CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter illustrates the background of the research that explained why this research is fascinating to be studied. This chapter also elaborates several theories that the research adapts some theoretical frameworks to understand the study based on particular views of experts.

A. Background

Critical thinking has been recognized as an essential skill in general education and language learning activities. In recent years, critical thinking has been identified as one of the 21st-century skills that students need to develop in modern society (Partnership, 2009). The development of critical thinking skills is important to the students' educational success in their current and future grades as thinking is a way of learning content. According to Lederer (2007), critical thinking has a central role in learning and regarded as a core outcome in higher education. Moreover, Junining (2016) says that critical thinking skill is not only necessary for the academic life, but also for the tight competition in every single fieldwork during this era which requires people to have critical thinking skills to increase educational quality, innovate in technology, and to produce outstanding human resources.

Developing the students' critical thinking skills can be done by using technology as a tool to do research, organize, evaluate, and communicate information (Bellanca and Brandit, 2010). The use of technology in communication and networking includes access to social media appropriately.

According to Mason (2006), social media has an enormous role for a high-quality education corresponding to the social settings of learning and fostering the students' critical thinking skills since social media is a significant part of our lives and a massive amount of people are spending many hours on Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube.

The use of social media attains to increase critical thinking skills. The more the students engage with social media, primarily as part of language learning activities, the more they can develop higher order skills by reading and making judgments about the credibility of sources of information. Beck (1989) states ''there is no reading without thinking". Thus, critical thinking skills in reading comprehension become important and essential skills that language learners need to develop for their academic life (Asgharheidari & Tahriri, 2015).

Asgharheidari and Tahriri (2015) state that nowadays, critical thinking becomes an important issue which has a significant part in modern education and numerous teachers are interested in developing and encouraging critical thought in their classes. However, there are several problems found in improving the students' critical thinking skills in reading class. Based on the preliminary observation in Indonesian context, it is shown that the students at the third semester of English Education Department of Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung are still less of knowledge of how to be well-critical-readers. Thus, this problem is studied further to emphasize the problem regarding the lacks of critical students and how to enhance their

critical thinking through social media. Therefore, the researcher would like to propose Twitter as a learning media to foster the students' critical thinking skills on reading comprehension.

There are several types of research conducted regarding the use of Twitter in classroom activity. One research is provided by Kassens-Noor (2012) that used Twitter as a way of gaining feedback about the teaching practices. The research focused on Twitter as a mechanism for feedback in the college classroom. Another research conducted by Blair (2013) that indicated the role of Twitter in establishing a collaborative learning relationship between students and teachers through the process of sharing ideas, resources, and reflections. Research also conducted by Junco, Heibergert, and Loken (2011) that examined the engagement in the learning process by using Twitter. The result of the research provides experimental evidence that Twitter can be used as an educational media to help engage students and to mobilize faculty into a more active and participatory role.

Since the previous studies of the use of Twitter for pedagogical tool is still rare and worth conducting, thus, this research proposes the particular way of developing students' critical thinking skills on reading comprehension using Twitter in English learning activities, particularly in reading class. In addition, today's students are digital natives (Palfrey & Gasser, 2013); and since Twitter is massively used by students and contained bias and subjective words, it should be appropriate for the researcher to examine the use of Twitter to foster the students' critical thinking skills through reading comprehension.

This research deals with the potential of Twitter as a learning media or teaching-supporting media to foster students' critical thinking through reading comprehension. It is widely known since it's inception in 2006, Twitter has opened up a new channel of information dissemination, and has seen tremendous user growth (Java, Song, Finin & Tseng, 2007). It is one of the microblog services that allow users to send and receive information real-time, on the website, from mobile applications, or via SMS messages. Haythornthwaite (2016) presented in a case study of social media tools in higher education. Twitter is among the top two tools which educators have expressed an inclination to use in their future classrooms, ranked before other favorite tools such as Facebook.

Furthermore, this research aims to investigate the students' ability in critical thinking on reading comprehension by understanding someones' Twitter posts (tweet) and investigating the context and the writers' ideas, including tone, mood, and purpose in posting Twitter. Twitter is used as the learning media of teaching reading to stimulate the students' critical thinking skills. The students are given the questions related to someones' tweet so that the students can think critically in comprehending the tweet by providing the assignments using that tweet to foster the students' critical thinking.

B. **Research Questions**

The problems of this study are formulated in the following questions:

1. How is the process of teaching reading using Twitter to foster the students' critical thinking?

2. What are the cores of critical thinking skills emerged in the students' analysis to answer the questions related to the Twitter posts?

3. What are the students' responses to the use of Twitter in English learning activities to improve their critical thinking skills?

