

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Background of the Study

Nowadays, English takes an important role in almost every country including Indonesia. This is in line with the 1994 SMU curriculum, “ Bahasa Inggris adalah bahasa asing pertama di Indonesia yang dianggap penting untuk tujuan penyerapan dan pengembangan ilmu ...” (Depdikbud, 1994:1). For this reason, David E. Eskey (1971:15) says “For the students in a Non-English speaking environment, the only practical reason for studying English is to gain the ability to read journals and books in that language”. Here, printed material represents the primary medium of communication in English or in other words we can say that the only practical reason for studying English is to gain the ability to read.

Reading books in English will directly influence the continuation of the students' education. James Ward (1984:36) in his article says that “.... The majority of students of English as foreign language may never speak much English but most of them will have to read English in order to complete their studies”. Realizing that much of the knowledge is gained from books, reading skills is needed by the students in their efforts to develop and increase their knowledge.

As a matter of fact, the expectation above is far from being fulfilled. Almost all of the students in the senior high school students find many difficulties in understanding a reading passage well. The difficulties however, according to Brock (1990:2) might be solved by linking background knowledge with which one can comprehend the unknown information in a text. This means that the reader should have knowledge about the text. In this case the text should be familiar to the student so that he or she can connect the new information in a text to what he or she already known.

Moreover, according to Anamaria (1985:35), the teaching of reading should be based on: (1) the interest and needs of the students, (2) the background knowledge they already possesses, (3) the understanding of how discourse is organized, and (4) the recognition of the functions performed by different language forms and discourse markers.

Based on the four points above, the writer only takes point number two into consideration since it relates to her study that the teaching of reading should be based on the students' familiarity. It can be said that there should be a relation between students' knowledge and the text under discussion. It will help them to comprehend the text easier since they have had some clues to guess what the passage is. In other words, the reading materials should be familiar to the students. If the students are familiar, they will be motivated to read the text. Conversely, when the students face completely unfamiliar material, it will make them confuse and do not know what to comprehend. As a result their marks will be lower and the worst thing is it does not motivate them to learn English.

The fact that is taken by the writer while she did her PPL, once, she got the opportunity to observe a reading instruction done by the English teacher of the school. The passage was about electricity which was given to the IPS program students. Unfortunately, when the students were expected to do the comprehension questions, they faced difficulty. They wasted time by looking up every difficult words in their dictionary but still they could not answer the questions well. As a result almost 70% students who got bad results. By interviewing some students, the writer suspected that first, the students were unfamiliar to the passage. Second, their teacher could not explain well. From these two suspectings above, only the first one is taken into consideration since it is closely related to this study. They could not connect their background knowledge with the passage they got although they had known the meaning of the every words in the passage.

Knowing this fact, the writer suggests that reading passage should be familiar to the students so that probably they can improve their reading comprehension achievement. In this study, however, the writer wants to know what is the effect of familiar and unfamiliar reading topics on the students' reading comprehension achievement.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In line with the background of this study that is to see the effect of familiar and unfamiliar reading topics on the students' reading comprehension

achievement, therefore, in this study, the writer would like to answer the major question as follows:

“What is the effect of familiar and unfamiliar reading topics on the students’ reading comprehension achievement ?”

This major research problem is, then, divided into the following sub-problem statements:

1. What is the effect of familiar and unfamiliar reading topics for IPA students in IPA-F Vs IPA-UF?
2. What is the effect of familiar reading topics for IPA and IPS students in IPA-F Vs IPS-F?
3. What is the effect of unfamiliar reading topics for IPA and IPS students in IPA-UF Vs IPS-UF?
4. What is the effect of familiar and unfamiliar reading topics for IPS students in IPS-F Vs IPS-UF?

1.3 The Objective of the Study

In connection with the statement of the problem formulated above, the major objective of this study is

“To find out the effect of familiar and unfamiliar reading topics on the students’ reading comprehension achievement”.

This major objective is subdivided into the following minor objectives:

1. to find out the effect of familiar and unfamiliar reading topics for IPA students in IPA-F Vs IPA-UF

2. to find out the effect of familiar reading topics for IPA and IPS students in IPA-F Vs IPS-F
3. to find out the effect of unfamiliar reading topics for IPA and IPS students in IPA-UF Vs IPS-UF
4. to find out the effect of familiar and unfamiliar reading topics for IPS students in IPS-F Vs IPS-UF

1.4 The Significance of the Study

This study is meant to give contribution to the English teachers in determining suitable reading topics. In determining the reading topics, the teacher should consider the students' background knowledge or the students familiarity towards the topics given. By giving the familiar one, it can motivate the students to read more compared to the unfamiliar one.

1.5 Hypotheses

In view of the fact that this study is intended to investigate the effect of familiar and unfamiliar reading topics on the students' reading comprehension achievement. Therefore, the major hypotheses of this study is:

“Familiar and unfamiliar reading topics affect the students' reading comprehension achievement”.

While the minor hypotheses of this study as follows:

1. Familiar and unfamiliar reading topics affect IPA students' reading comprehension achievement in IPA-F Vs IPA-UF

2. Familiar reading topics affect IPA and IPS students' reading comprehension achievement in IPA-F Vs IPS-F
3. Unfamiliar reading topics affect IPA and IPS students' reading comprehension achievement in IPA-UF Vs IPS-UF
4. Familiar and unfamiliar reading topics affect IPS students' reading comprehension achievement in IPS-F Vs IPS-UF.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study covers only to two types of reading topics. The first is familiar reading topic and the second is unfamiliar reading topic

In this study, the writer took two classes, one is IPA class and the other is IPS class of SMUK Petra III Jl.Kalianyar 43 Surabaya as the subjects of her study. The writer chooses IPA and IPS classes because the she wants to see whether IPA and IPS students give an effect on reading comprehension achievement when the students face familiar and unfamiliar reading topics.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misinterpretation, it is necessary to define the terms found in this study:

Familiar reading

It means that the reading which is generally known, seen or experienced or closely related to the reader's knowledge (Longman, 1978:394).

Unfamiliar reading

It means that the reading which is unknown, unexperienced or unrelated to the reader's knowledge (Longman, 1978:394).

Topic

Topic is subject for conversation, talk, writing, etc (Longman, 1978:1169).

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a complex process by which a student tries to reconstruct a message in a graphic language by a writer (Johnson, 1983, p.46).

Achievement

Achievement in L2 is viewed in terms of proficiency in the four basic skills i.e. reading, listening, writing and speaking. (Gardner, 1985, p.127). In this study, only reading is taken into account.

1.8 The Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I deals with background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, definition of key terms, hypothesis, scope and limitation of the study, assumption and organization of the study. Chapter II concerns with review of related literature. Chapter III presents methodology of the study. In chapter IV, the findings and discussions are presented. Chapter V contains the conclusions which is divided into summary and suggestion.