

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of the Study

English has become the international language. There are more people who speak English as a second language. In English, there are four skills those are speaking, writing, reading, and listening. It is better for students to master all those skills, but the fact is different. Many students do not master all of those skills. For example, some of students are good in writing, but not for speaking or vice versa. The other example, some students are good in reading, but not well in listening or vice versa. It means that these students have different ability in acquiring language.

Reading is one of the language skills that play an important role in foreign language acquisition. Without reading, one cannot access written information. Therefore, students need some abilities to understand and remember main ideas as well as number of details that elaborate the main and supporting ideas in the text. They also need to link the text to their knowledge base. In fact, reading is not as easy as people think. It is not easy to have the ability of drawing meaning from the printed page and interpret the information appropriately.

Harmer (2003:208), states that students sometimes have vague understanding of reading. Reading passage seems to be too difficult for them because of some conditions. The conditions here refer to the failure of understanding the words, the sentences, the sentences' unity and organization; and the lack of interest or concentration.

This phenomenon of reading problem can still be seen in the students of one of the school in Tembung city which is the eighth grade junior high school of SMP Sabilina Tembung, Kabupaten Deli Serdang. This junior high school, based on the researcher's preliminary survey, has two classes of VIII-4 and VIII-5 where the students are still less in reading comprehension. This is evidenced from the average value of students in both class is minimum those are 74.9 and 74.74.

Zukowski et.al (2002:1), says as one learns to read in English, one learns new words and new grammar forms. However, there is much more than that to learn how to read well. Reading is a process of learning to use a set of skill. A skill is an ability to perform and act (to do something out) or to make something well. A person can learn to become an expert by practicing a special strategy. Since the students are expected to comprehend the reading text, their ability to perform and act is very crucial, otherwise it will be difficult for them to comprehend the text.

In reading process, students are expected to get knowledge and be familiar with what is in the content, where as in comprehension the students are expected to have more skills in order to get the meaning in the text. Richards and Schmidt (2002:443) say that reading is "Perceiving a written text in order to understand its contents. ... The understanding that results is called reading comprehension." Reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and contrasting meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. It consists of three elements; the reader, the text, and the activity or purpose for reading.

Because reading is one of the most important skills a person may ever acquire, it is important that students know what they are reading. If teaching reading strategies will help students understand and gain meaningful information from what they are reading and can improve their reading comprehension, then that is what teachers should do. For this reason, the teachers should be able to choose a suitable strategy in order to create a better, interesting and communicative teaching and learning process.

As stated by Prado and Plourde (2005), “Reading strategies are tools that teachers use to help students learn to read and comprehend what they are reading. There are hundreds reading strategies available to help students with their comprehension at different levels and with different types of text.” So in this case, the writer needs to try to carry out a research in teaching reading and believes that the Think-Aloud Strategy is a very good strategy to be applied in teaching reading.

As Cárdenas and Montez (2009) show in the finding of their thesis with the title ‘The Impact of The Think-Aloud Strategy in the English Reading Comprehension of EFL 10th Graders’, the students’ engagement was increased in the activities of reading because of the think-aloud strategy. Through the use of this strategy the students could interact and construct meaning from the texts and obtain better results in their reading comprehension.

The think-aloud method has been widely used as a strategy of instruction by teachers to model for students the thinking process (Dunston & Headley, 2002); this in turn can help promote comprehension (Block & Israel, 2004).

The think-aloud helps to enhance students' abilities of the thinking process and understand what they comprehend, and it allows for the reader to connect meaning and understanding with the text. Block and Israel (2004) further that students feel that think-alouds are beneficial to their thinking process when the correct method is taught to them and it allows for teachers to become better educators. Teachers show their thinking process and how their thoughts are occurring during the reading for students who are struggling with comprehension. Through using a think-aloud teachers are able to vocalize how they think as they read (Davey, 1983).

The purpose of a think-aloud is to model what good readers do before, during, and after reading. It is used to elicit prior knowledge of a subject, determine word meanings, and allow for readers to connect with the text, providing an example of how to be expert readers and has been proven that students can read with greater understanding (Block & Israel, 2004).

In this study, the researcher will use the Think-Aloud Strategy in the process of reading text for students of the eight grade junior high school of SMP Sabilina Tembung, Kabupaten Deli Serdang. The researcher chooses this junior high school based on preliminary survey that is previously stated.

B. The Problem of the Study

Based on the background of the study, the research problem is formulated as the following: “Is there any significant effect of Think-Aloud Strategy on students’ achievement in reading comprehension at eight grade of SMP Sabilina Tembung?”

C. The Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to find out the significant effect of Think-Aloud Strategy on students’ achievement in reading comprehension at eight grade of SMP Sabilina Tembung.

D. The Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the significant effect of Think-Aloud Strategy on students’ achievement in reading comprehension, especially in the level that is suitable for the junior high school students, that is the level of literal and interpretive comprehension. To avoid excessively broad discussions, this study is limited to find out the significant effect of Think-Aloud Strategy on the students’ achievement in reading comprehension at eight grade of SMP Sabilina Tembung Kabupaten Deli Serdang. The genre of text that will be used is descriptive.

E. The Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be useful:

1. For the English teachers to improve their skill in teaching reading using Think-Aloud Strategy.
2. For the English students to apply and comprehend reading materials by using the Think-Aloud Strategy.
3. For other researchers who will conduct the research in the same area.