliar vocabularies, and less of pre-reading activities (Firmanto, 2005; Masduqi, 2014).

In this technological era, mobile devices are the most used tool in students' daily life. It becomes the challenge for teachers since their engagement in traditional classes is frequently low as it is not their interest. In addition, Hazaea and Alzubi (2016) stated that EFL reading class has been criticized due to less exposure of EFL students in reading because it only provides in-class reading practice. As a consequence, it results in students' lack motivation, students' unpreparedness before the class, students' dependency on the teachers, and weak competition. Hence, teachers need to adjust the learning process with students' habits and needs (Tavakoli et al., 2019).

Using online learning in EFL reading class has drawn a positive perception of students. According to Hazaea and Alzubi (2018), EFL students prefer to choose online learning in reading lessons since it gives them a chance to learn autonomously without being limited by the setting of the classroom. Hence they can extend their learning in term of their reading time and space and also reading materials outside classroom. In addition, online learning makes the students focus on their lesson instead of asking about the meaning of new words or grammar. In line with that, Rahmawati (2016) stated that EFL students in general consider the online learning as it supports the additional learning

resources, encourages students to read, and helps passive students to be more active. Online learning is also considered as a flexible, simple, and fast learning tool. Those responses have proven that students are interested in using online reading class.

Based on researcher's limited observation, EFL students have different toward online reading class and faced some challenges in online reading class. Moreover, there are few studies that examined students' perception in online reading class. Examining students' perception and challenges of online learning are essential since it will identify the factors that affect the failure of online learning. Thus, it will help teachers and students to improve reading class quality through online learning.

1.2. Research Questions

Based on the background discussed above, the problems can be identified as follow:

- 1.2.1. How is EFL students' perception toward online reading class?
- 1.2.2. What are challenges found by EFL students during online reading class?

1.3. Research Purposes

Based on the research questions above, the purposes of the study can be identified as follow:

- 1.3.1. To reveal EFL students' perception toward online reading class.
- 1.3.2. To reveal challenges found by EFL students during online learning in reading class.

1.4. Research Significances

The result of this research can provide two significances, they are:

1.4.1. Practical Significance

This research is expected to provide some advantages for the lecturers who teach reading, for example as the evaluation for the learning materials and methods given in online reading class. In addition, this

research is also intended to identify the factors that influence the challenges and opportunities found in the online reading class based on students' perception toward online reading class.

1.4.2. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study can be beneficial information for the improvement of reading learning not only in UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung but also other universities that need this information for conducting online reading class.

1.5. Research Framework

Perception has been defined as a process of receiving stimulus through human sense which resulting a conscious experience. May (2007) mentioned perception as the process of observing the stimulus from the environment that captured by human receptor to become a conscious experience stimuli in the form of judgement resulted by human sense. Leonard (2012) stated that the process of perception consists of three steps: selecting, organizing, and interpreting. In the first step, human sense will select the stimuli that will be processed. After that, the stimuli will be organized and break out based on our instinctive cognitive. In the last process, the stimuli will be interpreted as a conscious experience.

According to Saks and Johns (2017) there are some components of perception and factors that influence perception. It consists of perceiver, target (perceived object) and situation. The factors that influence the perceiver in the process of perception are experience, motivational factor and emotional state. As the object includes physical and dynamical elements, there are some factors that influence perception such as size, contrast and intensity in the physical object. Meanwhile the factors in dynamical object include repetition and target arrangement. In the components of situation, the context of situation will influence the perception.

Perception has an important role in educational environment. Turner and Meyer (cited in Wallace et al., 2016) mentioned perception of learning environment is important for developing and evaluating teaching. Students' perception could draw the learning process naturally. In addition, it can be a reliable measure that contributes to the effective learning. Thus, the students' perception should be identified in order to improve the learning quality.

There are some experts that have defined online learning in many points of view. Evergreen Education Group (cited in Potts, 2019) explained that online learning is a course that primarily conducted in the internet which students and teacher take the course through online delivery system. The students and teacher are separated in distance. In line with that, Sriyanto and Kaniadewi (2019) mentioned online learning as innovative media that allows people for having experience educational environment to be accessed anytime and anywhere. Therefore, it can be concluded that online learning is a type of learning by using internet as an innovation which allows students and teacher to access wherever and whenever.

