

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, limitation of the study, definition of key terms, theoretical framework, and organization of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Reading is one of language skills, aside from listening, speaking and writing. As one of language skills, reading is used with the high proportion as other language skills in daily life. Reading is a way to be connected with people in any location and any time (Abeyrathna, 2004). Through reading, people share and catch information which is written in any purposes and types, for example written information which is covered in pamphlet, books, newspaper. Also, people use reading skill to communicate with others in far distance. People write and read in order to be able to communicate through text message device, such as letters, text messages, instant messengers and many more.

The influence of Reading skill on human's life becomes an interesting topic to study. Reading techniques, reading habit, reading resistance, reading passages, and reading textbooks have been explored in many studies and researches. In many of these studies, emphasis is put on reading habit. One international organization that promotes reading habit is International Reading Association. IRA is a not-profit organization which has operated since 1956 until

now. IRA has several goals; namely improving the quality of reading instruction, disseminating research and information about reading, and encouraging the lifetime reading habit (Laughlin, 2014).

Reading becomes crucial since a range of cognitive skills are involved in it (Cain, 2010). According to Cheryl L. Champeau De Lopez (1997) cognitive skills refer to an intellectual area which is developed in learning process. To conclude, cognitive skills which are about human's intelligence are shaped through reading. As mentioned in Bloom's Taxonomy, cognitive process is composed of six hierarchies: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating (Overbaugh & Schultz, n.d.). Finally, reading is not a simple activity.

As reading is an important skill, everyone needs a kind of instrument that help people in achieving a good reading skill. Moreillon (2007) argues that reading comprehension is deepened through question use. For that, questions are classified into purposes and applications (Moreillon, 2007). Meanwhile, Barrett provides the question taxonomy (Unsworth, 2005).

Thomas C. Barrett is the past president of the International Reading Association. His research results on reading question classification which is called as Taxonomy of Cognitive and Affective Dimensions of Reading. Barrett's work draws on the work of Bloom in 1956. Barrett delivers a reading comprehension taxonomy which concerns to the readers' cognitive processes in answering questions (Unsworth, 2005).

The taxonomy consists of four categories. The first of these categories is literal recognition or recall, in which readers are required to elicit or produce from

memory information delivered explicitly in a text. The second category is inference, in which readers should use their understanding of a text and higher thinking in order to respond information which is not explicitly written in a text. The third category is evaluation, in which readers are required to give judgment about a text. The last category is appreciation, in which readers are expected to sensitively respond a text in terms of psychological and artistic element of a text (Barrett, 1976). Finally, well-designed comprehension questions help readers to develop their understanding of reading passage (Day & Park, 2005).

The English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University is a department that concerns the English language mastery and language teaching. Automatically, the department takes the responsibility to train its students in mastering reading skill. According to Mc Namara (2012) reading is a great achievement when the readers master reading components and levels. As the effort to make its students gain daily extraordinary reading skill, the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya includes Reading course as one of the compulsory subjects, like Listening, Speaking, Writing, Structure, Vocabulary and many more.

The Reading course in the English Department is divided into four levels; Reading 1, Reading 2, Reading 3, and Reading 4 with their specific syllabuses. Reading 1 as the first level of Reading course is taken by students at the beginning of their studies in semester 2 and the rest will follow for the next three semesters. Because Reading is a series course, the lower level becomes the prerequisite of the higher one. Students who do not pass a certain level of Reading course cannot

enroll to the higher level of Reading course. Each level of Reading course worths three credits. It means that in every meeting, the students have one hundred fifty minutes to learn reading as one credit equals to fifty minutes.

Comprehension questions are used actively in the Reading course. They are included with passages in the course book. They also exist in classroom discussions where the lecturers commonly deliver questions for stimulating discussion about the reading passages. Moreover in the reading examinations, the use of comprehension questions determines the goal and objective of Reading subject that the students are required to achieve. The broad use of questions in the reading course makes the writer interested in the sense that the lecturers use them as means to develop their students' reading skill, whether various categories of question are used or disregarded, whether the use of literal question is enough in order to achieve the goal of each level in the Reading course, or more categories of questions are needed there.

