

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

At present, there is no country that can stand alone to fulfill all its needs to live in the world. Every country should develop relationship with other country. In this case English has a very important role because it is used as one of some international languages. Based on this fact, English becomes the most important language in Indonesia.

In order to improve the students' mastery in English, the English Curriculum has been renewed for several times. To make it more effective, English has been taught since the primary school. Similar to any other languages, mastering English needs some basic skills, namely: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Through these four basic skills learners can use English well.

English is a foreign language in Indonesia. It is not used for every day conversation. Anyhow, it is still very important because modern science, which is needed to develop our country, is written in English. Therefore, any one who can read English well will have greater opportunity to enrich and to improve his knowledge by reading the knowledge he wants to study than one who does not. It is the reason reading skill is very important for Indonesian students to achieve.

In order to achieve reading skill, the purpose of reading should be known. Rivers and Temperley (1978:187) states that there are seven main purposes why people read, they are: (1) to obtain information for some purpose or because we are

curious about some topic, (2) to obtain instruction on how to perform some task for our work or daily life (e.g.: knowing how an appliance works), (3) to act in a play, play a game, do a puzzle, (4) to keep in touch with friends by correspondence or to understand business letters, (5) to know when or where something will take place or what is available, (6) to know what is happening or has happened (as reported in newspapers, magazines, reports), and (7) for enjoyment or excitement.

Therefore, reading ability is invaluable competence for every human being. Unfortunately, reading in students' native language and reading in a foreign language is quite different matter. In reading in their own language, they do not use dictionary to too much time because they know the language well. Moreover, they master the structure of the language, so that they can guess the meaning of the unknown words from the context.

In reading in a foreign language, such as English, the students face so many unknown vocabularies, and also they are not accustomed to the structure of the language. In this case, they have to consult with their dictionary for so many times. But if the students have adequate knowledge of structure, including know relatively enough vocabularies, and this condition will facilitate them to comprehend reading text to the utmost.

The ability of getting clear information from a text is not only by mastering the vocabulary and the structure of the language but also by knowing the elements that build the text because a reading text is developed from the units of language, such as words, phrases, clauses, sentences, topic sentences, paragraphs, chapters, and as a unit of a book. Therefore, reading is not an easy activity.

To get the maximum benefit from their reading, students need to be involved in both extensive and intensive reading. In extensive reading, the students choose what

they want to read. In this case, the students read for pleasure and for improvement of their English. The students are free to choose what they want to read. In intensive reading, the students are not free to choose what they want to read. The teacher chooses the materials. The teaching materials are designed to develop specific receptive skills, such as: identifying the topic, predicting and guessing, for general understanding, for specific information, for detailed information, for interpreting the text (Harmer, 2001:210).

Considering these conditions, the writer wants to know the ability of the Grade 8 Students of SMP Negeri 1, Pahae Jae, North Tapanuli in comprehending a reading text. The findings of the study are expected to give a comprehensive data about the problems faced by the students. because by knowing them, the teacher will get a clearer idea in presenting the reading lesson.

1.2 The Problem of the Study

The study is not about techniques of teaching reading. The study is focused on the ability of the Grade 8 Students of SMP Negeri 1, Pahae Jae in comprehending reading texts. There are some components of reading skills which should be achieved by students in order to comprehend reading text, namely vocabulary mastery and the structure of the language. According to Burns (1984:177) there are four levels of comprehension, namely: literal, interpretative, critical, and creative. Therefore, the problems of the study are formulated as follows:

1. Do the Grade 8 Students of SMP Negeri 1, Pahae Jae have enough vocabulary in reading a text?
2. Do the students comprehend reading text?
3. Do the students have good pronunciation?

1.3 The Objective of the Study

The study is meant to collect data about the SMP Negeri 1 Pahae Jae Students in reading comprehension achievement. Based on the problems of the study, the objectives of the study are stated as in the followings:

1. to discover the students' mastery of vocabulary,
2. to discover the students' reading comprehension achievement.
3. to discover the students' pronunciation

1.4 The Scope of the Study

In accordance with the 2004 Curriculum, the Grade 8 students are expected to:

1. Vocalize words, phrases, and sentences in good pronunciation
2. Read words, phrases, and sentences in good intonation
3. Be able to identify various information of the text, such as: instruction, list of goods, announcement, and congratulation expressions.

The research of this study is designed to collect the data of the students' comprehension achievement on point 3 stated above. Therefore, the problem of the study is formulated as follows:

1. How good do the students comprehend reading text about instruction, list of goods, announcement, and congratulation expressions?
2. What aspects of reading competence becomes the difficult problem for the students to comprehend reading text?

1.5 The Significance of the Study

There are some components of reading text which should be mastered by the students in order to comprehend what they read, such as the mastery of words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and finding the topic sentences. A study on the students' ability in comprehending reading text is very important because by knowing their difficulties the teacher of English will get an invaluable input to help their students improve their ability in reading comprehension.

The ability to get information from the text is a must for every reader. So, it is hoped that the findings of this study will give valuable contribution to the teachers as well as the students in improving, motivating, and encouraging them to read intensively and extensively.

