CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Some points related to the current study are presented in this chapter. These include the background of the study, formulation of the research question, purpose of the study, formulation of hypothesis, significance of the study, scope, and limitation, and definition of key terms. It is arranged as an introduction to the study being conducted.

A. Background of The Study

Nowadays, it is widely known that language is one of the important aspects of a creature's life. Language functions as the instrument of communication and interaction. Without language, people cannot do the communication with each other. In addition, language is considered the key of knowledge. To learn or get the knowledge, firstly people must understand and master the language well. Thus, studying language is indeed needed for all people.

There are many kinds of languages in the world. These come from many countries and regions. Every country has its distinctive language. One of the most important languages is English. It is an international language used in international events. While many countries use English as a second language used in certain events such as formal declarations, Indonesia uses English as a foreign language that is not used in formal events. In short, everyone needs to understand English to communicate in all aspects of life, including business, education, health and

tourism. These aspects are believed to be important contributors to the success or failure of learning English. Due to its importance, English has been studied as part of Indonesian education from kindergarten to university.

In learning English, writing, reading, speaking and listening are the skills that be mastered by the students. For mastering it, the students must fulfil some requirements. One of the skills mentioned here is reading. As a skill, reading is often considered the easiest skill after listening, writing and speaking, while that is not entirely true. Of course, few people know that the reading process is not only about one's understanding of each word and surface structure represented in the text being read, but also includes comprehension and the reader's ability to interact with the text. The text is read by interpreting the meaning of the text. According to Rajab et. al. (2012), reading is a language skill that focuses on understanding text and its related elements. To fully understand text, an individual must deal with new patterns of spelling, sentence structure, syntax, vocabulary, and other complex semantic relationships.

In many cases, individuals are still struggling to give meaning to different rhetoric and textual texts that require knowledge of cultural backgrounds. Therefore, being a good reader is not only good at reading but also how the reader can interpret the meaning contained in the text. Education-As part of the learning process, teachers need to spend a lot of time teaching reading to understand the text and acquire all macro and micro-skills in reading.

In the face-to-face classroom, reading is a skill that is no longer available for teachers to practice. It takes a lot of time, while face-to-face only gives a limited

amount of time. Given the limited time available for college-level reading, it is difficult to optimize the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in implementing blended learning to make students increase their reading comprehension.

The preliminary observation that has been conducted three times on the 6th, 9th, and 12th of October 2021 in MTs Darul Falah Sumbergempol Tulungagung also indicated that time allocation for reading comprehension is still lacking. In the first observation, students cannot finish to identify the main idea of every paragraph because of the limited time. Next, in the second observation, the teacher and students do not have more time to discuss the main idea of the paragraph. Therefore, they only discuss it on the surface. The last observation, students do not have limited time to answer some essay questions related to the text.

In the classroom teachers and students only have limited time for reading comprehension, while it takes more time because understanding the text is very complicated. Students must understand the meaning of vocabulary and catch explicit and implicit information from the text. It is not truly easy. Related to this case, the teachers need more time outside of the class to deliver the material for reading comprehension. Hopefully, it can make the students easier to comprehend the text.

Depending on the case of the limited time in reading comprehension, the implementation of Blended Learning can provide benefits for the students. It combines the benefits of classroom instruction and online meetings (Challob, Bakar, and Latif, 2016). It means that education and learning activities are

conducted both in the classroom and online. Online procedures are the extra time from classroom lessons. Therefore, students get the material in online classes as a complement to the material inside the classroom (Staker & Horn, 2012). It means, in online meetings, universally teachers give the students with supplementary material and exercises on topics being discussed in face-to-face classes and send the material through the online platform. In this case, the online platform turns into a virtual classroom for the students.

Moreover, in the context of Blended Learning in the language class, new technologies for reading and learning purposes are connected to the students. Most of them want to know the new technologies and they are positively aware of them (Al Bataineh et. Al, 2019). Therefore, the students' lifestyles are changed by the technologies. For example, as declared by Stafford (2011), students have less time for educational chances and they are concerned about time limitations. Hence, online learning platforms can save time, teach social skills, teach self-learning and self-discovery, and motivate them to stay in touch with the latest trends (Taylor. et al., 2011).

