

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In Indonesia, English occupies a special position in the educational system. It is taught as a compulsory subject beginning from the Junior High up to the University levels. It shows that English is considered an important subject. This condition is supported by the fact that most of the textbooks in different subjects are written in English.

Having English as a skill will help everyone enormously, because English is a universal language. Many people in this world use English as a means of communication. It shows that having this skill enables everyone to broaden his ideas and knowledge by coming across new things that he never imagines before. However, the majority of students learning English as a foreign language may never speak much English but most of them have to read in English to complete their study.

In the objective of the education of the SMA, the government states that if high school graduates want to continue their study to the higher

education, they should possess skills and one of the important skills is the ability to read English textbooks since most of the books at the university are written in English.

Being aware of the importance of the English reading skill, the teacher especially high school teachers should give more time to reading and use some techniques to make the students interested in reading.

Considering this condition, the government of Indonesia puts much emphasis on the reading ability on the objectives of English language teaching at the SMA. The objective of teaching English that concerns with the reading ability is stated in the 1984 curriculum of SMA in the *Garis-Garis Besar Program Pengajaran (GBPP)*:

“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 kosakata dalam tingkatan 4000 kata” (GBPP, 1986:62).

(Students have interest and ability in English especially in reading, and students are expected to be able to listen, speak, and write simple essay by using English sentence pattern within the vocabulary level of 4000 words.)

That is why, improving reading comprehension for the students is very important. Improvement can only be made step by step, that is why the teacher

should help the students from the early stage. Then after knowing the right way of understanding reading passages the teacher can broaden the scope of the reading.

Therefore, from the reasons above efforts should be done to develop the students' reading ability. By developing their ability, students who are going to continue their study to universities are expected to be able to read and comprehend English textbooks better. Accordingly students should improve their reading skill from the early stage.

Unfortunately, reading a foreign language book is more difficult than reading in one's language. Although the teaching of English at the SMA emphasizes the importance of reading comprehension, the reality shows that many SMA students still find many problems in comprehending English textbooks. "Sometimes it happens that a student understands all the sentences in reading material, but still does not understand what it says as a whole" (Wiriyachitra, 1984:21). Thus, it can be concluded that the reading ability of many SMA students is still very low.

It is true that the teacher plays an important role in teaching, so does the teacher in teaching reading comprehension. The teacher should know what makes the students not interested in reading passages. Some of the reasons

must be caused by the unfamiliarity of the passages. There are two types of passages, familiar and unfamiliar reading passages. Whether the students want it or not this will influence their comprehension.

It is called familiar when the students have knowledge about the materials. Familiarity here is limited to a certain condition where students at least know in general about things concerning to the content of the passage. Having information in mind related to the materials will help the students in comprehending the reading materials. This is shown by psycholinguistic view that believes that one must already know something, some conceptual knowledge, that can be related to new information before it can be comprehended (Swaby, 1989:187).

Conversely, it is called unfamiliar when the students have no ideas about the concept of the materials they reads. Specifically, students are unfamiliar with the reading materials if they do not have any concept or know very little about the reading materials. This permits the comprehension to be a failure because the incoming information is inappropriate with the stored knowledge. "Without experiences to relate to the concepts represented by the words you are reading, understanding is virtually impossible" (Heilman, Blair, and Rupley, 1981:239).

Knowing this fact the teacher should be wise in choosing materials for the students. Thus, in this case, good selection of reading passages will also help the students improve their reading ability. Another factor can also be seen from the level of difficulty compared to the students' level. Giving the students reading passages containing vocabulary beyond their level of understanding will only be in vain because it is difficult for them to understand the idea of the passages.

Learning how to comprehend reading passages is a great advantage to the students since they will know how to get new ideas or knowledge by reading. That is why it is very advisable for the teacher to help the students improve their reading skill because this makes the students are able to improve their competency in reading comprehension.