Because of that, the writer intends to find out what question categories are used in the reading examinations which are conducted for all Reading classes. The writer does this study by holding an understanding that without the use of question-making standard for reading, the students will not be able to maximally develop their reading skill. This study is unique because it does not elaborate the question-making tendency used in textbooks for junior or senior high students as many studies commonly do. This study analyses the tendency of the questions used in examinations of a Reading course which is for university students. The writer hopes to find the use of question categories which have their own urgencies

in the examinations of the Reading course at the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background above, the researcher formulated a problem statement below:

- What are categories of questions used in Reading examinations at the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University?

1.3 Objective of the Study

In line with the research problem, the purpose of the study is to find out the categories of questions which are used in Reading examinations at the English department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The results of this thesis are expected to be useful for reading educators especially the reading lecturers at the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University. A holistic description of the question categories used in the Reading course can become a consideration for the Reading lecturers to evaluate and improve the questions they may use in the Reading examinations. Eventually, the results of this thesis are expected to be a reference for further researches.

1.5 Limitation of the Study

Based on another of considerations, the writer needs to limit her study. The data of this study are the comprehension questions which are used at the examinations of a series Reading course in the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University, excluding grammar and vocabulary questions. Specifically, she focuses on classifying comprehension questions used in the examinations based on Barrett's Taxonomy, regardless the students' answers. The examinations cover the mid-term and the final exams. Any forms of questions such as Yes/No question, Alternative question, True/False, Wh-question, Multiple Choice and instruction which are for testing reading comprehension become the limitation of the data in this study. The limitation is taken from Day and Park (2005) and Budiono (2001) which is explained in Chapter 2, point 2.2.2. Then, to get the generalization of the tendency of questions used in the Reading examinations, the writer analyzes the comprehension questions used in Reading 1,2,3 and 4 examinations administered in the academic year of 2011/2012, 2012/2013 and 2013/2014.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

➤ **Category**

According to Barrett (1968) who delivered a taxonomy of reading comprehension, category is a classification which functions in identifying, grouping and developing reading comprehension questions or instructions (Budiono, 2001)

➤ Questions

Questions are sentences which function to measure students' comprehension in reading (McKenna, 2012). In this study, any forms of questions such as Yes/No Question, Alternative Question, True/False, Wh-Question, Multiple Choice and instructions which are used to check students' reading comprehension are analyzed.

➤ Reading Examinations

Test which is examination in this study is a way of assessing a student's competence, knowledge, or performance in a particular domain (Brown, 2004). Reading examinations in this study are tests administered in the Reading course at the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University. The Reading examinations cover mid-term test and final test.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The theories underlying this study are theories of good comprehension questions. Delivering question is a conservative way for testing reading comprehension (McKenna, 2012). According to Gosher (2007a), there are basically two types of questions for activity of comprehending, namely factual and inferential questions. Kintsch (2005, as cited in Caldwell, 2008) believed that factual question is text-based item which requires students to refer and summarize information explicitly written in a text. While Gosher (2007b) stated that inferential question is type of question which requires students to read between

the lines, recognize the writer's style, attitude, intention, and tone to infer the answer. Sometimes, students may be required to give their personal responses (Gosher, 2007c).

1.8 Organization of the Study

This thesis covers five chapters. The first chapter is Introduction. This chapter describes background of the study, statement of the problems, objective of the study, significance of the study, limitation of the study, definition of the key terms, theoretical framework and organization of the study. The second chapter is Review of Related Literature. This chapter consists of theories about nature of Reading, role of question use in Reading, Barrett's Taxonomy, forms of comprehension questions and previous studies. The third chapter is Research Methodology. This chapter explains design of the study, source of data, data, research instrument, procedure of data collecting, and procedure of data analyzing. The fourth chapter is Findings and Discussion. This chapter contains general description of data, findings of the study and analysis of the finding. The last chapter is Conclusion and Suggestions. This chapter consists of the conclusions of this study and suggestions for the Reading lecturers, the English Department and next study.