

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher explains the research background starting from general cases to specific research cases. This research includes research background, research questions, research objectives, research significance, research limitations, and terminology.

A. Research Background

English learning is an important part of the modern education system that aims to equip students with the ability to communicate globally. In the current era of globalization, mastery of English is an unavoidable need, both in education, work, and in everyday life. Therefore, English learning must be designed effectively so that students are not only able to understand the theory, but also able to use English in real contexts. This requires a learning process that does not only focus on memorization, but also develops language skills as a whole.

In learning English, students need to master four basic skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four skills are interrelated and are the main foundation for achieving complete language competence. However, in practice, not all of these skills are developed evenly. Some skills, such as reading and writing, often do not get enough attention, even though both are very important skills, especially in the academic world.

Therefore, reading learning needs to be designed with the right strategy in order to increase students' interest and abilities.

Reading skills in English learning are not just the ability to recognize words and sentences in a text, but also include the ability to understand the meaning of the reading. Reading is an activity that involves an active thinking process, because when reading, students not only see the form of writing, but also try to capture the content, message, and information conveyed by the researcher. Furthermore, in the context of English learning, reading skills have a very crucial role because they are the basis for developing other skills. When students have good reading skills, they will find it easier to understand the subject matter, write with the correct structure, and communicate well. Therefore, improving reading skills should be the main focus in the learning process, especially at the secondary level, where students begin to be introduced to various types of English reading texts.

One of the most important aspects of reading skills is reading comprehension, which is the ability to understand the contents of a text as a whole. Reading comprehension not only involves understanding the meaning of words and sentences, but also includes the ability to draw conclusions, interpret the author's intent, and connect the contents of the reading with the knowledge possessed by the reader. This ability is very important because understanding the text will affect students' ability to do assignments, answer questions, and even express opinions related to the

contents of the reading. Without good comprehension skills, reading activities will be passive and will not produce deep understanding.

However, in reality, many students have difficulty in reading comprehension. They often have difficulty answering questions related to the content of the reading, are unable to grasp the main idea in the text, or cannot distinguish between important and unimportant information. This can be caused by a lack of vocabulary mastery, a lack of effective reading strategies, and a lack of continuous practice in understanding English texts. This problem needs to be addressed with the right approach so that students not only read as an obligation, but also gain meaningful understanding from every text they read.

Therefore, serious efforts are needed from various parties, especially teachers, to provide reading activities that do not only emphasize the speed or amount of text read, but more on the quality of students' understanding of the contents of the reading. The learning strategies and methods used must be able to foster students' interest in reading while helping them understand the structure of the text, recognize important vocabulary, and build critical thinking skills about the contents of the reading. Improving reading comprehension skills is an important first step in creating active and independent English learners.

Based on the pre-observation conducted by researchers at eight grade students of SMPN 8 Ketungau Hilir showed that students' ability to understand English readings was still considered low. This can be seen from

the students' difficulty in answering comprehension questions after reading short texts in English. Most students were only able to answer questions whose descriptions were explicitly contained in the text, while for questions that required deeper understanding such as concluding, interpreting, or connecting information, students appeared confused and less confident in providing answers.

In addition, in reading activities in class, many students do not understand the texts they read. When the teacher gives exercises after reading, only a few students answer correctly and precisely. Based on brief interviews with several students, it is known that they find it difficult to understand new vocabulary and complex sentence structures. This causes students to quickly lose focus when reading and are unable to grasp the essence of the reading as a whole. Some students even said that they read only because of assignments, not because they understand what they read.

Another fact found is that reading activities in class have so far been carried out individually and have not involved much interaction between students. Learning is one-way, where the teacher provides text and students read silently, then answer questions. This learning model does not provide much space for students to ask questions, discuss, or exchange understanding. As a result, students who experience difficulties do not get enough support or clarification, so that their understanding of the text does not develop. From the results of this observation, it can be concluded that

there needs to be a learning approach that can increase students' active involvement in understanding reading.

Based on the findings above, the researcher considers the application of Group Reading Activities learning techniques as an alternative to overcome students' low reading comprehension skills. This technique allows students to work in small groups, read texts together, discuss the meaning of each part of the reading, and help each other understand the contents of the text. By working together, students who have difficulty can learn from their group mates, while students who are more capable can strengthen their understanding through the process of explaining it to others. This activity also creates a more active and less boring learning atmosphere for students.

Various studies have shown that students' difficulties in understanding reading can come from a lack of vocabulary, limited reading strategies, and less interactive learning methods. One approach that can be used is Group Reading Activities, a small group reading technique that directly involves students in the process of reading, listening, asking questions, and discussing the contents of the reading. This technique allows students to share understanding, help friends who are having difficulties, and form critical and collaborative thinking habits.

