

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses about the background of the study, the research questions, the purpose of the study, the scope of the study, and the significance of the study.

1.1. Background of the Study

Assessment is becoming increasingly important in English Foreign Language (EFL) classroom as a means for demonstrating and promoting quality in student learning. According to Koyalik (2002, as cited in Eggen & Kauchak, 2004), classroom assessment provides valuable information for the teachers to adapt instructional procedures in learning process toward the students' need in the classroom. It means assessment has important role not only for the teachers but also for the students since it gives information about students' progress based on the learning objectives and activities.

However, as stated by Brown (2004:4), assessment sometimes misunderstood in current educational practice since there are many things to be considered to create an effective classroom assessment. In order to achieve it, the teachers should prepare a set of learning goals, depend on principles of assessment, and use appropriate techniques and methods. This view is also supported by Stiggins (2004:89) who claimed that good assessment means clearly knowing what you want to assess, choosing the best method, and considering the purpose and the learning targets being assessed. Thus, teachers should have sufficient knowledge to be successful in conducting classroom assessment.

In the field of foreign language teaching, there are four language skills that should be mastered by the students particularly in senior high school. One of the important skills is reading. According to McDonough & Shaw (2003:95), reading is the main goal of learning and the most important skill in a foreign language. Moreover, reading is regarded as the backbone of other language skills due to it can develop the other skills and even for other academic domains (e.g. social studies, and science) as well as overall success in daily activities and future employment.

In order to provide effective reading instruction, assessment is an essential first step. Campbell (2001) points out that reading assessment is more than just gathering information of students' progress because the teachers are recognizing and understanding patterns in reading behaviors. For that reason, reading assessment become one of the significant factor for educational improvement because it has a great power to alert the teachers, researchers, and policy makers for making improvement in language and teaching process.

Unfortunately, mastery of reading is significant problems in schools. OECD (2007:29) consistently stated that Indonesian students had serious difficulties in reading skill. In terms of rank, Indonesia came in at 57th place out of 65 countries, still eight ranks from the bottom. They are reported couldn't comprehend information when it was presented in an unfamiliar format and faced difficulty in understanding texts at the highest level of literacy. In contrast, the expectation on students' reading skill is high. It can be seen from our curriculum that stated students must be able to comprehend the meaning of the text in form of recount, narrative, procedure, descriptive and report in context of daily life.

This situation leads us to the indication that there are some crucial problems in our reading classroom. Many factors can influence this situation ranging from ineffective governmental regulation on educational system, low engagement of student in the classroom, and low quality of assessment. Sikka, Nath and Cohen (2007) found that many education programs do not require prospective teachers to take up courses in classroom assessment, and the teachers reported that they were not well prepared to assess students' learning. As a consequence, teachers neither have knowledge of classroom assessment nor of testing. In the same ways, a study conducted by Jia (2004: 33) found that the EFL teachers had problem with assessing their students by any formal paper and pencil test. Some teachers reported are lacking of knowledge in assessing their students and they were often frustrated about the gap between the students' needs and wants.

Stiggins and Conklin (as cited in Sikka, Nath and Cohen , 2007) inform that the teachers spend one third to one half of their time on assessment related–activities. This fact indicates that teachers must have good knowledge and skill of assessment; therefore, they can make efficient time to deal with assessment. Further, the former ministry of education and culture, Mohammad Nuh, informs that “the one thing that is hardest and often gets complained by the teacher is assessment of learning” (Prawitasari, 2014, March 4).

The other fact reveals that Indonesian students have been reported to have problems in the ways of the teaching and learning process. They are frustrated with boring teaching techniques and methods because the teachers are reported only use monotonous or even single techniques in assessing their students (The Jakarta Post, 14 December 2010). It means some teachers have a problem in selecting of

appropriate assessment tools, especially, how to determine and choose appropriate testing techniques. Moreover, the testing techniques that are commonly used now give students an opportunity to cheat on and to guess easily, or even to gamble.

This study would establish the result that confirmed the previous study and some fact as mentioned in Jakarta post that most teachers have lack knowledge and still using monotonous techniques in assessing their students. It would examine whether there are correlations between teachers' knowledge and skill of assessment between the tendencies of choosing some techniques in the classroom. A variety of assessment methods and techniques should be used to give students opportunities to demonstrate what they know and understand about language itself and help the teacher to create effective learning. Therefore, this study would focus on the purposes, methods and testing techniques of reading assessment practices in the teaching and learning process.

The lack of literature in regards to this topic suggests the need for further research in this area since this study offering potential benefits for the improvement of quality in learning process, and raising educators' awareness of the classroom assessment. Because of the limitation of times and resources, this study mainly focuses on one reading skill, particularly it deals with practices of reading assessment. Therefore, the writer intended to conduct a research relate to EFL teacher practices' of reading assessment in ten Senior High Schools in East Jakarta by finding out the purposes, methods and techniques of reading assessment.

1.2. Research Questions

Based on the background above, the writer formulates the research questions as follows:

1. How do SHS EFL teachers in East Jakarta practice their reading assessment?
 - a) What assessment purposes do their classroom reading assessment practice serve?
 - b) What assessment methods do they choose to serve their reading assessment purposes?
 - c) What assessment techniques do they choose to serve their reading assessment purposes?

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study are to obtain the information about EFL teachers' practices of reading assessment by EFL teachers from eight schools in East Jakarta, and further, to describe reading assessment purposes, methods, and techniques are used by the teachers.

1.4. Scope of the Study

In this study, the writer focuses on how reading assessments practiced by Senior High School teachers in East Jakarta. Since the existing limitations such as limitation of time and resources, the writer only focuses on what of reading assessment purposes, methods, and techniques that the teachers used. The writer investigated fifteen English teachers from eight different Senior High Schools in East Jakarta.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study is expected to enrich research findings in assessment field, especially in reading assessment. The results of this study will help EFL teachers and administrators to be aware of the implications of classroom reading assessments. The result is also expected will encourage EFL teachers to reflect on their own reading assessment techniques and seek the best ways to conduct assessment in their classrooms. Besides, this study is also can be used as the references for the teachers to conduct reading assessment, and as the considerations for Indonesia's education policy makers to improve the quality of learning process in the classroom. Further, it also can be useful for other students especially in English Department of UNJ who need to know more about the reading assessment in the English language classroom.