

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In this globalization era, English is a very important language to interact with other people around the world. There are so many foreigners who come from other countries to work in Indonesia. They speak English as their international language, to communicate with other people. In order to build a good relationship with them, Indonesian people should be able to speak English too. Employers usually seek employees who can speak English as one of the requirements. People, who have higher education and can speak English and have a good skill, will therefore have a good position and good salaries.

Realizing those facts, the Indonesian government thinks that English is very important too. Therefore, it is taught from the elementary school up to senior high school as a compulsory subject.

Moreover teaching English is intended to make students obtain all the language skills. They should be made aware that there are four important skills involved. The related skills are reading, speaking, listening and writing. For years, reading has been considered to be the most important skill which determines the students' success in studying. Rubin in Dupuis (1982:16) writes that one of the most salient factors leading students to drop out of high school is lack of reading skill necessary for success in content subjects. In line with her, Carell (1983:01) states, "... reading is by far the most important of the four skills in a second

language; particularly in English ... reading is the main reason why students learn the language". Thus, the first reason for students to study English is undoubtedly to be able to read.

The reading skill needs developing in any language program because learning in many subject areas in school and outside involves reading. Reading is interrelated with the total educational process that educational success requires successful reading.

Here, being able to read is not only a matter of decoding symbols into sounds. It involves a mental process which is called comprehension. Heilman, Blair, and Rupley (1981:236) confirm that the major goal of teaching reading should be aimed toward furthering students' comprehension abilities. Therefore, students must be able to grasp the meaning of the printed text when they read it.

Since the comprehension abilities are significant in reading, many experts have discussed several factors affecting them. The factors may be broad and varied, but, here the writer only takes the one that is mostly related to her study, the growth of the vocabulary in reading comprehension.

Jones in Burns, Roe, and Ross (1984:152) puts forward that the growth of the vocabulary is essential to the development of labels of child's schemata. Students must call upon their existing schemata to comprehend. Vocabulary development is an important component of comprehension skill. Supporting that idea, Searfoss and Readence (1985:186) state that reading comprehension is certainly much easier if the students possess a large stock of words to draw in their mind. Lack of a large reading vocabulary places them at a distinct

disadvantage in giving meaning from the printed text. Furthermore, they point out that the presence of words can facilitate thinking processes, and, since reading is a thinking process, vocabulary naturally is the prime contributor to reading comprehension. Based on the notions above, those students' vocabularies will influence their comprehension in reading.

The fact is that most teachers in Indonesia do not give attention to the relation between words in a sentence in a reading passage with students' prior knowledge. Therefore based on this fact, students may have difficulties in relating their own ideas with the information given in the reading passage. As a result, students feel bored in comprehending a reading passage (Shepherd, 1973; Zhang, 1997).

In addition, Wittrock (1981), in her book "Neuropsychological and Cognitive Process in Reading, says that children and adults read with comprehension when they generate meanings of written language by relating it to their knowledge and memories of experiences." So, in the process of comprehending a reading passage, background knowledge is very important.

One of the usual techniques in teaching reading is Vocabulary Explanation. In this study, the writer uses Vocabulary Explanation technique to make the students able to comprehend the reading passage easily. Vocabulary in the target language is learned through direct translation from the native language.

Therefore, nowadays the writer wants to propose another teaching reading technique by using Semantic Mapping. Johnson (1986:780) defines Semantic Mapping as a technique which uses diagrams that help students become aware of

new words, to gather new meanings from old words and to see the relationship among the words. This technique can make the students relate their prior knowledge with the information given from the reading passage in the form of a map (Zaid, 1995; Chia, 2006).

Realizing the condition that in Indonesia, there are not many teachers who have got any access to the concept and practices of those techniques, the writer becomes interested in writing this study with the focus on answering the following problem statement.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Dealing with the fact that most junior high school students are not able to comprehend the reading passage fully, this study is designed to see whether there is a significant difference in the reading achievement of the students who are taught by means of Semantic Mapping technique and those who are taught by means of Vocabulary Explanation technique for second grade of junior high school students. Thus, the major problem of this situation based on the explanation above is:

“Is there any significant difference in the reading achievement of the students who are taught by means of Semantic Mapping technique and those who are taught by means of Vocabulary Explanation technique?”