C. Research Objectives

From the research questions above, this study is intended to find out:

1. The process of teaching reading using Twitter to foster the students' critical thinking.

2. The cores of critical thinking skills emerged in the students' analysis to answer the questions related to the Twitter posts.

3. The students' responses to the use of Twitter in English learning activities to improve their critical thinking skills.

D. Significances of the Research

Theoretically, this research is significant for the reader, particularly teachers and students, to acknowledge information about critical thinking skills in teaching reading activity. Practically, this research can provide an alternative media in teaching reading to foster the students' critical thinking skills.

E. Framework of Thinking

Learning and thinking have long been regarded as interrelated lifelong processes (Chaffee, 1994). Critical thinking is believed to have significant contributions to learners' academic context in the era of technology and the explosion of information (Kealey, Holland & Watson, 2005). This statement is supported by Bailin and Siegel (2003) who state that critical thinking should

be the primary goal of education. The inculcation of critical thinking in education is important for reasons to facilitate students to think for themselves and make decisions, to equip them with skills to do well in subjects such as mathematics, science, literature, art and history, to prepare students for challenges of adulthood and to enable them to lead a democratic life which involves good and analytical thinking (Siegel, 2010).

The relationship between critical thinking and reading comprehension is well established in the literature. Norris and Phillips (1987) point out that reading is more than just saying what is on the page; it is thinking. It is supported by Ruggiero (1984) who recognize that reading involves thinking. Moreover, Yu-hui (2010) states that reading is a thinking process to construct meaning. From those statements, it can be drawn that there is a significant relationship between the critical thinking ability of learners and their performance on reading comprehension.

Reading comprehension has held an important place in the English language classroom. Reading comprehension is defined as the activity to understand the meaning of a text which enables the reader to find the information needed (Sahardin, Mukarramah, & Hanafiah, 2015). Hasbun (2006) highlights the importance of reading by stating that reading skills "lie at the heart of formal education" and it is difficult to achieve many things without having the ability to read fluently and with good comprehension.

The ability of reading comprehension can be improved by using social media. According to Greenhow (2008), social media can help engage students

in reading, allowing them to learn and practice the new language in an interactive environment. This statement is supported by Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin (2010) who state that social media can be used as an online environment to assist the language learning process.

Therefore, regarding the importance of critical thinking and reading comprehension in language learning activities, this research is conducted to examine the use of Twitter to foster the students' critical thinking skills on reading comprehension. Additionally, the use of Twitter for the educational purpose has been of interest to many researchers, and they have produced many studies showing a positive correlation between Twitter and various aspects of education (Borau, Ullrich, Feng & Shen, 2009).

Greenhow and Gleason (2012) state the use of Twitter as a new literacy practice. They suggest that when used, it may lead to increased engagement and better interaction between students and teachers. Similiarly, Park (2013) indicates that Twitter could be an effective media to enhance students engagement in course readings. Junco, Heibergert, and Loken (2011) also find that students using Twitter for educationally relevant purposes were significantly more engaged and earned higher semester grade point averages as they engaged in extended discussions of class topics. Moreover, students who use Twitter in class also reported feeling better prepared for future careers (Rinaldo, Tapp, and Laverie, 2011).

F. Previous Studies

Many researchers have used Twitter for educational purposes, and they have produced many studies showing a positive correlation between Twitter and various aspects of education. One of the researches had been done by Lomicka and Lord (2012). The sample of the study consisting of thirteen students of French course in the United States and twelve native French speakers. The research proved that Twitter could help language learners form a collaborative community where they can learn, share, and reflect. Moreover, the study shows that Twitter allows learners in both languages to develop a sense of community and learn a new language in a fun and interactive way.

The study is also conducted by Junco, Heibergert, and Loken (2011). The research focused more on Twitter and students' engagement. The research concluded that if Twitter is used in educationally relevant ways, it had a positive effect on student engagement, as well as having positive effects on students' grades. Moreover, the research proved that to improve student collaboration, engagement, and success, the faculty has to be active to participate and involve Twitter into the course.

Another research also conducted by Borau, K., Ullrich, C., Feng, J., & Shen, R. (2009). The research focused on analyzing the usefulness of Twitter in second language learning. The result showed that Twitter could help second language learners to train in communicative and cultural competence. This happened because the traditional language teaching method rarely gives the

learner the chance to be active and produce the target language as a tool of communication.

From those previous researches, it can be summarised that Twitter is an appropriate supporting media or tool that can enhance the teaching and learning process. Therefore, this research used Twitter as a media and critical thinking skills on reading comprehension as the gap from the previous researches.