CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of the Study

A study of a language is an interesting one to be conducted, especially if the language is a foreign or a second language. In the process of learning it, someone will say that it is a complex activity while others may say that it is challenging. If one is serious then the complexity will sooner or later becomes simple, fun, and enjoyable. In fact, in the teaching-learning process, it should be that way, i.e. fun and enjoyable; learning English is fun. It cannot be denied that if one wants to study a language, in this respect, one must give a special interest and attention so that it is motivating and interesting, otherwise one will say that is it difficult to learn.

In learning English, students are expected to be able to achieve and be familiar with the four language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. In reading, the students are expected to be knowledge and familiar with what the teacher has explained in the context, where as in comprehension the students are expected to have more skills than to explain individual text or passage after comprehending them. The purpose of reading comprehension is to get some skills in understanding the text.

Students' attempt to comprehend an English passage is often hindered by the encounter of unfamiliar words. Such words have been recognized as a vocabulary problem that the students face in trying to understand the passage. This is confirmed by Nation and Coady's (2001:4) claim that word familiarity may become one of the factors that contributes to the ease or difficulty of a certain reading passage.

To get the meaning of the unfamiliar words the students usually turn to the dictionary, which provides one or more definition of the words. The use of dictionary

in such a situation seems to give a practical solution, because they are expected to get the meaning of words immediately after reading a list of definitions and picking up one which sounds suitable. However, they should not depend on the dictionary as the main aid to comprehension of a particular reading text since other problems may arise when the dictionary is used as the major means of gaining vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension.

The first problem concerns with the students' motivation. Robinson (2002:5) writes that believes looking up the meaning of the words in the dictionary frequently may be quite ineffective since it obstructs the flow of comprehension process which is going on in the students' mind. In the long run, they will lose interest in what they are reading, and this can be harmful for their motivation to read further. Another problem relates to the definitions presented in the dictionary. Nagy (2008:76) finds that many definitions are simply not very good, inaccurate, or not appropriate to the reading selections. Moreover, the definitions deal only with superficial level of word knowledge, and therefore they cannot guarantee thorough comprehension of the reading texts containing the words which are defined. The words in the reading texts are presented in a context, and occasionally the definitions supplied by the dictionary do not match this context. Therefore, context should be taken into account in determining the meaning of words.

The students employ context clues to figure out the meaning of the unfamiliar words in a reading text. What they should do when employing context clues is to make use of surrounding information to identify the unknown meaning of words. It is essential that this vocabulary strategy be applied, in addition to the use of dictionary. Grellet (1990:45) even suggests that the students be encouraged to make an intelligent

guess at the meaning of the words they do not know rather than look them up in the dictionary.

Context clues have role in teaching reading. Through context clues, a sentence, paragraph, or passage can be hinted to make the students understand the meanings of new or unfamiliar words. Learning the meaning of a word through its use in a sentence or paragraph is the most practical way to build vocabulary, since a dictionary is not always available when a reader encounters an unknown word. Students must be aware that many words have several possible meanings. Only by being sensitive to the circumstances in which a word is used can the students decide upon an appropriate definition to fit the context.

Students should rely on context clues when an obvious clue to meaning is provided, or when only a general sense of the meaning is needed for the reader's purposes. Context clues should not be relied upon when a precise meaning is required, when clues suggest several possible definitions, when nearby words are unfamiliar, and when the unknown word is a common one that will be needed again; in these cases, a dictionary should be consulted.

Basically there are two types of context clues, namely, semantic clues and syntactic clues. In figuring out the unknown meaning of a word by means of semantic clues, the students should rely on the meaning of the words surrounding it as clues. If they make use of syntactic clues, they are supposed to apply their knowledge about grammar.

B. The Problem of the Study

The problem of in this study is formulated as : *"Is there any significant effect of using semantic clues technique on the students' achievement in reading comprehension?"*

C. The Objective of The Study

With reference to the problem mentioned before, the objective of this study is: "to investigate the effect of using semantic clues technique on the students' achievement in reading comprehension.

D. The Scope of the Study

This study deals with the analysis of the effect of using semantic clues technique on the students' achievement in reading comprehension. The researcher limits her study on the reading of narrative text.

E. The Significance of the Study

Findings of this study are expected to be useful for,

1. English teachers who want to enlarge the students' achievement to get the meaning of the reading text through mastering semantic clues,

2. English students who be able to use semantic clue to overcome their difficulties in reading comprehension especially narrative text can help them through identifying the words, sentences, figurative meaning, synonym and antonym, and

3. other researchers who want to do further research related studies.