1.3 Objective of the Study

Closely related to the statement of the problem, the objective of this study is to see whether there is a significant difference in the reading achievement of the students who are taught by means of Semantic Mapping technique and those who are taught by means of Vocabulary Explanation technique.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study is expected to give contribution both to the teaching of reading to the junior high school students, especially the second grade ones and to the readers as reference.

The writer hopes that the use of Semantic Mapping technique and Vocabulary Explanation technique in the teaching learning process can add the variety of techniques used in teaching reading skill. It is expected to be persuasive to encourage classroom teachers to create their own student-fronted classrooms. While for the students, the use of Semantic Mapping technique and Vocabulary Explanation technique may introduce them to the new teaching reading technique.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study was carried out based on meaningful learning theory by Ausubel (1965, in Brown 2000:83). He states that learning takes place in the human organism through a meaningful process of relating new events or items to already existing cognitive concepts or propositions – hanging new items on existing cognitive pegs.

Moreover, this study is also based on the linguistic schemata theory. According to schemata theory, the reader can not extract any information from a text unless s/he has the existing knowledge previously. The existing knowledge then can be used to facilitate an interpretation of the text. Therefore, the less familiar a reader is with the various schemata of the particular text, the more s/he will struggle to construct an accurate meaning (Kinsela: 1994).

1.6 Hypotheses of the Study

The students who are taught by means of Semantic Mapping technique are able to comprehend the ideas related to the reading passage and those who are taught by means of Vocabulary Explanation technique uncertainly able to comprehend the ideas related to the reading passage. It is assumed that the Semantic Mapping technique is better than Vocabulary Explanation technique. Accordingly the Alternative Hypothesis (Ha) is formulated that “There is a significant difference between the reading comprehension achievement of the second year junior high school students who are taught by means of Semantic Mapping technique and those who are taught by means of Vocabulary Explanation technique”.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study is about teaching reading comprehension based on the Competence Based Curriculum (2004) for English lesson for junior high school

students using the Semantic Mapping technique and Vocabulary Explanation technique.

The subjects of the study are limited to the second year students of SMP YPPI I Surabaya belonging year 2006-2007. The subjects of this study have the same level of English competence. The writer considers that the second year students have already had experience in reading independently so that it will not influence the result of the study.

1.8 Definition of the key terms

To avoid misunderstanding, the writer finds it useful to define several key terms used in this study. It is hoped that the readers will have a clear picture of what this study is trying to present. The key terms are: reading, schemata, the meaningful learning theory, Semantic Mapping and Grammar Translation Method.

1. Reading is a cognitive process, which is needed to comprehend the passage (Nuttal, 1996:10). It means that in reading readers not only do the linguistic exercises but also getting the meaning from the passage. The meaning has to be understood through an active “interrogation of the passage” by the reader. In other words, the reader has to work hard to construct the meaning by examining the information contained in the passage.
2. Schemata are the background knowledge. These are mental representations of typical situations, and they are used in discourse processing to predict

the contents of particular situation, which the discourse describes (Cook, 1990:69).

3. The meaningful learning theory by Ausubel (1965). He contended that learning takes place in the human organism through a meaningful process of relating new events or items to already existing cognitive concepts or propositions – hanging new items on existing cognitive pegs.
4. Semantic Mapping is a diagram which helps the students to be aware of new words, to gather new meanings from old words, to see the relationship among the words in order to activate student's prior knowledge and to introduce meaningful new words in context (Carrell, 1983; Zaid, 1995; Porter, 2006).
5. Grammar Translation Method is a way of studying a language that approaches the language first through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences or Vocabulary Explanation and texts into and out of the target language (Richards and Rodgers, 1986).
6. Vocabulary Explanation is a way of explaining some key vocabularies from the reading passage (Zaid, 1995).

1.9 Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 deals with the introduction of the thesis. It contains background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, theoretical framework,

hypotheses of the study, scope and limitation of the study, definition of key terms, and organization of the study. Chapter 2 deals with the review of the related literature. It covers the underlying theories, Grammar Translation Method, Semantic Mapping and review of related studies. Chapter 3 is about research methodology. It discusses about research design, variables, treatments, population and sample, research instrument, data collection procedure and data analysis procedure. Chapter 4 presents data analysis and findings. It presents data, data analysis and findings and interpretation of the findings. The last chapter, Chapter 5 deals with summary, conclusion, and suggestion. It contains the summary, conclusion and suggestion.