

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

According to the 1975 and 1984 SMA curriculum, the goal of teaching English in Indonesia is not emphasized on speaking, but rather on the ability to read. To make it clearer, the following is the direct quotation of the objective of the 1984 curriculum stated in Garis-Garis Besar Program Pengajaran (GBPP; translation: The Outline of Instructional Program).

Siswa memiliki minat dan kemampuan berbahasa Inggris terutama membaca, dan disamping itu siswa juga diharapkan dapat menyimak, berbicara dan menulis karangan sederhana dalam bahasa Inggris yang menggunakan pola kalimat lanjutan bahasa Inggris dengan kosa kata dalam tingkatan 4000 kata.

Translation: Students have interest and ability in English, especially in reading, also students are expected to be able to understand, to speak and to write a simple composition using English sentence pattern up to 4000 words.

This means that in Indonesia, especially at the SMAs, reading should be given a priority among the four language skills; namely, reading, listening, writing,

1. Kurikulum Sekolah Menengah Umum Tingkat Atas (SMA), Garis - Garis Besar Program Pengajaran (GBPP), Depdikbud, 1986, hal.62.

and speaking; though the other three language skills should, of course, not be neglected. It is an important skill, as Julia Dakin states that the most important language skill, the most valuable and the most enduring is reading. ²

In spite of the fact that reading is a very important skill for all SMA students in Indonesia, it is a skill that has not been fully developed in English Language teaching. It is predictable that the students' average ability in reading comprehension is still low. Some efforts to improve this situation have been made, and many suggested methods concerning teaching on reading have appeared, but what is expected to be achieved on students' reading comprehension ability is still beyond our reach. There are a lot of reasons that deal with this unfavourable result.

The study in this paper emphasizes reading comprehension achievement in relation to three variables, namely vocabulary, structure, and general knowledge. These variables can be considered as factors that account for the success and failure of reading comprehension achievement. But then a question may arise. Why do we have to consider vocabulary,

2. Julia Dakin, Reading, unpublished paper.

structure, and general knowledge as influencing factors to reading comprehension?

Reading comprehension involves both lexical and grammatical aspects. I believe that in order to comprehend a reading passage well, one should have a wide range of vocabulary (=lexical aspect) and good knowledge of structure (=grammatical aspect), also a broad general knowledge. William D. Barker, in his book 'Reading Skill', states: "Your ability to comprehend and critically evaluate what you read depends on your knowing the meaning of a large number of the words you see in print".³ And Mary Finocchiaro, in her book 'Teaching English as a Second Language' says : "To understand a reading passage, the learners have to acquire the structure system, vocabulary, and basic pronunciation".⁴

Interested in finding out whether the students' ability in comprehending a reading passage has correlation with their vocabulary, structure, and general knowledge, I decided to make a study on this

3. William D. Barker, Reading Skill, Prentice-Hall, Inc., N.Y., 1974, p. 47

4. Mary Finocchiaro, Teaching English As a Second Language, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1969, p. 137

matter, i.e. the correlation between reading comprehension and the ability of vocabulary, structure, general knowledge of the first year students of SMAK Stella Maris.

1.2. Aim of the Study

Based on the theory that reading comprehension involves both lexical and grammatical aspects, the study in this paper aims to prove that one's reading comprehension achievement has relationship with his vocabulary, structure, and general knowledge. Therefore, it is expected that these findings will be of some help to English teachers to improve their strategies on teaching English.

1.3. Limitation of the Study and Some Definitions

Being aware of how broad the topic of this study would be, I find it necessary to limit the topic. For this purpose, it would be useful to define the terms found in the title of this study. They are variables, comprehending a reading text, and first year students of SMAK Stella Maris.

Variables mean the factors or the aspects which influence the students' ability in understanding the

reading passage, namely vocabulary, structure and general knowledge.

Comprehending a reading text means understanding a reading passage or the score obtained from the students' reading comprehension test.

The first year students of SMAK Stella Maris represent the students who during the 1988-1989 school year belong to class I SMAK Stella Maris Surabaya.

So, the Variables that account for comprehending a reading text: a Study on the First Year Students of SMAK Stella Maris is a study on the relationship between: 1. the vocabulary achievement, 2. the structure achievement, 3. the general knowledge achievement and, 4. achievement in comprehending a reading text of the first year students of SMAK Stella Maris.

1.4. Problem Statement

In connection with the aim of the study that is to see whether vocabulary, structure and general knowledge significantly account for the students' ability in comprehending a reading text, the statement of the problem under discussion is formulated as follows:

Do vocabulary, structure and general knowledge significantly account for the ability of the first year

students of SMAK Stella Maris in comprehending a reading text?

1.5. Fundamental Assumptions

Attempting to answer those questions above, I have drawn the following assumptions:

- a. The first year students belonging to the school year 1988-1989 have more or less the same level of English proficiency. They have got English three years during their study at SMP and about more than six months at the first year of SMA.
- b. The material given to the students tests are based on GBPP Kurikulum 1984.

1.6. Hypotheses

Based on the assumption above the following hypotheses are formulated:

- a. The Null Hypothesis (H_0) : There is no significant relationship between vocabulary, structure, general knowledge and comprehending a reading text.
- b. The Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a positive relationship between vocabulary,

structure, general knowledge and comprehending a reading text.

1.7. Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter I, the Introduction, deals with the Background of the Study, Aim of the Study, Limitation of the Study, Problem Statement, Fundamental Assumptions, Hypotheses, and Organization of the Thesis.

Chapter II, Review of the Related Literature, deals with a brief review of related papers written by graduates of the English Department of Widya Mandala University, and the theoretical background related to this study.

Chapter III, Methodology of Research, is divided into five parts. Those are Research Design, Population and Sample, Instrument, Procedure of Data Collection, and the Constructing of the Test.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data, Chapter IV, is divided into two parts. The first part is Raw Data of the Test; the second part is Data Analysis and Interpretation of Findings.

The last chapter, Chapter V, consists of two parts: Summary and Suggestion.