

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Language is a tool used by people to communicate ideas, emotion, and desires as means of voluntarily produced by symbols (Sapir, 1912: 8). In this definition, he states that language is a bridge in expressing one's, feelings, ideas, emotion, and desires by using oral and written forms. In other definition, language can be said as a means of communication and interaction we use in social life.

There are so many languages in the world and one of them is English. As language of the world, people of Indonesia need to learn English in order that they can communicate with foreign people, especially those who speak English. The government of Indonesia has included English in the curriculum of Indonesian schools.

There are four main skills of language such as, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are closely related one to another. The subskills are grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling as supporting materials. Reading is one of the basic skills besides listening, speaking, and writing, which must be acquired by a learner of the English language and it is a language process requiring the understanding of written language. Both the skills and sub-skills play an important role in teaching and learning English.

Reading is defined in many ways depending on the view of their experts. Some of them are the following. Reading is an active attempt on the part of the reader to understand a writer's message. Smith (1936: 6) said that in the process

of reading the reader interacts with and tries to reconstruct what a writer wishes to communicate.

Reading is becoming more and more important in the knowledge acquisition and remains the most effective human activity for transforming information (Mikhailov, 1998: 4). Based on this statement the writer may say that reading is an activity done by a reader to get information in a text and through reading one can know many things happening in the world.

Grabe et al (2002: 29) said that reading comprehension is an extraordinary feat of balancing and coordinating many abilities in a very complex and rapid set that makes comprehension seemingly effortless and enjoyable activity for fluent readers.

Reading as one of the English skills at all levels of education is considered as the core skill if a reader wants to improve his/her speaking, writing, listening pronunciation skill, and grammar mastery. Reading can help the achievement of other language skills.

The essential goal of reading activity is comprehension. "Comprehension" refers to the ability to understand what is read. In real life, there are so many difficulties that the students face. The text books used in schools contain reading passage and followed by exercises. It is expected that by reading, the students can learn structure, acquire more vocabularies and even to learn and improve pronunciation. With all these, students can develop other language skills.

The fact shows that many Indonesians are not accustomed to reading habit. Because of this habit, the students might encounter some problems in reading.

They might not understand or comprehend what they are reading. In line with this, they might answer the question or doing the exercise given.

The writer wants to do research in the eighth grade students of SMPK St. Joseph Noelbaki Kupang, because the writer thinks the students have known and able to use English. In this case, the eighth grade students of SMPK St. Joseph. Noelbaki Kupang are able to master reading as one of English four main skills.

Seeing the situation above, the writer felt interested to conduct a study entitled **''A Study on Reading Comprehension Ability of the Eight Grade Students of SMPK St. Joseph Noelbaki Kupang in the School Year 2017/2018.**

1.2 Statement of the Problems

The topic of the study is specified into three problems. The problems are formulated in questions.

1. Are the eighth grade students of SMPK St. Joseph Noelbaki Kupang able to understand the text they have read?
2. What is the ability level of the eight grade students of SMPK St. Noelbaki Kupang in understanding the text they have read?
3. What are the areas of difficulties of the eight grade students of SMPK St. Joseph Noelbaki Kupang in understanding the text they have read?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Going in line with the problem statements, the objectives of this study are formulated in the following statements:

1. To find out whether or not the eighth grade students of SMPK St. Joseph Noelbaki Kupang able to comprehend the reading text.
2. To find out the ability level of the eight grade students of SMPK St. Joseph Noelbaki Kupang in comprehending the reading text.
3. To find out difficulties faced by the eighth grade student of SMPK St. Joseph Noelbaki KUpang in comprehending the reading text.

1.4 Significance of the Study

In line with the problem statements that have been presented above, this study may have contribution for the following persons.

1. For the English Teacher

This study informs the teacher of English about the ability of the eight grade students of SMPK St. Joseph Noelbaki Kupang in reading especially the ability in answering the questions about the text they have read.

2. For the Writer

Through this study the writer would be able to improve her knowledge and skills in reading.

3. For the Students

Through the result of this study the students will be informed about their ability in reading.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

There are four kinds of language skills, they are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Reading consists of skimming, scanning, and reading

comprehension. According to Gullet (1982: 3) there are four main kinds of reading: extensive reading, intensive reading, scanning, and skimming.

This study deals with student's reading ability. In this study the writer only limits her study on the ability of students in answering questions about the text they have read.

1.6 Definition of Term

There are some terms used in this study that should be defined. The definitions may help the readers understand the study as a whole. The terms that should be defined are as follows.

1. Ability

Ability is a potential capacity or power to do something physically or mentally (Hornby, 1982: 2). Dealing with this study, ability means the students capacity in comprehending a reading text.

2. Reading

Reading is an activity of contacting the eyes on printed material by which a reader is led to record the information to the brain to process and create a new similar text to that of the original one (Andreson, 1984). Reading, in this study, is a reading text used as a test to measure the ability of the eight grade students of St. Joseph Catholic Junior High School Noelbaki Kupang.

3. Comprehension

It is a process by which a person understands the meaning of the written or spoken language (Ricard, 1985). In this study, comprehension is a process by

which the eight grade students of St. Joseph Catholic Junior High School Noelbaki Kupang understand the reading text they have read.

4. Reading Comprehension

It is a process of using syntactic and rhetorical information found in printed task to reconstruct in the readers mind, using the knowledge of the words she or he possesses, plus appropriate cognitive skill and reason ability (Devine, 1986: 73). Reading comprehension, in this study, is comprehension of the students of St. Joseph. Catholic Junior High School Noelbaki Kupang on reading texts.

5. SMPK St. Joseph Noelbaki Kupang

It is a Private Catholic Junior High School located in Noelbaki Kupang on Jl. Timor Raya – Kupang Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia.