

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

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1.1 Background of the Study

Reading is a very important skill in learning a language. Gurrey (1970:113) states that reading is one of the skills of increasing the pupil's knowledge of the language. By reading, the pupil meets the new ideas, acquires facts and information about a variety of subjects, learns about the lives of other people and about life in other lands, enriches his mind and imagination with new and significant ideas and experiences.

Concerning reading in an English foreign language classroom, Eskey (as quoted by Carrell, 1988:1) says that for many students, reading is by far the most important of the four skills in a second language, particularly in English as a second or foreign language. Certainly, if we consider that the study of English as a foreign language around the world - the situation in which most English learners find themselves - reading is the main reason why students learn the language.

In Indonesia, like in other English foreign language countries, reading is given more emphasis among other language skills. In accordance with the 1994 English curriculum, the ultimate goal of teaching

English at SMU is to make SMU graduates have reading ability that enables them to comprehend information from English written text well. It is due to the fact that SMU graduates, who continue their studies at university, are expected to be able to infer important information from their reference books that are mostly written in English.

Although the teaching of English at SMU emphasizes on the importance of reading, the reality shows that most SMU students still can not comprehend English passages. The writer's experience when she carried out the teaching practice at SMUK Santa Agnes also tells that many students still found difficulties in comprehending English textbook and reference books. When they read a text, it is hard for them to get the message of the text. It also happens to some SMU graduates who continue their studies at higher educational institutions. They are still poor in comprehending English books. Retmono (1980:195) states that it is a fact today that incoming university students who have had six years of English at the secondary level, still can not comprehend passages in English like standard textbooks in various disciplines.

As stated by Finocchiaro (1974:77) that in order to help students comprehend the written material in the text we are using, we should give the knowledge and

ability to read other material with ease and enjoyment. What is meant by other material here is the material outside the textbook. In line with this idea, Celcemurcia (1984:5) says that introducing variety into learning activities will arouse external motivation. If the teacher can use some varieties in each lesson, the class will be more enjoyable and less routine so the students will be motivated to learn. Both ideas above encourage the writer to introduce humorous stories as one of the varieties of reading material.

Using humorous stories as supplementary materials in reading comprehension class is beneficial to facilitate a relaxed atmosphere and enjoyment for the students so they will have strong motivation in reading. Thus, they will try to comprehend the content of the reading passage. Furthermore, the routine of the reading class will be broken and the students' knowledge will increase. Grotjan (1957:7) states the importance of humor as follows:

"Humor can be used to express an unending variety of emotions. It is based on guilt free release of aggression, and any release makes us perhaps a little better and more capable in understanding one another, ourselves, and life. What is learned with humor is learned well. Humor gives freedom and freedom gives humor".

The beneficial use of humor in students' learning is shown by Blumenfeld and Alpern (1986:177):

"Humor can have positive effects upon students' learning conditions. When the learning material or the teacher's explanation on the material is not easy to grasp, less clever students will feel themselves "stupid" and stop asking questions. These students fear that their classmates will laugh at their "stupid" questions. The use of jokes will create a more relaxed situation so that a less clever group is not discouraged to get themselves involved in the discussions. Humor motivates the students to work hard to reach their goal. Humor is also a means to get them respect individual differences and divergent thinking, and is a safety valve for tension and aggressive behavior".

Reading needs practicing. In accordance with this statement, Palmer (1974:33) says that one of the teacher's task is to encourage the students to read as much as possible because there is a strict limit to what can be achieved during the class time. Since humorous stories are interesting and enjoyable, it will stimulate the students to read more and it will train their comprehension ability on reading. As a result, it will be easier for the students to comprehend any other reading materials. Consequently, the aim of 1994 SMU English curriculum will be achieved.

Realizing that giving the students supplementary reading material outside the textbook is beneficial in improving the students' reading comprehension ability, the writer decides to write this thesis entitled:

"Using humorous stories as supplementary materials in the teaching of reading comprehension at SMU".

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the reason explained in the background above, this study is intended to answer the following questions:

How can humorous stories be used as supplementary materials in the teaching of reading comprehension at SMU?

The sub problems are as follows:

1. What kinds of humorous stories should a teacher give as supplementary materials in the reading class?
2. What steps should a teacher take to teach these materials?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Derived from the problem stated above, the main objective of this study is to find out :

How humorous stories can be used as supplementary materials in the teaching of reading comprehension at SMU.

The main objective above can be divided into two sub objectives which are to describe :

1. The kind of humorous stories a teacher should give as supplementary materials in the reading class.
2. The steps a teacher should take to teach these materials.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The result of this study is expected to give a contribution to the teaching of reading at SMU by using humorous stories so SMU English teacher can create a new, fresh, and interesting atmosphere to the reading class in order to motivate the students to read any other reading materials on their own.

