

CHAPTER I

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1.1 Background of the study

English has taken a more and more important role in Indonesia because as a developing country, Indonesia still needs to absorb a lot of modern technology and new invention which mostly use writing in English. Many valuable books about various subjects written in English are marketable throughout a great many countries including Indonesia. The importance of English in this twentieth century is also known to almost every country. As such, English is regarded as a means of International communication. Bailey and Gorlach (1988:vii) say,

"By 1975, English was the sole official language of twenty-one nations, and in 16 more it is the official language of government, education, broadcasting, and publication. According to the best estimates, English is the first language of 300 millions people around the world."

As a foreign language, English is taught in Indonesia starting from the first semester of Junior High School (SMP) up to the sixth semester of Senior High School (SMA). Even it has been taught as an optional subject starting from the third grade of elementary school since 1994. In teaching-learning English, the four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading, and

writing are taught and learnt, of which the main objective is stressed on the reading ability. This fact is realized by the government, which through the Department of Education and Culture, states the main objectives of teaching English reading in the Curriculum of 1987 as follows:

"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." (Depdikbud, 1987:1)

This simply to say that, the students have interest and the abilities to communicate in English especially to read and besides that, the students are expected to be able to listen, to speak and to write simple compositions in English, which use simple with simple English advance patterns with vocabularies of about 4000 words.

The latest curriculum of 1994 also stresses the same objective, saying,

"Mata pelajaran ini berisi ketrampilan membaca, menyimak, berbicara, dan menulis dalam bahasa Inggris yang disajikan secara terpadu dengan penekanan pada ketrampilan membaca." (Depdikbud, 1993:18)

This statement means that, this lesson contains of reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills which are given integratedly with special emphasis on reading ability.

We know that there is no difference in the objective of teaching learning so the writer still uses the curriculum 1987.

The purpose of reading in the teaching-learning of English in SMA also brings the teachers to focus on reading teaching. Anamaria Harvey A (1980:34) says,

"The aim of teaching students to read in a foreign language would be to help them recognize, process, and retrieve meaningful information which they may use in their daily contact with other subjects at school or for their main concerns outside of school".

Undoubtedly, the objective is good, for all the four language skills are to be achieved. However, the fact is that there have been some constraints in its application to the teaching-learning of the reading skill. These constraints are found mainly in the students' ability to comprehend the reading passages and the teachers' techniques in teaching the reading skills.

Students' poor ability to comprehend is one of the causes of students' complaint. We often hear statements such as, "I don't understand what the passage is about," "I am not interested in the topic," "It is full of new words," "I would need hours to look up new words in my dictionary," "It is difficult," "I don't know enough English," "All I do is memorizing a long list of words." As a result, they are not satisfied with their efforts of reading English passages.

It is obvious that comprehension is needed in any reading activity. To this point, Thonis (1970:77) says that comprehension or understanding in every reading activity is an important part of each skill learning.

Thonis (1970:78), then, proposes some steps to motivate students in reading class. First, they should read paragraph per paragraph to select the main idea of each paragraph. Second, after they are able to comprehend the main thought of each paragraph, they should be able to identify the details which support the main idea. Third, they should learn to appreciate motives and traits of people, to see the relationship between circumstances, and action, and greater insight into people and event. And last, they must think about what they read in order to interpret meanings as well as to get the factual information given.

In reality, it is not easy to apply the steps to real classroom teaching of reading comprehension because the size of reading classes is usually too large (about 40 to 50 students) and the time allotted is too little. There is not enough time for so many students to share their opinions about the passages being read. Daely (1984:4) observing the reading classes of 25 "training school" (SMP & SMA) describes the teaching of reading comprehension in these schools as follows:

1. The teaching materials only contain a few comprehensive questions which is most of them are factual.

2. The teacher reads the passage aloud as an example and explains the difficult words by giving the equivalents in Bahasa Indonesia.
3. The teacher asks the students to read the passage aloud in turns or to read it silently.
4. The students are made to answer the provided questions.
5. The teacher provides the students with "correct" answers.