This research designed to determine how the application of Group Reading Activities in English learning can help improve students' ability to understand the contents of the reading. It is expected that the results of this

research can contribute to the development of English learning methods, especially in reading skills, and be a reference for teachers in designing active, collaborative, and effective learning activities.

B. Research Questions

This research aims to improve the reading comprehension of eight grade students at SMP Negeri 8 Ketungau Hilir through group reading activities. This approach is expected to improve text understanding and foster student interaction.

1. How is the students' participation toward reading comprehension through group reading activities?
2. How is the students' improvement reading comprehension through group reading activities in SMPN 8 Ketungau Hilir?

C. Research Purposes

Based on the questions formulated, the researcher set the objectives of this research as follows:

1. To describe the students' participation toward reading comprehension through group reading activities.
2. To find out the improvement of students' reading comprehension through group reading activities at the eighth grade of SMPN 8 Ketungau Hilir.

D. Research Significant

This research is expected to provide significant benefits for various parties related to the English language learning process, especially in reading comprehension. The benefits of this research are as follows:

1. Theoretically

This research has theoretical contributions in the field of English language education, particularly in reading comprehension teaching. This research contributes to the ongoing discussion in language learning that emphasizes a learner-centered approach, where students actively engage with texts and construct meaning collaboratively. By implementing Group Reading Activity, this study supports a theoretical framework that promotes active engagement, interaction, and comprehension-building strategies in reading instruction. The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for future educators and researchers who are interested in exploring innovative and interactive methods to improve students' reading comprehension, particularly in English as a Foreign Language learning.

2. Practically

This research is expected to provide significant benefits for various parties related to the English language learning process, especially in reading comprehension. The benefits of this research are as follows for teacher, students, researcher, and STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa Sintang. The first is for teachers, it is hoped that the results

of this research can provide teachers with alternative reading learning techniques that are more interesting and interactive, such as implementing Group Reading Activities. With this technique, teachers can be more creative in developing learning strategies that motivate students to be active in reading. Apart from that, teachers are also expected to be able to better understand how to improve students' reading comprehension through activities that involve collaboration between students, so that the learning process becomes more effective and enjoyable.

The second is for students, this research is expected to provide a new experience in learning to read English. Through group reading activities, students can be more motivated to actively participate in understanding texts, discussing and collaborating with their friends. This activity is also expected to help improve their understanding of reading texts, expand vocabulary, and strengthen critical thinking skills. Thus, students' reading skills can improve significantly.

Third is for researcher, this research provides an opportunity for researchers to develop experience and knowledge in the field of English education research, especially in reading comprehension. Researchers can also identify deficiencies in the field and develop more effective strategies in overcoming reading learning problems in schools. Apart from that, the results of this research can be a reference for further research that focuses on improving students' reading comprehension.

Fourth is for STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa Sintang, as an institution where researchers gain knowledge, it is hoped that this research can contribute to the development of educational science, especially in English language teaching methods. The results of this research can also be a reference for students and lecturers at STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa in conducting research or developing more innovative and effective learning programs, so that the quality of graduates in the field of English education continues to increase.

E. Limitation of the Research

The limitations of this research refer to the limitations contained in the research conducted. The researcher focused on the use of Group Reading Activities in teaching reading comprehension in the eighth grade at SMPN 8 Ketungau Hilir based on an explanation of the research background and the problems that arose.

F. Terminology

Reading comprehension are an important aspect of language skills that students need to strengthen and improve. In this research, there is several terminology that is relevant to this topic. Here are some terms that can be used in proposals:

- 1) Reading Comprehension is the ability to understand, interpret, and derive meaning from written texts. It involves not only recognizing words and sentences but also connecting ideas, making inferences, and drawing conclusions from the reading material.

- 2) Group Reading Activities, is a learning method that involves students in groups to read, discuss and understand texts together. The goal is to improve reading comprehension through social interaction and sharing idea

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, researcher discuss about reading comprehension, reading teaching, and group reading activities. Researcher will mention several theories related to the title of this research.

A. Nature of Reading

Reading is an important skill in language acquisition, and many experts have highlighted the importance of this skill and how it develops. In general, reading can be defined as the ability to interpret written or printed texts to obtain knowledge and information. This process includes word recognition, understanding sentence structure, and understanding the overall meaning of the text.

The process of learning to read in a foreign language generally occurs through classroom interactions, where the teacher, students, and the reading material play interconnected roles. Strong reading skills enable individuals to process information accurately, evaluate texts thoughtfully, and use insights gained in a variety of situations. Smith, cited in Alqarni, F. (2015:162) explains that learning to read is influenced by the interaction of the student, the teacher and the text. In this sense, students as readers interact with the text, with other readers as well as with teachers.

Readers interpret and critically evaluate the text. They share thoughts, feelings and ideas with the author of the text. They also exchange and share the ideas with other readers and with their teachers. According to