CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Reading plays an important role in higher education. At university level, reading is considered as one of the most important skills to master (Sugirin, 1999, p.1; Cahyono and Widiati, 2006) because reading helps the students comprehend international articles, journals, and textbooks as part of their learning support (Sudjana et al., 2006, p.1; Ueta, 2005, p.3). Seeing the importance of reading, the government imposed reading in the national curriculum in secondary and tertiary schools for both English and non English department in Indonesia (Cahyono and Widiati, 2006. p. 36). The establishment of reading in the national curriculum is inevitably important because the aim of reading itself is to support the students with learning as well as to broaden their view and develop their educational and professional quality (Ueta, 2005, p. 3; Sary, 2010, p.9).

In relation to the importance of reading above, most universities require their students to take formal courses to develop their reading ability (Cahyono and Widiati, 2006, p. 46) to enable them to read academic texts. However, this requirement indicates that not all university students have a good reading ability despite their nine years spent on learning English. In the real EFL setting, their reading abilities do not seem to be sufficient to meet the reading demand at university. Several findings reveal that students face difficulties in reading academic texts as reported by Sidek (2012) and Baker (1985 in Roebl and Shiue, 2013). A more surprising finding is that junior, senior and university students reading comprehension in Indonesia are still poor (Soejoto as cited in Aini, 2011, p. 4). Additionally, Floris and Divina (2009) discovered that even many students majoring in English also experience difficulties with their reading skills.

Given the above situation, some possible causes of reading difficulties are to be noted. Generally, reading difficulty is experienced when the readers are lack of background knowledge and have limited vocabulary (Nuttal, 1982, p. 5-6).

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These two factors can block the comprehension that fails the understanding of a text. In addition, less appropriate teaching method can also lead to reading difficulty (Shahab, 2001). These causes of reading difficulties seem to be the situation which most university students experience in reading class.

An alternative reading instruction should be promoted to improve reading comprehension considering the reading difficulties above. A wide range of research has been suggested to improve comprehension. One of the teaching programs that is proven statistically improved the comprehension is MURDER strategy, a type of cooperative learning technique (Dansereau, 1990; 1978; 1988; Bonk and Glennon, 1991; Kollar, 2006).

MURDER, a student-centred technique in teaching reading, stands for Mood, Understanding, Recall, Detect, Elaborate, and Review. All of the acronym aforementioned are steps carried out by reader in comprehending a text. MURDER works under cooperative learning approach and has been reported to have improved reading comprehension (Ardika, 2014; Kurnianingsih, 2012; Ariani, 2012; Amumpuni, 2012). Considering the success of this method in improving comprehension, this study investigates how MURDER can help develop students' comprehension in reading comprehension class at university level and describe how the students response to this teaching program. The research is conducted in an EFL setting where the participants are a third year of English department students at a State Islamic university in Bandung.

1.2 Research Question

In attempt to discover how MURDER helps students improve their comprehension, some research questions have been formulated as follow

1. How can MURDER help develop students' comprehension in reading class?

2. What are the students' attitudes toward the implementation of each instruction (MURDER and direct instruction)?

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1.3 Aims of the Study

In relation to the research questions above, this study specifically aims to describe how MURDER can help develop students' comprehension and to find out the students' attitudes toward the implementation of MURDER

1.4 Significance of the study

This study suggests how comprehension can be promoted through MURDER. The findings of the study are expected to contribute to the language teaching and learning in two ways; theoretically, this study is expected to support the theory of reading and reading instruction, specifically in comprehension instruction. Also, it is expected that this study will enrich the research findings in the field of Cooperative Learning. Practically, the result of this study may encourage the teacher to use MURDER in their teaching. Also, the research offer benefits and encouragement of theory-based reading instruction.

1.7 Clarification of terms

Some terms are used in this research and need to be clarified in the context of this study:

1. Reading comprehension refers to a simultaneous process of extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language (Snow, 2002, p.11).

2. MURDER refers to a cooperative learning technique which is an acronym of Mood, Understand, Recall, Detect, Elaborate, Review. MURDER is a student-centred instruction involving a cooperation between two students or dyad in the learning process.

3. Mood is a phase of MURDER strategy that functions to set the mood of participants through the involvement of a brainstorming before reading.

4. Understand is a phase of MURDER strategy in which student tries to understand a text individually by identifying the main ideas and draw their understanding into semantic map.

5. Recall is a phase when the readers recall his/her comprehension of the information from their reading with the help of the semantic map.

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6. Detect is a phase of MURDER which is conducted by the listener role to detect and monitor the recall of information performed by the recaller.

7. Elaboration is a phase of MURDER in which it involves reader's active thinking in relating the text information with his/her background knowledge. This can be done by adding more details to the text, giving examples, and generating images. This process is carried out in order to get the fuller understanding of the text (King, 2007).

8. Review is the last phase of MURDER. In this phase, the students are required to make a summary from the revised semantic map and also make self-reflection via email.

9. Semantic map is a visual display or diagram of categories that facilitates the reader organize and integrate concepts of the material (Dechant, 1991).

10. Dyad is the smallest possible social unit used in MURDER strategy. The dyad consists of two students that cooperatively comprehend the text. Each member of the dyad has a role; one plays as recaller and the other plays as listener.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter explores the importance of reading in tertiary education. Then, chapter II outlines the relevant literature concerning the reading comprehension and MURDER. The reading comprehension deals mainly with overview of reading comprehension, strategies in reading comprehension, and factors affecting the comprehension. For MURDER sub section, it essentially discusses its concept, basic principles, implementation of its principles, the role of teacher and the procedure of conducting the MURDER. On chapter III, design and methodology of the research are discussed. The discussion on chapter III includes the research design, sites and participants, variables, data collection and data analysis. Then, chapter 4 discusses the implementation of MURDER as a teaching program. The finding and discussion of how MURDER can help develop students' comprehension are

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discussed in chapter V. Then Chapter VI closes the thesis by conclusion and recommendation.