One of the online platforms that are newly recognized, innovative, and one of the best online platforms for learning and teaching in the form of Blended Learning is Google Classroom. The launching of this online platform was in 2014 by Google (Al-Maroof& Al- Emran, 2018). To advance the e-learning process, the education world uses Google Classroom. It joins the modern technology for the learning process with the traditional method in offline classrooms. The widespread receipt of this innovative technique has led to the appearance of the literature.

Google Classroom is primarily used by teachers to support the teaching process within the classroom (Halverson, Spring, Huyett, Henrie, and Graham, 2017).

So far, using Google Classroom in the teaching and learning process is very effective. The existence of this online platform can help students and teachers to conduct learning in new ways. First, Everyone in the world can use the tools and applications which are assembled into a package called Google Apps for Education (Northey, Bucic, Chylinski, & Govind, 2015). Second, the way in operating Google Classroom is very easy (Janzen, 2014).

Further, Google Classroom can organize the students' and teachers' work. Many gadgets such as laptops, PCs, and mobiles phone can be used to access Google Classroom easily. In the first six months of use, Google Classroom is believed to have received roughly 30 million assignments from teachers and students. This demonstrates that the education community highly recommends Google Classroom (Northey et. al., 2015). Moreover, online learning tools such as Google Classroom allow for more flexibility in scheduling, eliminate travel costs, and reach out to anybody with an internet connection.

Some aspects support the success of using Blended Learning in the language teaching-learning process. One of these aspects is autonomy. It plays an important role that gains the students to learn effectively (Lynch & Dembo, 2004). Moreover, learning autonomy is considered as the capacity to control the students' learning (Holec,1981). It refers to the students' responsibility to control and manage their learning. In this context, learning autonomy covers the technical, philosophical, psychological, political, and socio-cultural aspects. High autonomous students can

continue learning in many situations and conditions. Also, they are expected to have high abilities.

In the context of language learning, autonomy is broadly defined as the way of being or the sense of self achieved through joint decision-making about learning and access to internal and external resources (Everhard, 2015). Especially in the context of reading, a study by Masita (2016) and Masoumzadeh (2016) showed that there was a significant and positive relationship between learner autonomy and reading comprehension. Therefore, the higher the student's autonomy, the better the reading comprehension.

Several studies have proven that Blended Learning using Google Classroom is effective for teaching-learning in English language classes. The study written by Sujannah et. al. (2020), Laili and Muflihah (2020), and Albasthawi and Albathaineh (2020 investigated the effect of Blended Learning using Google Classroom on EFL learners' writing by considering the learners' autonomy levels. Those studies use a quasi-experimental research design. Then, the result of the study shows that Google Classroom is effective in improving the students' writing ability.

Next, the previous study is written by Dewi et al. (2020). It investigates the implementation of Google Classroom in improving students' reading comprehension. The result of the study shows that Google Classroom is effective for the students' reading comprehension. Moreover, the last previous study is also conducted by Melani (2020). It investigates the effect of Google Classroom assisted extensive listening on listening comprehension across learning autonomy. Furthermore, the result of the study shows that Google Classroom is effective to

teach listening comprehension. Then, the students with higher autonomy levels get a higher score than those who have a lower autonomy level.

All of those studies show the effectiveness of Google Classroom. Nonetheless, the Effect of Blended Learning using Google Classroom on students' reading comprehension by seeing the levels of autonomy has not been conducted yet. Thus, the current study aims to make a larger contribution to Blended Learning by using Google Classroom research, especially by investigating the effect of Google Classroom on students' reading comprehension when they read the descriptive text in Junior High school by seeing the students' level of autonomy.

The differences between the current study and the previous include the focus on English skills which are measured. Then, the current study also involves the students' autonomy levels in considering whether Google Classroom is truly effective for students' reading comprehension or not. Those differences make the current study gives the newest result than the previous.

