

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

English as an international language is used by many people all over the world to communicate among nations either in spoken and written interactions. In Indonesia, it is taught as a foreign language. As known in Indonesia, it is still a foreign language, so through reading is the way to get the information of the world. As a language of science in this globalized era, it is very important for information and communication. Based on the curriculum, the Indonesian Department of National Education (*Departemen Pendidikan Nasional: Depdiknas*) has stated that English is as a compulsory subject at Indonesian schools.

In learning English, there are four basic language skills that should be well mastered namely: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Ideally, these skills and the language components should be proportionally taught. However, in the latest curriculum (Depdiknas, 2006) the Indonesian government has stressed more on reading skill because it is an active thinking process and the way to absorb knowledge from many sources in the daily life in order that the Indonesian students can compete in this globalized era. It can be seen from the National Examination held by the government for Senior High School students which evaluate only two skills namely listening skill 30 percent and reading skill 70 percent. This must be because of the assumption that every second in our life we always read and read, and read the situation; in case someone is in a new place

s/he must read the road signs and the directions, in order to find his or her destination.

Reading is an important activity in every language. It enables people to find out information from varieties of texts, written or printed information such as newspapers, magazines, advertisements, or brochures. And now reading becomes more important especially in this era of globalization, where the development in every aspect of life occurs very rapidly. As one of the language skills, it also plays an important role for the success of language learning. In reading activity, one is not only reading the text, but also trying to understand what one is reading. It is said to be the window of the world.

Reading requires words recognition, comprehension, and fluency. It is not merely a matter of transferring printed symbols into oral forms. It requires not only the reading activity, but also the ability to understand the content. In addition, without the ability to understand the text content, one is not able to absorb or comprehend much information quickly, accurately, and easily. It is also a careful recognition and comprehension of each word on the page in sequence. A good reader uses minimum clues from the text to reconstruct the writer's message. It is not difficult for a good reader to read and understand the text, in which the words are missing. Their successful reading depends on their ability to predict what next. When reading, knowledge and to predict what comes next are very important.

The skill of comprehending a message in the text is the goal of reading in a language instruction. However, comprehending a text message is not easy,

especially in English. It can be seen from the students' reading comprehension that is still far from what is expected. Based on the writer's experiences, the result of the students reading comprehension skill is lower than the result of the other skills such as listening and speaking at State Senior High School 4 Kisaran (State Senior High School : *Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri : SMAN*) . It is a real fact that many students fail to reach the standard score (the minimum passing grade) for the daily tests in which the tests should be conducted after completing one chapter or one topic. Therefore, it becomes a serious problem which needs to be solved. In addition, the test in the National Examination (*Ujian Nasional: UN*) is mainly in the form of reading texts dealing with the language function, grammar and vocabulary. Table 1.1 presents the students' daily test mean scores.

Table 1.1
Students Daily Test Mean Scores

Mean Scores Of Daily Test In First Semester			Mean Scores Of Daily Test In Second Semester		
First	Second	Third	First	Second	Third
$\bar{x} = 64$	$\bar{x} = 62$	$\bar{x} = 64$	$\bar{x} = 63$	$\bar{x} = 61$	$\bar{x} = 63$
$\bar{x} = 63$			$\bar{x} = 62$		

Minimum Passing Grade Criteria (*Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal: KKM*)

Source: Student Daily Test Mean Score of Grade X (Daftar Kumpulan Nilai SMAN 4 Kisaran, 2010)

Table 1.1 shows the students mean scores for the daily test of Grade X, and now they are in Grade XI-Science 2. Based on the data, it can be seen that the mean scores of the students' daily test for the first semester is 63 and the mean scores of the students' daily test for the second semester is 62. These scores are lower than the minimum passing grade criteria. Since the minimum passing grade criteria for English as stated by the school for Grade XI is 70. These scores are still far from satisfaction. In other words, the students can pass just because they joined the remedial phases.

Thus, it can be concluded that Grade XI students of SMAN 4 Kisaran students failed to comprehend the English text and there are many reasons underlying this problem. First, students' vocabulary is not broad. Students do not understand the texts, when they encounter words that have actually been taught to them, not to mention if they find new words. What is it that makes a text difficult? In the case of a written text, the difficulties depend on the word and sentence by length, on the premise that texts with longer sentences and longer words will be more difficult to understand than those with shorter ones. Others, however, claim that the critical issue is quite simple, namely the number of unfamiliar words which the text contains. If readers and listeners do not know half the words in a text, they will have great difficulty in understanding it as a whole. To be successful, they have to master a high proportion of the vocabulary without consciously thinking about it. It is clear that the sentence by length and the percentage of new words both play their parts in the comprehensibility of a text.

