

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter covers seven points. They include the background of the study, the research questions, the purposes of the study, the significances of the study, the definitions of the key terms used in this thesis, the organization of the thesis, and the concluding remarks of this chapter.

1.2 Background of the Study

Reading comprehension is an active reading process to get information and to create meaning from reading materials by integrating what to be read into what has already known (Guthrie and Scaffiddi, 2004, p. 227; Moreillon, 2007, p. 10; Johnson, 2008; Blachowicz and Ogle, 2008, p. 27-28). Reading comprehension is important in language learning, including in senior high school level. It can be seen from the fact that reading comprehension is one of the skills to be tested in the National Examination that determines the students' graduation. Furthermore, reading comprehension questions also take a big portion in the National Examination that comprises 75% of all questions (Widiasih, 2013).

Furthermore, the importance of reading skill in determining the students' academic achievement has been stated by the government in the statements of passing competence standard (*SKL*) of reading skill for the senior high school students (*BSNP*, 2006). In the competence standard, the senior high school students are required to comprehend the meaning of the interpersonal and transactional written texts, formally and informally, in forms of recount, narrative, procedure, descriptive, news item, report, analytical exposition, hortatory exposition, spoof, explanation, discussion, and review texts, in daily life contexts. It implies that the senior high school students need to deal with this standard as one of the requirements to graduate, particularly in reading comprehension of

English subject. Hence, the students as well as the teacher need to pay attention to improve reading comprehension.

However, teaching reading comprehension, particularly in the senior high school level seemed still unsatisfactory (Hamra, 2010). Based on the writer's teaching experience in a senior high school in Riau, the students still found some difficulties in comprehending reading text. This included the difficulties in getting main ideas, finding specific information, understanding the vocabulary, seeing the relationships among words and concepts, organizing ideas, recognizing the author's purpose, making judgments, and evaluating (Dije, 2009). Hence, the teachers need to work harder in order to solve these problems. The teachers could work with a variety of methods that best reflects the students' needs (Harmer, 2001, p. 9; Snow, 2002, p. 42). In addition, as explained by some previous research (Afrilia, 2013; Sholeh, 2010; Masruroh, 2011; Hatiningsih, 2011; Irawan, 2012), one of the methods that can be implemented in teaching reading comprehension is Number Heads Together (NHT).

Number Heads Together (NHT) is included in cooperative learning method which holds students' accountability for learning and comprehending reading materials. It offers an alternative to the competitive approach of whole-class question-answer activity. In this case, teacher gives each student "head number" (e.g. 1-4), provides reading materials, and then tells the students to "put their heads together" to comprehend it. Then, they should be responsible to correctly answer the questions in the quiz session that decides their group scores.

Number Heads Together (NHT) is beneficial to implement for two reasons. First, the structure facilitates positive interdependences and promotes individual accountability. Second, it gives confidence to low achievers because they know they will have the correct answer to give to the class (Coffey: n.d.)

A number of studies have examined the effectiveness of Number Heads Together method in improving students' reading comprehension. In general, the findings of these studies show that the NHT is effective in improving the students'

reading comprehension ability. However, to the researcher's knowledge, research on the use of the NHT in Indonesian context, especially in the senior high school, has only been conducted by a few researchers (Hatiningsih, 2011; Masrurroh, 2011; Afrilia, 2013). This, study, thus, aims to fill this gap by examining the implementation of the NHT at one senior high school in Riau.

Besides, teacher's scaffolding is also important to support the effectiveness of the NHT in improving the students' reading comprehension since the teachers play a role as facilitators as stated in the principles of the implementation of the NHT in teaching reading comprehension. Teacher's scaffolding refers to teachers' assistance and support that are designed to help the students move towards new skills, concepts, or understandings (Hammond, 2001, p. 5). In this regard, the teachers assist and guide the students to understand the concept of reading comprehension. Thus, the implementation of the NHT with teacher's scaffolding is necessary to teach reading comprehension in order to provide temporary support that will assist the students in developing their new understanding, new concepts, and new abilities.

On the basis of the previous explanation, this study focuses on investigating whether the NHT with teacher's scaffolding is effective to teach reading comprehension at one senior high school in Riau and finding out the students' responses to its implementation.

1.3 Research Questions

Relevant to the background of the study in the previous section, this study mainly focused on answering the following research questions:

1. Is Number Heads Together with teacher's scaffolding effective to teach reading comprehension?
2. What are the students' responses to the implementation of Number Heads Together with teacher's scaffolding in teaching reading comprehension?

1.4 Purposes of the Study

Based on the research questions listed in Section 1.3, the study is intended to investigate whether Number Heads Together with teacher's scaffolding is effective to help students improve their reading comprehension. Moreover, the study also attempts to investigate the students' responses to the implementation of Number Heads Together with teacher's scaffolding in teaching reading comprehension.

1.5 Significances of the Study

The results of this study are considered to be significant theoretically, practically, and professionally for the readers, including the teachers and the future researchers who are concerned with teaching reading comprehension. Theoretically, it is expected that the results of the study provide empirical support, theoretical information, or references to existing theories related to teaching reading comprehension, especially through the use of the NHT with teacher's scaffolding.

Practically, it is hoped that the results of the study assist in clarifying and defining more precisely on how the use of the NHT with teacher's scaffolding can help students improve their reading comprehension. Professionally, it is expected that this study adds the understanding of the way of implementing the NHT with teacher's scaffolding in improving students' reading comprehension as well as improving the practice of teaching and learning reading comprehension in general.

1.6 Definitions of Key Terms

There are some key terms which are related to the study. The following are the key terms and their definitions:

1. Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension in this study means the ability in comprehending reading text based on the passing criteria of reading skill for the senior

high school students as attached in the Regulatory Ministries of Education and Culture (see Section 3.4.2 in detail) which reveal someone's ability in reading activity, particularly for the second grade students in a senior high school in Riau as the subject of the research.

2. Number Heads Together

Number Heads Together (NHT) in this study is a kind of method which focuses more on the students' activities in looking for, processing, and comprehending information provided in the reading materials

3. Teacher's scaffolding

Teacher's scaffolding in this study refers to the teacher's guidance and assistance which is designed to support the students to comprehend reading materials and complete certain task by their own.

1.7 Thesis Organization

Chapter 1 comprises the background of the study, the research questions, the purposes of the study, and the significances of the study. This chapter also shows the definition of the key terms used and the organization of the whole thesis.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature related. It involves (1) Reading comprehension which includes overview of reading comprehension, reading comprehension levels, and importance of teaching reading comprehension in language learning, (2) Cooperative learning, (3) Number Heads Together and teacher's scaffolding in teaching reading comprehension: overview of Number Heads Together, advantages of Number Heads Together, principles of Number Heads Together, effectiveness of teaching reading comprehension through number heads together, teacher's scaffolding, and procedures of teaching reading

comprehension through Number Heads Together with teacher's scaffolding. This section will be ended by discussing review of the related research and concluding remarks of this chapter.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology that the researcher used in this study. It consists of some main parts: research design, research site and participants, data collection technique, treatment, data analysis techniques, and hypothesis testing. This chapter will be closed with concluding remarks.

Chapter 4 deals with research findings and discussion which covers three main sections which elaborated based on two research questions: the effectiveness of Number Heads Together in teaching reading comprehension, the students' responses to it, and concluding remarks.

Chapter 5 discusses two main sections: conclusions, and recommendations of the research.

1.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has discussed the introductory part of the study. It provided the background of the study, the research questions, the purposes, the significances, the definition of key terms appeared in this study, as well as the thesis organization.

The following chapter will review the relevant literature of the study which involves: reading comprehension, cooperative learning, and Number Heads Together and teacher's scaffolding in teaching reading comprehension. At the end of the chapter, there will be the review of related research and the concluding remarks of the chapter.