

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Background of the Study

English is taught as the first foreign language to the Senior High School students in Indonesia. The objectives of the teaching of English in Indonesia are stipulated in the Minister of Education Decree No.096/1967, dated 12 December 1967. One of the aims of the teaching of English is effective reading ability. The purpose is to comprehend the content of textbooks and reference materials in English, which comprise 90% of all reference materials.

The 1984 English Curriculum for SMA states that a good reading in English is important to academic studies, professional success, and personal development. There are some reasons why reading is important. The first reason is reading helps students learn to think in the new language. Second, reading helps students build a better vocabulary. Third, reading makes students more comfortable with the language. The fourth reason is reading is the only way for students to use English if students live in a non-English-speaking country. And the last reason is reading can help students learn to read

better in English-speaking countries (Mikulecky and Linda Jeffries ,1964:10).

Since Senior High School graduates are prepared to continue their study to higher education, teaching reading is the most important skill among the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Besides, the majority of the SMA students do not speak English much but they have to read English texts.

However, when students read English passages, they seem to read with less understanding than the teacher might expect them to have. In addition, they read considerably slower than they reportedly read in their first language.

One of the ways in comprehending the information in English texts is that students should be able to relate the textual material with their prior knowledge. Carrell (In Richards et.al., 1979:220) states that comprehending a text is an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text. Similiar argument is given by Anderson. He points out that "every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world as well" (1977:369). According to Coady, the role of background knowledge is that :

Background knowledge becomes an important variable when we notice, as many have, that students with a background of some kind learn English faster, on the average, than those without such a background (Coady, 1979:7).

The students' prior knowledge is needed in reading. If they have the relevant background information, they may be easy to detect the logical organization of the text being read. Eskey (1986:6) stresses that comprehension of any kind depends on knowledge. Comprehension here means relating what is not known, or new information, to what is already known, which is not a random collection of facts but a "theory of the world" (Smith 1982:84).

There are many SMA students who still have difficulties in reading English texts. They are still unable to understand them well although they have studied English for three years. There are many reasons why students cannot understand the text well, one of them is they are not used to comprehending reading text using their prior knowledge. They only discuss the vocabulary and answer the useless questions which are not helpful for students in comprehending the passage (Hardiani, 1990:3). Moreover, the teacher is supposed not to know how to use the appropriate techniques. Considering such a condition, the writer would like to suggest two techniques to teach reading comprehension, they are: previewing and webbing.

The two techniques mentioned above are suggested in order to help students develop their prior knowledge. In webbing, the students are led by the teacher in

offering words or phrases related to the topic or term written on the board (brainstorming) in turn. Then they are led by the teacher in organizing this seemingly random collection of terms into categories. Webbing is used to activate the students' prior knowledge (Gillet and Temple 1986:208-212). Previewing activity is done before the students read the texts. They scan each page or part of the passage looking at illustrations and text features such as boldface points and headings (A. Ngadiman 1990:64). The same with webbing, previewing is also used to activate the students' prior knowledge (Gillet and Temple, 1986).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Since reading is an important skill to teach and realizing that many students still have difficulties in reading, the teacher must be able to choose appropriate techniques to teach reading comprehension. Based on the background of this study, the problem of this study is: How can previewing and webbing be used in teaching reading comprehension ?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Derived directly from the above formulated problems, the objective of this study is to suggest the use of previewing and webbing in teaching reading comprehension, so that the students' reading ability can be improved.

1.4 Significance of the Study

In this study, the writer discusses suggested techniques of teaching reading through previewing and webbing to SMA students. The aim of the application of these techniques is most likely to be useful for the teachers of English, especially those of Senior High Schools, in encouraging the students to use their background knowledge or their previous knowledge in reading comprehension in order that they are able to comprehend texts well. Hopefully, the teaching of reading comprehension through previewing and webbing can be more effective and interesting.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

Because of the limited time, this study is limited to previewing and webbing for teaching reading comprehension to SMA students.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misinterpretation, it is necessary to define the following key terms :

1. Reading is an interactive process between the text and the reader's previous background knowledge (Adam and Collins 1979, Rumelhart, 1980).
2. Webbing is a simple way to help students begin to recall prior information and form relationship. The teacher writes a topic or term on the board, students offer terms or phrases, then they are helped to organize the terms which are seemingly random of collected (Gillet and Temple, 1986:208).
3. Previewing is referred to as prereading or surveying. Students scan each page by seeing the key words or sentence to predict the story (Gillet and Temple, 1986:210).
4. Prior knowledge or schemata is a theory about how knowledge is represented and about how the presentation facilitates the use of the knowledge in particular ways (Rumelhart, 1980).

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the following schemata theory:

According to Carrell and Eisterhold (In Richards et.al., 1979:220) comprehending a text is an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text. Efficient comprehension requires the ability to relate the textual material to one's own knowledge (In Richards et.al., 1979). The role of background knowledge in language comprehension has been formalized as " Schema Theory", which has as one of its fundamental tenets that a text, any text, either spoken or written, does not by itself carry meaning. A text only provides directions for listeners or readers as to how they should retrieve or construct meaning from their own (Barlett et.al., 1979:1-22).

Schemata alone, however, are not enough. In order that reading comprehension becomes efficient, the reader's background knowledge or schemata must be activated. Previewing and webbing are two of the many ways which can be used to help the students activate their schemata (Gillet et.al., 1980:208-212).

1.8 Methodology

This study is a library research. The writer has thoroughly studied many books, papers and articles which most of them can be found in the library to complete her study.

1.9 Organization of The Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. In Chapter one, the writer presents the introduction of the thesis that deals with the background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study, definition of key terms, theoretical framework, methodology, and organization of the thesis. In Chapter two, the writer presents the reading process and schemata. In Chapter three, the writer presents the methods in activating the students' prior knowledge. In Chapter four, the writer presents the application of suggested techniques. In the last Chapter, the writer gives some conclusion and suggestions.