Online learning offers some opportunities for its users. Online learning environment can increase learners' metacognitive awareness and develop their problem-solving skill (Dunlap and Lowenthal, 2011; Song, 2016). Furthermore, students who use online learning get the benefit from it because they are prepared for their professional context for their future life. Students need to explore a higher quality of learning experiences for their future job in the digital era (O'Flaherty and Philips, 2015; Fisher et al., 2018). The use of online learning as the improvement of learning experience is an appropriate way in developing their skill for the future job. Another opportunity of using online learning is the flexibility to access the class, whether learning content or interaction everywhere and every time. Raes et al. (2020) stated the flexibility allows the interaction among students and teacher can be done in distance. In addition, Hazaea and Alzubi (2018) stated that online learning as the part of

MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) gives the chance to extend the learning time outside the class setting.

Utilizing online learning for teaching reading skill is a great deal since it has positive impacts for the learning process as the new learning environment. The result of teaching reading through online learning has shown better development in reading. Some researches also have highlighted the use of online learning in reading development such as better affective experience in the process of language learning by using internet, the increase of learner autonomy and the development of learning process (Lin et al., 2019).

Indeed, online learning comes with some challenges during its application in the learning process. The challenges of online learning can be defined as the problems and obstacles found in utilizing online learning. Therefore, the challenges in online learning should be solved in order to make the better quality of learning process. Sun (2014) mentioned two major challenges related to online learning: participation, collaboration and learning strategy. Participation has an important role in online learning environment. In fact, develop students' participation in online learning is difficult since the class is only limited in cyberspace. In addition, online learning will make students not easy to work with their peers as they could not share their experience and work. Another challenge in online learning is the learning strategy. Online learning environment make students to be more self-dependent. They have to manage and control their own learning. Some researches have reported that most students have difficulties in managing their learning time and pace.

Other than challenges in online learning, there are challenges in EFL reading class. The challenges found in reading class are lack of reading skill, lack of motivation, lack of innovative teaching and lack of reading strategy. Lack of reading skill such as lack of vocabulary mastery, inefficient lexical part, complexity of language structure (Rahman, 2007; Jayanti, 2016). Rukmini (cited in Masduqi, 2014) also cited that problems in Indonesian reading class in

the university level are students are lack of understanding in teachers' explanation and discussion of genres used in university level, lack of vocabulary mastery and repetitive teaching. Problems in reading class are also influenced by cultural background that will affect to their reading behavior.

1.6. Research Limitation

This study is limited only on describing English Education undergraduate students' perception toward online reading class in critical reading course. However, the perception of online learning will be different in the other contexts including the course subject and students level.

1.7. Previous Researches

Some researches have analyzed the perception of online learning in various types of student-level and countries. A research toward the perception related to challenges in online language learning has been studied by Sun (2014). Undergraduate students in New Zealand University who took fully online language class were participated by using mix method approach. The result found that there are three main issues related to online language learning: (1) collaboration/ teamwork includes working collaboratively, socializing with group, and finding suitable time to work together, (2) class participation includes getting engaged in class interaction, (3) self-management such as managing learning time and pace, keeping their motivation to learn.

Another study conducted by Jayanti (2016) has investigated the reading difficulties found in EFL reading class and compared students' and teachers' perception. The study involved 80 students of University of Bengkulu majoring English Department with the use of questionnaire. This study also involved 5 lecturers as the elaboration from students' perception. The result found students argued that the factors that make reading difficult during the class are syntactic and semantic analysis of the text, vocabulary mastery, their feeling during

reading and the use of reading strategy. The other challenge is lack of prior knowledge.

Another research by Rahmawati (2016) has analyzed students' perception of using online learning in their language class. The study involved 6 EFL undergraduate students in a private university in Indonesia. By the use of qualitative design, the students perceive that the online language learning reduce their social interaction and communication, lack of actual feedback from the lecturers, lack of ICT skill, less internet connection, increase the possibility of cheating and plagiarism, etc. The research has suggested that teachers/ instructors have to analyze students' need in order to increase the quality of online learning.

Since the previous researches have analyzed the perception of online language learning, online reading class and also reading perception, the present study is different. The present study explores the perception toward the challenge and opportunities of using online class in the extensive reading class in the context of Indonesian undergraduate students.