The fact is that the students still find it difficult when they are having reading passages to understand. They read the whole passage and know the words but still do not know what message is conveyed. Improving the students' ability in grasping the true meaning of reading passages is very important. By having this quality, students who are going to continue their study to higher level of education will take a good advantage of it as well as those who are going to get a job. High school students who do not wish to continue their

study will still need to improve their future career. Through reading, their mind will be open and they learn about things they do not know before and for the things they know less become more accomplished by more reading.

Considering those facts, the writer sees that it is important to analyze the correlation between familiar and unfamiliar reading materials and the students' reading comprehension achievement.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, the problems of the study can be formulated as follow:

1. Is there any significant correlation between familiar reading materials and the students' reading comprehension achievement?
2. Is there any significant correlation between unfamiliar reading materials and the students' reading comprehension achievement?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Being aware of the important role of reading materials in the teaching of reading comprehension, the objectives of this study is to find out:

1. whether there is a significant correlation between familiar reading materials and the students' reading comprehension achievement.
2. whether there is a significant correlation between unfamiliar reading materials and the students' reading comprehension achievement.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The results of this study are expected to give contribution to the teaching-learning activities. It is hoped that this study will be of some help to teachers in determining suitable reading materials and then it can be used to improve the students' ability in reading.

Most of all, this study will be of great help if it can be used to increase the students' interest in reading comprehension. This can also be done by giving them appropriate reading passages.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Schema theory. Schema theory suggests the importance of having background knowledge to be able to connect what is

being read with the stored knowledge in the brain. Without this background, the reading activity will tend to be uninteresting and cause the comprehension to be poor.

“The more background knowledge the reader possesses, the more likely it is that the reader knows the relevant words, and the more likely he or she will be able to make appropriate inferences while reading, and build appropriate models of meaning” (Johnston, 1983:14).

1.6 Hypothesis

Concerning this study, the writer formulates the following hypotheses:

1. There is a significant correlation between familiar reading materials and the students' reading comprehension achievement.
2. There is a significant correlation between unfamiliar reading materials and the students' reading comprehension achievement.

1.7 Research Methodology

This research is a correlational study where the writer uses two kinds of reading materials -- familiar and unfamiliar reading materials -- to be tested. The results of the tests will be analyzed to find out the correlation between

familiar and unfamiliar reading materials and the students' reading comprehension achievement.

1.8 Scope and Limitation of the Study

Owing to the limited time, funds, and energy, the writer carries out the experiment on one high school only. The writer chooses SMAK Dapena I at Jl. Sumatera 112-114 Surabaya as the subject of his study. The subject of study chosen to support this study is the third year students. The reason is that they are assumed to be more competent in their English compared to the first or second year grade.

The study itself is limited into two types of reading materials. The first is familiar reading materials, and the other one is unfamiliar reading materials. This study is also limited to analyze the correlation between familiar and unfamiliar reading materials and the students' reading comprehension achievement.

1.9 Definition of the Key Terms

To enable the readers to understand the study discussed easier, it is necessary for the writer to define the important key terms used in the this study. By defining the terms, the writer hopes that the readers can have a clearer idea of what this study is about.

The explanation of the key terms of the title is as follows:

1. Familiar reading materials.

It means that the content of the materials are quite relevant to the readers' knowledge.

2. Unfamiliar reading materials.

It means that the content of the materials are not relevant to the readers' knowledge.

3. Reading comprehension.

Reading comprehension means the understanding of a text by interpreting the writer's idea correctly.

1.10 Organization of the Study

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter I deals with the background of the study, statement of the problem, the objective of the study, hypothesis, the significance of the study, theoretical framework, research methodology, scope and limitation of the study, definition of the key terms, and the organization of the study. Chapter II concerns with review of related literature. Research methodology is speld out in chapter III, whereas data analysis and interpretation are presented in chapter IV. Chapter V will be about the conclusion and suggestion of the study.

