

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Nowadays mastering a foreign language is important. English is one of the important languages in the world. People speak English as their international language to communicate with other people around the world. In order to build a good relationship with them, Indonesian people should be able to speak English too. For this purpose, parents ask their children to join English courses. They even start it when they are in the early age. According to Rubin and Thompson (1994: 4) “Some people think that the best time to begin studying a foreign language is in childhood and that younger you are, the easier it is to learn another language.

Realizing those facts, in Indonesia English is taught from Elementary school up to Senior High school as a compulsory subject. According to the development stage of Erikson’s theory (in Santrock, 1999: 36), as children move into the elementary school years, they direct their energy toward mastering knowledge and intellectual skill. This includes the knowledge of language. It is the basic knowledge that must be possessed by the children before they can master the other skills. In this elementary school age, the children will absorb new language more easily and quickly than the elder ones. It is one of the children’s innate abilities. This ability makes the children able to learn language well.

In teaching-learning English, the four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, are taught and learnt. One of the basic skills that can make

the students become active in exploring and constructing the new knowledge is reading. Moreover Santrock (1999:290) says that when children read, they process and interpret the information. The information processing is concerned with how children analyze many different sources of information available for them in the environment and how they make sense of those experiences. They can broaden their knowledge and then use it in their life.

Furthermore reading 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 passage when they read it.

The factors of the comprehension may be broad and varied; here the writer only takes one that is related to her study, the growth of the vocabulary in reading comprehension.

Jones in Burns, Roe, and Ross (1984:152) put 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.

However, in reality, many students have difficulties in relating their own idea with the information given in the reading passage. It is because most of the teachers in Indonesia do not give attention to the relation between words in a sentence in a reading passage with the students' prior knowledge. As a result, students will feel difficult in comprehending the reading passage (Zhang, 1997).

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

Most teachers in Indonesia still deal with traditional reading techniques. One of traditional teaching reading technique is Vocabulary Explanation. In this study, the writer uses Vocabulary explanation Technique to make the students able to comprehend the reading passage easily. The application of Vocabulary Explanation Technique in teaching reading is learned through direct translation to the native language.

Teachers in Indonesia have used vocabulary Explanation Technique for many years. This technique is proven quite effective to teach reading comprehension in many years. Nevertheless, many techniques support the teacher in teaching reading process. In this study, the writer wants to propose another teaching reading technique by using Semantic Mapping. Johnson (1986: 760) defines Semantic Mapping as a technique that 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). According to Johnson (1986), students who are taught by using Semantic Mapping technique will have more meaningful ideas stored in long term memory, because the students can relate the ideas which are

stored in their existing knowledge with the ideas in the passage. As a result, the students who have been taught by means of Semantic Mapping will remember the ideas from the topic discussed.

There are four theses written at Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya concerning reading similar to this study is overviewed. The first study of Dewi (1990), the second study of Tjing (1991), the third study of Hardiani (1992) and the fourth study of Kosasih (2007)

In all of their theses found that Semantic Mapping can improve the students' reading achievement of Senior High School Students and Junior High School Students.

In fact, studies related to the implementation of the Semantic Mapping technique in reading class have been carried out. However, most of them have focused on high school and junior high school setting. More studies need to be conducted to find out the whether there is a significant difference in the reading comprehension achievement of the fifth grade of the elementary school students who are taught by means of Semantic Mapping Technique in other settings. In this case, the writer chooses elementary school setting as the subject.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background above, the writer in this study tries to answer the following question:

“Is there any significant difference in the reading comprehension achievement of the fifth grade of the elementary school 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

From the problem mentioned above, the objective of this study is to find out whether there is a significant difference in the reading comprehension achievement of the fifth grade of the elementary school 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 elementary school students, especially the fifth grade ones and to the readers as reference.

The writer hopes that the use of Semantic Mapping technique in the teaching learning process can add the variation of the technique used in teaching reading skill. It is expected to provide ideas of the technique in teaching reading in order to make the students interest in reading learning activity.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

Every people have schemata in their mind but sometime they cannot activate it. Schemata are the background knowledge. According to Kinsela (1994), “the less familiar reader is with the various schemata of the particular text, the more s/he will struggle to construct an accurate meaning”. The teacher can use Semantic Mapping Technique to activate their students’ schemata, so that their students can comprehend the reading passage easily and get higher reading achievement. In this study, Semantic Mapping based on the meaningful learning theory because when we make a map it must be meaningful. Ausubel (1965, in Brown 2000:83) contends 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. Meaning is not an implicit response, but a “clearly articulated and precisely differentiated conscious experience that emerges when potentially meaningful signs, symbols, concepts, or propositions are related to and incorporated within a given individual’s cognitive structure on a non-arbitrary and substantive basis” (Anderson & Ausubel 1963, in Brown 2000:83).

1.6 Hypothesis of the Study

On the basis of the theoretical problem above, the following alternative hypothesis is formulated:

The alternative hypothesis is:

~ There is a significant difference in the reading comprehension achievement of the fifth grade of the elementary school students who are taught by means of Semantic Mapping Technique and those who are taught by means of Vocabulary Explanation Technique.

To test the above alternative hypothesis, the following null hypothesis is formulated.

The Null Hypothesis:

~ There is no significant difference in the reading comprehension achievement of the students who are taught by means of Semantic Mapping Technique and those who are taught by means of Vocabulary Explanation Technique.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study is about teaching reading comprehension based on English lesson for Elementary school students by means of the Semantic Mapping Technique and Vocabulary Explanation Technique.

The subject of the study is limited to the fifth grade students. The writer considers that the fifth grade students have already had experience in reading independently.

1.8 Definition of Key Term

To clarify the term used in this study and to avoid misunderstanding, the writer finds it is necessary to define the following key term:

a. Young Learners

They are children between the ages of 2-12 years old, approximately corresponding to the elementary school years (Santrock, 1999: 18). In this study, they are children at Indonesia Elementary schools more particularly in grade 5.

b. Reading

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.

c. Schemata

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).

d. The meaningful learning theory

The meaningful learning theory by Ausubel (1965). He contends 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.

e. Semantic Mapping

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).

f. Grammar Translation Method

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).

g. Vocabulary Explanation

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 three 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 Theory of Reading, Types of Reading, Schemata Theory, Teaching English to Young Learner, Vocabulary Explanation Technique, Semantic Mapping and review of related studies. Chapter 3 is about research methodology. It discusses about research design, variables, population and sample, treatments, research instrument, data collection procedure and data analysis procedure. Chapter 4 is about data analysis, findings and interpretation. It is concerned with data analysis, Interpretation of the findings. The last chapter, Chapter 5 deals with conclusion. It contains the summary, conclusion and suggestion.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE