

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents some points related to this research. Those include Background of the Study, statement of research problems, objectives of the research, significance of the research, scope and limitation of the research, and definition of key terms.

A. Background of the Study

Literacy is a prerequisite for individual success in the twenty-first century. It is crucial to support individual success in education and social life. Literacy also holds a key to forming civilization and builds literal learner and society (Solekhah and Mustadi, 2019). Through good literacy skills, students can gain access to world of knowledge and information, and enhance their ability in technology. In addition, literacy also improves the quality of individuals to participate in society. Therefore, literacy is considered as a basic skill that must be possessed in this global era (World Economic Forum/WWE, 2015).

Initially, the concept of ‘literacy’ is interpreted as the ability to read and write. This concept of literacy is rooted in cognitive and psychological perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) that concentrate on specific outcomes of reading and writing skills. Then, along with the development of Information, Communication and Technology, the concept of literacy has gradually changed, with complex and dynamic conception. The concept of literacy is not only at the level of being able to understand knowledge and information, but also the ability that refers to the ‘effective participation of any kind in social processes’ (Halliday, 1996: 98). In this matter, notion of ‘literacy’ is closely tied with social practices and social experiences of the individual as a member of society. This concept viewed literacy as a way of utilizing reading and writing appropriately according to each context and purposes (Burton and Hamilton, 2000:7).

In this sense, the notion of literacy is understood as *social practice* (Burton and Hamilton, 2000), which involves reading and writing as part of the process of producing ideas and constructing meaning (Dewayani, 2017: 12). Thus, literacy is not only related to knowledge and skills but also pattern of literacy practices that exist in educational institutions and society. Literacy as a social practice is an

important parameter because it contributes to the effective interaction of a student in society (Theodotou, 2017). Therefore, it can be said that the indicators of literate students mean that they are able to use their potential to participate optimally in their community and social environment (Dewayani, 2017: 13).

Moreover, in the era of rapid development of technology and information, students are faced with new demands that require advanced literacy skills in order to face complex economic, political and social challenges (Murnane et. al, 2012). To be able to participate optimally in the community and social environment, students need to develop skills such as being able to read, interpret and analyse information from various sources, utilize reading and writing skills to critically understand information and knowledge, and expand individual capacity and productivity” (Binkley et al., 2010, p. 1). Through high proficiency in literacy, it adds value to a person’s life and strengthens the capabilities of individuals, families and communities to access educational, health, economic and political opportunities (UNESCO, Global monitoring report, 2006).

Unfortunately, the significance role of literacy is not well realized by Indonesian students especially at the tertiary level. Some of them are still unconcerned toward the importance of having good literacy quality. In fact, reading as basic skill in literacy does not become a habitual activity for EFL students although they have read English since elementary school to university (Iftanti, 2012). This is in line with the findings of Wijayanti (2020) who said that the reading literacy level of university students in Indonesia was still disappointing. In practice, students only read one to two hours per day and they read more books when the exams or due date for an assignment is coming. Moreover, the result of survey from PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) in 2018 shows that reading literacy of Indonesia students are in low performance quadrant score of 371 points compared to an average of 487 points in OECD countries.

Considering the results of the research above, it is necessary to make efforts to find out what and how reading and writing practices in universities, especially at the undergraduate level. According to Iswanto et. al. (2019) research

on literacy practices is not only about literacy achievements and figures, but also about patterns or forms of literacy practices that exist in the community and educational institutions, so that they can be used as initial steps to create a qualified education. Besides, reading is also the foundation for success, not only in education but throughout life. Academic activities involve reading and writing skills, so that, reading skills greatly affect writing skills (Rintaningrum, 2019). The more students read, the more they establish love of reading and embed good habit in reading (Iftanti and Shofiya, 2018). Reading proficiency also has a positive impact on quality of student scientific writing, which is demand in higher education (Wijayanti, 2020).

Several previous studies related to reading and writing literacy have been conducted by the researchers, for example, Thomson, Graham and Marsham (2018) conducted research that focused on reading practices of undergraduate students from three academic schools at university in the UK. Iftanti (2015) conducted study that also focused on reading practices and habit of EFL students. On the other hand, research conducted by Sari and Pujiono (2017) focused on investigating reading and writing practices of undergraduate students at Yogyakarta State university. In line with Sari and Pujiono research, Wahyudi (2016) also conducted study with similar focus, reading and writing practices, but in a more specific context which examined literacy practices inside and outside the classroom of Chinese students in Australia.