In addition, since humorous stories are cultural, the students can learn the culture in the stories. Furthermore, they can make use of some good points in Western culture that may be valuable for their lives.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

In this study, the writer uses the following theories:

Reading Comprehension

The teaching of reading comprehension is one of the theories in reading that is required to get the result of this study. In this study, the teaching of reading comprehension involves a two-stage process, that is pre-teaching or preparation stage and comprehension stage which includes skimming and scanning. In pre-teaching stage, advance organizer is used to give the students prior knowledge before reading the text. Comprehension stage involves skimming and scanning process in which the students search quickly for general idea and specific information in order to comprehend the text totally. In comprehension stage, the students use several reading comprehension skills such as vocabulary

recognition and paragraph analysis. The students check the meaning of difficult words in the dictionary since it provides the exact meaning of words. In addition, by using the skill of paragraph analysis, the students find the topic, main idea, major and minor supporting details of the text. To check the students' comprehension on the text, teacher develops a variety of exercises whose sole aim is enhancing reading skills.

Materials Development

Dwyer (1984:8) suggests ten points for developing effective materials as follows:

1. The purpose of every material should be connected to the realization of ultimate program goals.
2. The purpose of designing materials should be clear and united.
3. All materials should use natural English.
4. Materials should have tasks with clear and complete instructions.
5. Well-designed materials are consistent in design within each task.
6. The length of the materials should be appropriate.
7. Materials should be free of contamination.
8. Materials must be clear. It does not leave the students guessing what the teacher wants.
9. Materials are written by employing a variety of techniques.
10. Materials should use adequate printed and human resources.

In addition, Prabhu (1989:67) says that materials represent a selection of certain cognitive and cultural content, as well as a demand for linguistic effort at a certain level. This idea encourages the writer to suggest humorous stories as supplementary reading materials since they are cultural. Furthermore, humorous stories have been developed based on Dwyer's ten points for developing effective materials. Further explanation will be presented in Chapter II.

Humorous Stories

According to Lim (1989:15), simple stories are invaluable for the teaching of language at the elementary and intermediate levels because they constitute the most effective motivational device. The choice of the stories in terms of the special interest and linguistic abilities of the learner is of course important. Stories that are poignant, **humorous**, clever, unusual, even bizarre, are extremely useful for the teaching of reading comprehension. Furthermore, she says that the basic principle that learning best takes place when there is laughter, fun, entertainment, emotional participation, applies not only to children but to everyone, regardless of age (Lim, 1989:17).

Humorous stories constitute the most effective motivational device since they provide laughter, fun, entertainment, and emotional participation. However, they are sometimes difficult to be understood. Fat and Flemming (1981:49) say that humorous passages are

sometimes difficult to read. They rely heavily on the use of words as in the following example:

"I am firm; you are obstinate; he is a pig-headed fool".

This famous line by Bertrand Russell points out the difference in the emotional meanings of words very well. Besides, readers must draw upon their knowledge of recent events to appreciate the joke such as political humor. They may understand every line of a humorous passage but they may not see what is funny about it. This can often happen because humor is culturally based. What one country finds funny, another country may not find so at all.

Thus, humor must be universal. Humor is only successful if the situation depicted is not too culture-specific. Chiaro (1992:10) says that when humor is too culture-specific, it will not be seen as amusing outside the culture of origin. It therefore follows that if a joke contains a situation which is heavily culturally oriented, it too will not travel well. Further explanation will be presented in Chapter III.

1.6 Scope and Limitation

Being aware of how broad the topic of this study will be and the limited time given to finish it, the writer thinks it is necessary to limit the scope of the study. In this study, the writer only takes one of the textual humor forms that is "short-text jokes" as the examples in the presentation of teaching reading

comprehension through humorous stories. This kind of humor is suitable with the level of the third year students of SMU since it only consists of one or more paragraphs and the topic is interesting for the students.

1.7 Research Methodology

This study is done through library research. Consequently, the conclusion of it is not tested in the fields. To obtain the necessary information, the writer has read several books and other kinds of relevant sources, concluded them and used them in her study.

1.8 Definition of the Key Terms

To give the readers a clear picture of what the writer is going to discuss and to avoid misunderstanding or misinterpretation, the writer feels it is necessary to define the following terms used in this study:

1. Humor

Humor is that quality of action, speech, or writing, which excites amusement; the faculty of perceiving what is ludicrous or amusing or of expressing it in speech, writing, or other composition (Oxford English Dictionary, 1961:453).

2. Humorous

Humorous is having or characterized by humor; funny, laughable; comical (The Heritage Illustrated Dictionary of the English Language, 1975:641).

3. Story

Story is a form of writing in which characters and events influence each other (Kennedy, 1991:526). In this study, the writer considers humorous stories as interesting reading materials, however, the students can only share humor if they have already shared the history or have understood the way of interpreting the experience.

4. Supplementary material

According to Dick and Carey (1978:5), it refers to modules which are self-contained or self-instructional units of instructions that have integrated themes, provides students with information needed to acquire specified knowledge and skills, and serve as the components of a total curriculum. According to the writer, supplementary material is the additional reading material outside the textbook.

5. Reading Comprehension

According to David L. Sheperd (1977:8), it is reading with full understanding to obtain a maximum information of a text. To show their understanding, the readers should be able to re-express the content of the reading text. Reading comprehension in this study is a reading activity that the students have to read thoroughly in order to understand the humorous story by making appropriate connections to the knowledge they have known or possessed.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter one is introduction, chapter two deals with the nature of reading, chapter three presents the nature of humor, chapter four is the teaching of reading comprehension using humorous stories and chapter five is conclusion and suggestions.