

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Background of the Study

There are four language skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing. Reading which is commonly called the third language skill does not mean that it is less important than the other three skills. In Senior High School, reading is the focus which is given to the students as the primary skill because it functions as an instrument to gain knowledge and technology for the development of Indonesia. We know that many textbooks, references, journals of science and technology are still written in English; therefore, students must be able to read in English. In relation to this, James Ward (1980:2) says that, "The majority of students of English as a foreign language may never speak much English, but most of them will have to complete their university studies"

This condition happens in Indonesia where English is not widely spoken. The writer is of the opinion that the easiest way to reach the purpose is through reading.

The main objective of teaching English at SMA based on Curriculum 1984 which is stated in Garis-garis

Besar Program Pengajaran (GBPP) is Students have the interest and the ability to use English especially reading, and besides, students are also expected to be able to understand, speak, and write simple composition in English which uses intermediate English sentence patterns with vocabulary level of 4000 words.

From the writer's experience when she conducted her teaching practice in SMA Sasana Bhakti Surabaya, she found out that many students have difficulty in comprehending reading passages. Most of the students cannot answer inferential questions which are given, because they do not understand what the questions are about and the answers are not explicitly stated in the passage. They can answer the questions by quoting the whole sentences in the reading passage although it is not necessary to quote. Most of them showed poor marks on their inferential comprehension tests.

Knowing the fact above, the writer made some observations on the results of the students' reading tests. This was done when she asked them to check the second year students' formative tests during her teaching practice. From her observations, she found out that the students got problems in comprehending the reading passage. The inferential comprehension was a difficult thing for them.

Realizing the situation related to the students of SMA Sasana Bhakti Surabaya, the writer was interested in conducting this study to know how far the students comprehend a reading passage, and are able to answer the inferential questions given.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the second year students' poor marks in inferential tests, their inferential comprehension needs observing and analyzing.

The major problem of this study is "How is the inferential level of reading comprehension of the second year students of SMA Sasana Bhakti Surabaya ?

Derived from the major problem above, the minor problems of this study are as follows :

- a. What is the extent of the students' understanding of inferential questions in narrative passages ?
- b. What is the extent of the students' understanding of inferential questions in descriptive passages ?

1.3 The Objective of the Study

After studying the problem above, the writer is going to state the objective of the study. The objective is to find out the inferential level of reading comprehension of the second year students of SMA Sasana Bhakti Surabaya. Based on the major objective above,

the minor objectives are as follows :

- a. to find out the extent of the students' understanding of inferential questions in narrative passages.
- b. to find out the extent of the students' understanding of inferential questions in descriptive passages.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study is expected to be of great help for those who are involved in the teaching process of English especially for English reading comprehension teachers.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The writer limited the subjects of this study to the second year students of SMA Sasana Bhakti Surabaya. In line with the objectives this study, the discussion is limited to the extent of students' understanding of inferential questions in narrative passages and descriptive passages made by the second year students of SMA Sasana Bhakti Surabaya.

1.6 Assumptions

Some assumptions are used as the base of this research implementation. Since it is impossible to control all the extraneous variables, and in order to

concentrate on the problem investigated, the following assumptions are made :

- a. All subjects take the test seriously and there are not extraneous factors that might hinder the subjects from doing the test.
- b. The test scores reflect the students' real competence in understanding reading passage written in English.
- c. All subjects have similar attitude toward and interest in English.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

There are four theories underlying this study. They are the Process of Reading, the Theory of Reading, Schema Theory, Reading Skills, and Methods for Improving Comprehension.

1.7.1 The Process of Reading

According to Strang (1967:8), reading is more than pronouncing printed words and recognizing the meaning of isolated words, it requires someone to think, feel, and imagine. Furthermore, Smith (1980:133) gives a focus on the relationship between the reader and the writer. He said that reading comprehension is not entirely dependent on the reader. The author is also responsible for the communication that does or

does not take place with the reading. So it is really understandable that reading is very complex.

1.7.2 The Theory of Reading

There are three theories of reading which are related to the reading process. They are the Bottom Up, Top - Down, and Interactive Models.

In the Bottom - Up model of reading process, reading is basically a translation, decoding, or encoding process. Eisterhold (1983:4) states that to understand the reading material, all readers need to do is to figure out the graphic symbols and apply previously the oral language skill.

In the Top - Down model of reading, the reader's cognitive and language competence play the key role in the construction of meaning from the printed material. It is largely based on the psycholinguistics. According to Goodman (1967:126), reading, which he describes as a psycholinguistics guessing game, is a process that involves using available language cues selected from the perceptual input on the basis of the reader's prediction.

In Interactive Model Comprehension, reading is a result of interaction between the perception of graphic symbols representing language and the reader's language skills and her knowledge of the world. The writer can

say that a reader has comprehended a passage if she can associate the new information obtained from a reading material to her own experiences and prior knowledge. This is the main point of view that this paper would like to adopt and use as a point of reference for the rest of the discussion.

1.7.3 Schema Theory

According to Silberstein (1987:22) Schema theory is the essential part of the interactive approach to reading an approach which tries to combine the role of the text and the reader in the process of understanding meaning of a reading passage. Furthermore the function of schemata is in the construction of an interpretation of an event, object, or situation in the process of comprehension.

1.7.4 Reading Skills

Reading skill is divided into two : word recognition and comprehension skill. Strang et al (1967:11) define that word recognition skill is the ability to pronounce and recognize the meaning of unfamiliar words.

In comprehension skill according to Barrett's Taxonomy (1974:26) there are three levels of comprehension. They are Interpretive, Inferential Questions and

Predictive. The one which is discussed here is the inferential Questions because it relates to the problem of this study.

1.7.5 Methods for Improving Comprehensions

According to Joseph F. Callahan and Leonard H. Clark (1982:249-251), Methods for Improving Comprehension are providing background knowledge, giving fully developed homework assignments, teaching the students how to use their textbooks, and utilizing guides and questions.

1.8 Definition of key terms

Operational definitions are given to each of the following technical terms :

1.8.1 Reading

According to Marksheffel (1966:12) Reading is a highly complex, purposeful, thinking process engaged, evolving new ideas, solving problems or relaxing and recuperating through the interpretation of the printed symbols.

1.8.2 Inferential Level Comprehension

As defined by Christine Nuttall (1982:132) Inferential Questions are questions that obliged the student to read between the lines to consider what is implied but not explicitly stated. Questions of this

kind are considerably more difficult than either of the former types, because they require the student to understand the text well enough to work out its implications.

1.8.3 Narrative Passages

According to Winterowd and Murray (1985:50) narrative passage is a form of reading which relates an event or an experience. The experience could be the information or facts that the students have read. Those facts include details that tell when and where the incident occur, who has involved and what happen.

1.8.4 Descriptive Passages

According to Debra Journet (1984:64) descriptive passage is a form of reading which describes a thing in detail.

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis, which discusses a study on the inferential level comprehension of the second year students of SMA Sasana Bhakti Surabaya, consists of five chapters with the following organization.

Chapter I is the introduction which consists of background of the study, statement of the problem, the objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study, assumptions, definition of

the key term, and organization of the thesis.

Chapter II deals with the review of related literature and studies which are relevant to this study.

Chapter III concerns with the research methodology which gives a description of the population and sample of the study; the instrument for collecting data ; and the data analysis.

Chapter IV discusses the result of the study. It gives its interpretation to find the answer to the problem under investigation.

Chapter V gives the conclusion of the study and the suggestion.