However, those arguments lead the researcher to conduct a study based on the existing problems. The researcher wants to investigate whether Blended Learning using Google Classroom is effective to teach reading to students in Junior High School, especially in descriptive text with their different levels of autonomy. Accordingly, the researcher decides to conduct the study entitled **"The Effect of Blended Learning using Google Classroom on Students' Reading Comprehension Across Different Levels of Autonomy".**

B. Formulation of Research Questions

The research question is the heart of the study. All of the activities in the study are intended to answer the research question. It means that in every study there must be a research question. Hence, the research questions of the current study can be formulated as follows:

1. Is there any significant difference score in reading comprehension between the students treated by Blended Learning using Google Classroom and those treated by the conventional method?

2. Is there any significant difference score in reading comprehension between the students with high and low autonomous levels treated by Blended Learning using Google Classroom?

3. Is there any interaction between Blended Learning using Google Classroom and the students' level of autonomy?

C. Purpose of The Study

In line with the research questions, it can be stated that the objectives of the current study are:

1. To find out whether any significant difference in reading comprehension between the students treated with Blended Learning using Google Classroom and those treated with the conventional learning model;

2. To investigate whether any significant difference in reading comprehension between the students with high and low autonomous levels was treated by Blended Learning using Google Classroom;

3. To know whether any interaction between Blended Learning using Google Classroom and the students' level of autonomy.

D. Formulation of Hypotheses

According to Gay (2009), the hypothesis is a researcher's prediction of the research findings and statement of the research expectations about the relation among the variables in the research topic. From a research point of view, this means that if the hypothesis does not show a correlation among variables, the hypothesis cannot be tested. So, the hypothesis gives the correlation statement that can be tested in research automatically. Additionally, related to the problems in the current study, the alternative hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

1. The students who are treated by Blended Learning using Google Classroom have significantly better reading comprehension mastery than those who are treated with conventional learning model;

2. The students with high autonomous levels have significantly better reading comprehension mastery than those with low autonomous levels;

3. There is an interaction between Blended Learning using Google Classroom on students' reading comprehension mastery and the students' levels of autonomy.

E. Significance of The Study

By conducting the current study, the researcher expects that it gives the involvement for:

1. **Teachers**

   Hopefully, by the result of the current study, the teachers can apply Blended Learning using Google Classroom as the media in conducting teaching reading especially for reading comprehension to their students not only during teaching the descriptive text, but also it can be used to apply in teaching all the kinds of text.

2. **Future Researchers**

   Future researchers who read the current study can learn and determine the gap from it. Next, they can conduct another study that is related to the current study with the various methods, subjects, media, and so on.

F. Scope and Limitation

The scope of the current study is Blended Learning using Google Classroom, students' reading comprehension, and the students' level of autonomy. Then, to avoid misunderstanding what the researcher has explained, the researcher limits the scope of the study to make it more detailed and focus. Here, some limitations proposed are the following:

1. The subject of current study is 7th grade students at MTs Darul Falah Sumbergempol Tulungagung;

2. The current study only focuses on the effect of Blended Learning using Google Classroom on students' reading comprehension of descriptive text;

3. The level of autonomy that is measured in the current study is emphasized in the reading comprehension context only.

G. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstandings about the topic to be discussed in the current study, it is necessary to explain the definitions of key terms related to the topic. Here are some definitions of key terms according to the current study:

1. **Blended Learning**

   Blended learning is the instruction that combines Face to Face learning in the classroom and online learning outside of the classroom in the teaching and learning process. The level of classroom offline learning and online learning is the same. This means 50% for classroom meetings and 50% for online meetings.

2. **Google Classroom**

   Google Classroom is a type of LMS (Learning Management System) that can help students in their online teaching process. When learning a language in Google Classroom, teachers provide feedback and students can collaborate

3. **Student's Reading Comprehension**

   Students' reading comprehension is the student's ability to process this type of text independently, understand its meaning and integrate it with textual content that includes internal and external factors. It also refers to the student's ability to answer questions related to information in the text.

4. **Students' Autonomy Levels**

Students' autonomy levels are the capacity to control the students' learning. It means the students with high autonomy levels can continue learning by themselves in online sessions without guidance from the teacher immediately, especially in reading comprehension. Meanwhile, the students with low autonomy levels must be guided more by the teacher because they cannot learn by themselves in reading comprehension. In other words, they do not have the willingness to look for information during the learning process.