He says that the routine job continuous day after day and of course it makes the students get bored, lose their motivation and be reluctant to participate in classroom activities.

Based on what has been practised in reading classes, especially the teaching steps in the classroom, the writer suggests that group discussion be used as an alternative technique for the teaching of reading comprehension to SMA students. According to Byrne (1976:82), in group discussion, the students can exchange or share their opinion within the context of the group. Davies (1980:39) even claims that students can learn from each other, and correction made by their peers in the natural give-and-take of discussion can be more successful than correction from the teacher. Indeed, in group discussion, the students can find occasion for discussing their thinking. It is also accepted that a group discussion attempts to achieve its goal by solving the problems through the interaction of its members. It is expected that the students will try to express their ideas in answering the ques-

tions and what they know about the passage.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In line with the background of the study, the problem to be solved in this thesis was formulated as follows, "How should the teacher use group discussion to teach reading comprehension to his students?."

Before solving this problem, the following questions should be answered first:

- a. What is the nature of group discussion?
- b. What are the advantages of group discussion in teaching reading comprehension to SMA students?
- c. What are the suitable types of group discussion for the teaching of reading comprehension to SMA students?

1.3 Objective of the Thesis

Connected with the formulated problem statements, the central objective of this thesis is to present ideas about how to teach reading comprehension to SMA students through group discussion. Prior to talking about the central objective, this thesis intends to present ideas about :

- a. the nature of group discussion.
- b. the advantages of group discussion in teaching reading comprehension to SMA students.

c. the suitable types of group discussion for the teaching of reading comprehension to SMA students.

1.4 Significance of the Thesis

The ideas presented in this thesis are expected to be used as a small contribution to the teaching of English reading comprehension to SMA students. As such, it is expected that the English teachers of SMA will make use of this information about group discussion in teaching reading to help their students better comprehend reading passages.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Thesis

Being aware of how broad the topic of the study would be, the writer finds it necessary to limit it. In this thesis, the writer talks about teaching reading comprehension based on the 1987 Curriculum of SMA through group discussion. The technique suggested here is intended for the second year students of SMA as an example, since they have got knowledge in reading. In discussion, the students don't have to use English only. For this purpose, the reading passages taken from "Bahasa Inggris 2A untuk SMA" are used as examples.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation, the following key terms: group discussion, reading, and

comprehension are defined briefly.

a. Group Discussion is defined as the systematic and objective sharing of ideas and information by two or more persons, who work together as an effort to solve a problem or to gain a better understanding of the problem. (Samovar and Mills, 1962:218)

b. Reading is extracting information from text. The text here implies not only the printed page, but also combinations of text and pictures, diagrams, graphs, illustrated text, instructions and so on (Gibson and Levin, 1985:5).

c. Reading Comprehension to Smith and Robinson (1980:205) is the understanding, evaluating, and utilizing of information and ideas which are got through an interaction between reader and author.

1.7 Research Methodology

Related to the background, this thesis was the result of a library reseach. At first, the writer studied several different views and aspects of reading, group discussion and other related theories, which could be applied to the teaching of reading skills. Then based on the available literature, the writer developed her own ideas of how to teach reading by using group discussion. These sources can be seen in the bibliography of this thesis.

1.8 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter one deals with the Introduction of the thesis which contains: the background of the thesis, the statement of the problem, the objective of the thesis, the significance of the thesis, scope and limitation of the thesis, the definition of key terms, the research methodology, and the organization of the thesis. Chapter two is concerned with the theories of discussion and group discussion, the organization of group work, and the advantages of group work. Chapter three discusses the nature of reading comprehension. Chapter four, then, deals with the procedures of group discussion in reading comprehension. Finally, the last chapter covers the summary and suggestion.