

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the following subheadings: (1) background, (2) the problems of the study, (3) the objectives of the study, and (4) the significance of the study.

#### **1.1. Background**

English is a world language. It is the fastest-spreading language in human history. English is spoken at a useful level by some 1.75 billion people worldwide (Harvard Business Review [HBR], 2012). English is a tool to make communication in our life. Furthermore, people communicate in different ways to express our thoughts, feelings, knowledge, skills and ideas. The purpose in language teaching and learning is to ensure the use of four basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). One of the most fundamental skills is reading.

Reading is a way to get information for reader from the writer. Zaffarian and Nemati (2016, p. 53) define reading is a process of interaction between reader and the text, resulting in comprehension. The text includes letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs that encode meaning. Moreover, Juyandegan (2016, p. 304) states that reading as a cognitive process which includes transferring the written symbols by the reader through the eyes, so these symbols need understanding meaning and then integrating this meaning into personal experiences. In addition, Celce-Murcia (2001, p. 154) explains that reading is an interactive, socio-cognitive process involving a *text*, a *reader*, and a *social context*

within which the activity of reading takes place. Brown (2004, p. 185) also indicates that reading is likewise skill that educators simply expect students to acquire. Furthermore, Acheaw (2014, p. 2) argues that reading makes way for a better understanding of one's own experiences and it can be an exciting voyage to self-discovery. All in all, reading is understanding process and transferring knowledge between writer to reader.

In globalization era, reading is the most important academic skill (Bagheri & Sadeghi, 2013, p. 1641). Meanwhile, reading comprehension skill stands out in every field unexcept in a successful academic life (Memis, 2013, p. 1242). By reading, people can convey information, know world development, and gain new knowledge that will guide deep thinking. Ahmadi (2014, p. 75) explains why reading is very important, Firstly, learners continuously come across it in their daily life. Secondly, students need to study longer texts and articles and they will have to read a lot of reading texts in their academic endeavor. Therefore, without understanding the texts and improving their reading skill they cannot learn much. In line with the idea, Indonesian Constitution number 20 year 2003 about National Education System, chapter III has stated that one of the ways to accomplish education goal for all Indonesians is by developing their reading habit and literacy. In short, reading is very essential which open many doors about knowledge to guide better thinking and living aspect as human.

Despite the importance of reading, problem in reading are commonly faced by many people. Reading is complex skill. It is in line with Bagheri and Sadeghi (2013, p. 1641) who argue in spite of this crucial role of reading, some people still

have problems concerning reading. Andres (2002, p. 2) mentions that language learning is affected by both domains which are the mental and emotional sides of human behavior. Attraphacul (2013, p. 82) Duke & Pearson, p. 423) explore reading factors which contribute to text difficulties arise from some elements within the text, the knowledge base of individual reader, or the context of interaction n between the writer and the reader. Besides, within the text lie the unknown vocabulary, the complicated sentence structure as well as the organizational pattern. The individual reader approaches the same piece of text with different background knowledge, reading proficiency, and purpose. Those are potential problems which can avoid students to read. Lacking in reading skills, or even having lower ability than normal reading abilities can guide in truancy, underpaid jobs, and falling prey to the cycle of illiteracy in the next generations (Alharby, 2015, p. 1257). Having lower ability was happened in many countries, not except Indonesia.

Reading problem has become an old phenomenon in Indonesia. UNESCO (2012) reported Indonesians' reading habit is lower than other countries (singapore, korean, and japan) in Asian, Only 1 from 1000 Indonesia people who has good reading habit. Moreover, Indonesia people just read one book in a year compared to Japan people who can read 10-15 books, and American people who can read 20-30 books in a year. Also, PISA (2015) reported that reading skill in Indonesia stayed in the 7<sup>th</sup> position from the lowest. Whereas the average scores was 397 in 2015. It is lower than previous year, (i.g: 437) in 2009. Indonesia is far below the average, while among the East Asian countries which participated in

PISA (2015) the highest performance in reading literacy in respective order came from Singapore (535), Hongkong (527), Korea (517), and Japan (516) (The Ministry of Education and Culture Results of PISA (2015). Besides, Central Connected University (2016) informed in the category of “most literate nations in the world” Indonesia stayed in the 60<sup>th</sup> rank from 61 countries.

In fact, reading is affected by some factors. According to Brown (2004, p. 234), there are two factors in reading, linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Linguistic is a factor that comes from the language such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, etc. meanwhile, non-linguistic factor comes from the students’ personality or students’ psychology such as motivation, attitude, anxiety and autonomy. All in all, reading factors arise from inside and outside of the one as a reader. One of the factors is learner’s autonomy.

According to Thanasolus (2000, p. 117), in the domain of educational psychology, perhaps the clearest definition that can be given to learner autonomy is “the learner’s willingness and capacity to control or oversee ones’ own learning”. Moreover, Zaffarian and Nemati (2016, p. 53) state that autonomy is generally defined as the ability to deal with and to be responsible of one’s own learning. In addition, Zhe, (2009) states that autonomy is a process in which individuals accept responsibility for all the decisions concerned with their learning. It can concluded that learners’ autonomy is the ability to have responsibility and willingness to respect his/her learning.

