

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Background of the Study

In Indonesia, English is one of the compulsory subjects that must be learned by all the students. One of the English skills that should be possessed by these students is the ability to read English text-books, since most of the books at the university are written in English.

As in any other environment where English is taught as foreign language, so is in Indonesia where reading is given the most emphasis among the other language skills in accordance with the SMU curriculum of 1994. In the SMU, the main purpose of English teaching is to enable the students to read, comprehend, speak and write (Depdikbud 1994). By reading text-books, magazines, newspapers and other literature, students can gain knowledge, technology and culture. Although reading is emphasized, it does not mean that

the other skills are neglected.

The objective of teaching reading at the SMU as stated in the curriculum of 1994 is that the students are able to comprehend and interpret the contents of the reading passage through observations, interpretation and application (Depdikbud Ibid). Considering the statement above, the teachers should focus their teaching on developing the students' reading ability. This is quite reasonable because the majority of the students of English as a foreign language will have to read English in order to develop their knowledge at the university where most of the reference books are written in English.

The writer's experience and observation on the reading ability during his teaching-learning practice at the SMU of Santa Agnes told him that the students of that SMU got difficulties in understanding the English text-books because they tend to read word by word and they still spend a lot of time trying to comprehend the reading texts. Besides, many SMU reading teachers do not realize that the purpose of teaching reading is developing students' reading comprehension ability. Many of them think they have accomplished their task

when their students have been able to answer the comprehension questions correctly. It is not suprising, then, that many of the students and graduates as well have been conditioned to be slow and ineffective readers of English.

This does not mean that the teacher has to ask the students to read a reading passage while they are given a list of difficult words to help them comprehending the reading passage. Although reading comprehension and vocabulary are often put together as one subject, many students still find it difficult to understand reading texts.

Realizing how crucial this problem is the writer suggests that reading comprehension be taught through the Gestalt Psychology, where the students can make predictions about what is to be invented in written passages (Goodman, 1976). For example, a piece of gray paper is gray in relation to its background or to something with which it is compared. In the Gestalt Psychology, students do not correctly say every word, they are able to guess about the miscalled or missing parts to get the general idea. Besides, learning is a matter of seeing the whole first and the part after.

Morgan and King (1975:1-9) claim that:

They are pattern or organization analogues to a magnetic field, in which events in one part of the field are influenced by events in another part. In the Gestalt the relationship and interactions of the elements had to be considered when studying experience.

It is expected that with this technique the students' boredom will be reduced and their interest will be increased in reading. If the students are interested in reading, they will pay attention to the process of reading comprehension teaching, and as a result they will comprehend the reading texts better.

1.2 The Statement of the Problem

In accordance with the background described previously, the central problem discussed in this thesis is: "How can Gestalt Psychology be used to improve SMU students' reading comprehension ability in English?"

1.3 The Objective of the Thesis

Derived from the above formulated problem statement, the main objective of this study is to present

some strategies of improving SMU students' reading comprehension ability in English through Gestalt psychology.

1.4 Significance of the Thesis

It is expected that all the informations presented here can be useful as (1) a basis for selecting reading materials based on students' need, and (2) can be used to help the students become rapid, accurate, efficient, independent readers of English written texts.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Thesis

Being aware of how broad the topic of this study would be, this study was limited to investigating the teaching of reading through Gestalt psychology in senior high schools. The techniques to be discussed in the following chapters will only cover those that will help the students to achieve the instructional objectives.

As such, the discussions are centered around the ideas of Gestalt Psychology, Reading Comprehension, and

the techniques of teaching reading comprehension through Gestalt Psychology.

1.6 Research Methodology

This study is a library research. All ideas presented here are taken from reference books, journal, thesis, hands out and seminar paper. It took me along time to arrange this thesis because it was have difficult to find appropriate books to support my thesis.

1.7 Definition of Key-Terms

To avoid ambiguity, misunderstanding and misinterpretation, it is necessary to define the key-terms used in this thesis.

1. *Gestalt*. Gestalt is a structure or configuration of physical, biological or psychological phenomena so intergrated as to constitute a functional unit with properties not derivable from its parts in summation (Gove, 1961: 952).

2. *Psychology*. Psychology is a science of human and animal behavior. It emphasizes the pattern of relationship and field or force in mental and behavior process

(Morgan, 1977: 6).

3. *Gestalt Psychology*. It is the study of perception and behavior from the standpoint of the organism's response to configurational. Whole with stress on the identify of psychological and psychological events and rejection of atomistic or also configurationism (Gove, op-cit).

4. *Reading*. Reading is a process of interpreting, understanding the text interms of the questions that the reader formulated about the text (Smith, 1971: 28).

1.8 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of 5 chapters. Chapter one is the introduction which consists of background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study, research methodology, definition of key-terms and the organization of the thesis. Chapter two presents the selected theories of reading comprehension. Chapter three consists of the theory of Gestalt. Chapter four is about the Gestalt Psychology in the teaching reading comprehension. And at last the writer

will conclude and give some suggestions in chapter five.