Second, the teaching and learning of reading activities is more teacher-centered in a way that the reading instruction is based on what the teachers tell and students are only required to answer questions, without any sharing of ideas or discussions with their pairs or groups. Third, the strategy the teachers employ is still conventional. Sometimes the students read the text silently or aloud and after that the teacher translates the text to the students. At other times, the teacher reads the text and afterwards, one or two students read it again prior to answering the questions. Fourth, the process of reading is sometimes boring, students are not motivated to do it and sometimes they keep silent listening to what the teacher is reading. Finally, students are seldom engaged in a cooperative work. Students work competitively and individually which triggers them to give up when dealing with difficult tasks. As a result, they end up feeling bored and unmotivated.

In addition, the implementation of English as a compulsory subject at Senior High Schools in Indonesia at present is based on the 2006 curriculum. Its target is to have the students reach a functional level which means that the students can communicate in English orally and also in written form to overcome their daily problems (Depdiknas, 2006). In reading skill, the standard of competence is to comprehend the meaning implied in a short, simple text or essay in the forms of descriptive, recount, report, narrative, analytical exposition, etc that are related to their life, to respond the meaning and rhetorical steps in essay written text accurately, fluently, and acceptable in daily life in order to access science in the form of descriptive, recount, report, narrative, analytical exposition, etc.

As language teachers, a variety of teaching media should be applied to explain the language meaning and construction, engage the students with interesting topics, or as the basis of a whole activity. The language teachers cannot teach effectively only by looking at the phenomena of a language, learning, and teaching. This understanding forms the principle basis upon which the choosing of particular approaches, methods, and techniques for teaching a foreign language.

There are varieties of strategies that can be implemented in involving and engaging students in reading activities. And referring to the problems above, the writer is very much interested in carrying out this research by implementing cooperative learning and one of its strategies is a Think-Pair-Share (TPS) strategy, because based on the relevant previous studies, this strategy has succeed to improve the students' cognitive skill and basic learning process, so, the writer would like to use it for improving students' achievement in reading comprehension. It is applied in order to bring students out of boredom, competitive, and individual class atmosphere; and a more student-centered approach, in order to improve the students' reading comprehension. It is the teaching strategy where teams of two or more work together on learning tasks. Each member of the team brings special talents to the group, i.e., concrete or analytical abilities. Also other team members cooperate on the achievement of the tasks and learn from each other. As a result, students learn both academic and social skills from a cooperative learning environment. In other words, cooperative learning stresses the academic skill of the students that is clearly defined in the

curricular goals. Cooperative learning aims at increasing students' academic achievement through a good social relationship with others in a classroom.

Furthermore, there are several advantages of using TPS strategy. With this strategy students are given time to think through their own answer(s) to the question(s) before the questions are answered by other peers and the discussion moves on. They also have the opportunity to think alone about their responses before being asked to share their ideas publicly. This strategy provides an opportunity for all students to share their thinking with one another. This, in turn, increases their sense of involvement in the classroom learning. TPS strategy also benefits students in areas of peer acceptance, peer support, academic achievement, self-esteem, and increased interest in other students and school.

Considering these advantages and based on the relevant previous study asserts by Monet (2003) that TPS strategy is one of the best strategies of teaching. It is because the students have opportunities to work collaboratively, learn faster and more efficiently, have greater retention, and feel more positive about the learning experience. Therefore, the writer is very much interested in solving the problems of teaching reading comprehension through the application of TPS strategy.

1.2 The Problem of the Study

Based on the problems of the study, the research problem can be formulated as follows: "Does Think-Pair-Share strategy improve Grade XI-Science 2 students' achievement in reading comprehension at SMAN 4 Kisaran?"

1.3 The Objective of the Study

In line with the research problem, the objective of this study is to implement Think-Pair-Share strategy in order to improve the students' achievement in reading comprehension of Grade XI-Science 2 students at SMAN 4 Kisaran.

1.4 The Scope of the Study

The scope of this Classroom Action Research (CAR) focuses on the teaching of reading comprehension by using TPS strategy, which is applied to improve the students' reading comprehension of Grade XI-Science 2 of SMAN 4 Kisaran in School Year 2010/2011 with the three of the four levels of reading comprehension. They are: (1) literal reading comprehension, (2) interpretive reading comprehension, (3) critical reading comprehension, and (4) creative reading comprehension. But the types of questions that the Senior High School students need to comprehend are three levels, namely: literal, interpretive, and critical reading comprehension.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

The research findings are expected to give a valuable contribution both theoretically and practically.

Theoretically, the result of the research is expected: (1) to enrich the theory of teaching how to comprehend the reading through TPS strategy, (2) the teachers will get the input which can make the students' reading comprehension

improved, and (3) can be used as the references for those who want to conduct a research in improving the students' reading comprehension.

Practically, the result of the research is expected to give contribution for:

(1) the teachers and writer to give the worthwhile experiences and improvement in teaching English specially for teaching reading comprehension, and to develop their teaching abilities, (2) the students to improve their skill and achievement in reading comprehension and the strategy can be used as a variation of learning activity, and (3) other researchers to conduct a much more in-depth study on the benefits of TPS strategy.