Learner autonomy is the fundamental aspect that can support and hide students’ performance in learning. Learner autonomy which is achieved through

learner training and strategy training enable an individual to surpass the circumstances (Benson, 2001, p. 21). It is both a social and an individual construct. It involves the personal development of each student and, at the same time, interaction with others (La Ganza, 2001). Dafei (2007, p. 24) believes that one of the reasons why the relationship between autonomy and language proficiency, mainly reading proficiency, has become a critical debate in these years is that researchers have realized that effective learning is greatly influenced by independent self-directed learning. Zami and Gahremani (2010, p. 6) indicate that the learners become more aware of social context and recognize their borders, they gradually become independent and assume greater levels of autonomy. Little (1995) believes “autonomy is a capacity - for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action”. Thus, Learners who take responsibility for their own learning have higher probability to achieve their learning goals, and to keep a positive attitude regarding learning in the future (Dickinson, 1987).

Learners’ autonomy have essential roles which affect language learning achievement. Zami and Gahremani (2010, p. 6) explain some roles of learners’ autonomy in language learning, especially in reading. First, learners take an active role in language learning. Most educators agree that learners should decide the objective of their courses, what they should learn, what activities to use and how long to spend on each activity. In other words, learners should learn to be self-motivated and self-disciplined in autonomous situations. Second, the teacher is a facilitator in this process. Within the context of autonomous learning, the role of the teacher might not become superfluous. Birchley (2003) avows that the roles of

instructors in autonomous learning situations are resource person, language model, motivator, leader, facilitator, counselor and knowledge transmitter. Third, in autonomous learning conditions, the desirable learning environment has some characteristics: the classroom gives the students a sense of being in charge of their learning; practical lessons performed in group work, communicative lessons in which it is easy to ask questions; and the lessons should be meaningful and interesting in the way that students are not forced to memorize by rote.

Every teacher and learner should be aware of the factors influencing autonomous learning in order to promote autonomy in their educational settings Zami and Gahremani (2010, p. 6). Furthermore, Dickinson (1995, p. 6) claims that autonomous learners become lower motivated and work more ineffectively. In short, if a student has high autonomy, it will support the process of learning language in reading. On the contrary, low autonomy affects students' proficiency in reading comprehension. Therefore, the reason is that the global concern in education is forcing the teachers to show the effectiveness of their teaching practices to gain proficiency. And one of the requirements of proficiency gain is for the learner to be autonomous. Furthermore, according to Abdollahi (2014, p. 64), in high school level learners do not have good capability in manage their autonomy. Meanwhile, teachers ignore the roles of learners' autonomy.

Based on informal interviews with the English teacher and some students of the school, it was found out that the teachers were not really aware of learners' autonomy because it was hard to identify. Besides, teachers explained that students had low responsibility in learning especially English subject. Students

were also not conscious about the roles of autonomy. In terms of English reading, students did not have high willingness in reading. Most of students had low proficiency in reading. It was because they did not realize the importance of reading. In addition, students argued that the laziest activity in learning English was reading. All in all, most of students had low responsibility in learning especially reading. It is in line with autonomy roles that learners' autonomy is related to the ability to have responsibility in learning.

Some studies have previously explored those related variables. Meanwhile, the result is still confronted. Zafarian and Nemati (2012) found the significant correlation between autonomy and reading comprehension. Further, Zarei and Gahremani (2010) showed the results of the correlation procedure indicated that there was a positive relationship between learners' autonomy and the reading comprehension ability but the oneway ANOVA showed that the differences among the scores of low, mid and high autonomy-level students on the reading comprehension test were not statistically significant.

Based on the explanation above that it can be concluded that learners' autonomy is one of affective factors for students to achieve successfully in reading subject. In fact, there is no research conducted at the SMA NU before related to learners' autonomy and reading comprehension. Therefore, it is important to conduct this study to investigate the correlation between learners' autonomy and reading comprehension of the eleventh grade students of SMA NU Palembang.

## **1.2. Research Problems**

Based on the problems above, the research problems are formulated in the following sentences:

1. Was there any significant correlation between learners' autonomy and reading comprehension of the eleventh grade SMA NU Palembang?
2. Did learners' autonomy significantly influence reading comprehension of the eleventh grade SMA NU Palembang?

## **1.3. Research Objectives**

The objectives of the study are formulated in the following sentences:

1. To find out whether or not there was a significant correlation between learners' autonomy and reading comprehension of the eleventh grade SMA NU Palembang
2. To know if learners' autonomy significantly influenced reading comprehension of the eleventh grade SMA NU Palembang.

## **1.4. The significances of the study**

From this study, it was hoped that this study gave some information in development for language teaching and learning process, especially understanding the learners' autonomy related to the students' reading comprehension. To get success in learning, learners needed to be responsible for their capability as a power to reach the purpose of learning.



The findings of this study could be of value to those who are involved with language training. This study was helpful to instructional designers in general and teachers in particular. Discovering the relationship between autonomy, and reading comprehension encouraged them to use reading materials purposefully and efficiently.

If there was a significant relationship is found between autonomy, and reading comprehension this insight could assist in the development of effective instruction. The researcher hoped that the findings of this study might be beneficial to understand the processes involved in reading. It could also propose guidelines for EFL teachers who are specifically focusing on improving the responsibility and comprehension of learners not only in the class but also out of there. Especially for students, they could be aware about their autonomy to have willingness and responsible in learning to improve their capability effectively.