From the above explanation, those previous studies focus on four points: firstly, Thomson, Graham and Marsham, (2018) and Iftanti (2015) focus their researches on reading practices for EFL students in general university. Secondly, Sari and Pujiono (2017) focus their researches on reading and writing practices among undergraduate students in general university. As for the last point, research by Wahyudi (2016) focus on reading and writing practices inside and outside of the classroom on academic preparation course for master study. Yet, it is hardly found studies concerning with reading and writing practice among undergraduate students of Islamic based institutions. Hence, it is significant to conduct research on that focus.

Research on reading and writing practices among undergraduate students are important to do in order to gain insight and knowledge adequately. Through sufficient insight and knowledge about reading and writing practices, this can be used as a basis for developing program that support the implementation of reading and writing literacy among undergraduate students in Islamic based institutions. In addition, reading and writing literacy is foundational skills for undergraduate students to achieve academic success (McClanahan, Ennis and Connell, 2016), career (Ivey, 2011; Long, 2013), increased self-esteem (Bown,1990; Jones and Manger, 2020), professional development (Carlisle and Berebitsky, 2010; Kennedy, 2010; Chinyamurindi and Dlaza, 2018), and increased political participation (UNESCO, 2006).

Based on the above statement, it is necessary to explore the types of reading and writing literacy practices among undergraduate students of English department in Islamic based institution. By understanding the background of the study and the gap, the researcher attempts to explore the reading and writing practices among undergraduate students of sixth semester of English department at UIN SATU Tulungagung. As the above phenomenon and explanation, the researcher interested in conducting research entitle “**Exploring Reading and Writing Literacy Practices of Undergraduate Students**”.

B. Statement of Research Problems

In line with the background of study, the research problems are formulated as follows:

1. What types of reading literacy practices employed by undergraduate students of English department?
2. What types of writing literacy practices employed by undergraduate students of English department?
3. How do the students can learn better from the employed practices of reading and writing literacy?

C. Objectives of the Research

Based on the formulation of research problem, the objective of the study is to find out:

1. To describe the types of reading literacy practices employed by undergraduate students of English department
2. To describe the types of writing literacy practices employed by undergraduate students of English department
3. To know do the students can learn better from the employed practices of reading and writing literacy

D. Significance of the Research

Theoretically, the finding of this research can provide a new academic contribution for the future researcher in studying literacy practices in case of English language teaching. Practically, the first contribution is dedicated to the learner especially for undergraduate students in order to developing their literacy skill. The second, it is expected to inspire the English lecturers to be more aware toward the necessity of literacy. So, the lecturers are able to support and encourage the students to develop their competency in literacy.

E. Scope and Limitation of the Research

As mentioned in the background, this study only focuses to investigate the practices of reading and writing literacy. In other word, the researcher only focuses to investigate the activities that centered on reading and writing literacy. Research on activities in reading and writing literacy is needed to gain fully

understand on how students make a sense of literacy in their lives through a series of actions and behaviors. In addition, investigations into literacy practices can add insight and knowledge (Burn, 2003; Iswanto et. Al., 2019). Considering that there are numerous kinds of attributes related to literacy, this present research only focuses on investigating the aspects of reading and writing literacy practices in the context of lecture activity of undergraduate students of sixth semester of English department at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung.

F. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding of the concept used in this research, the researcher must provide some definitions of the term used in this research.

a. Literacy practice

According to Lankshear and Knobel (2011) literacy practices is socially recognized ways in which people generate, communicate, and negotiate meanings through the medium of encoded texts. In this research, the term literacy practice refers to as a socially evolve and patterned activity where the activity is centered on text, both reading and writing which are used in particular context and for particular purposes.

b. Reading literacy

PIRLS (2019) defined reading literacy as the ability to understand and use the forms of written language required by society and/or valued by individuals. In present research, the term reading literacy refers to the ability to understand, use, reflect and engage in various types of texts that aim to develop one's knowledge and potential, as well as to participate in society

c. Reading practice

Reading practices are the ways, processes, behaviours that occur while reading (Bhooth, Azman & Ismail, 2014) and the application of skills associated with reading for specific purposes in specific context (Kirsch and Guthrie, 1984).

d. Writing literacy.

Dewayani (2017) asserts that writing literacy is process to create texts through construction, reproduction and intertextuality in which

the author synthesizes the ideas, takes a distance from existing thoughts and combine them with the authors' appreciation towards the social texts or the reality of life. In this study, the term writing literacy refers to the iterative process in which the writer revises his ideas and thoughts, repeats the stages of writing, until he/she is able to express idea in a good written form.

e. Writing practice

Writing practices refer to the socially constitute and constitutive, in which the writer is engaged in activity that include the process of production and construction of texts (Gregson, Simonsen & Vaiou, 2003).