

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The chapter starts with the background of the research in which the reasons for choosing the topic are clearly stated. It includes the statement of the problems, the aims of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, and organization of the paper.

1.1 Background

Reading in a foreign language, in this case English, is considered to be difficult for most Indonesian students. This is supported by numerous research that show the ability of Indonesian students in reading English texts was very low (Syatriana, 1998; Hamra, 1993 and 1996; Mardiana, 1993; Kweldju, 2001; as cited in Syatriana, 2010:28). An observation conducted by the researcher during her fieldwork in a junior high school showed that the students' capability in comprehending English texts were poor. It can be seen from their narrative test, eighty percent of the students' scores were below the KKM. KKM requires score of minimum 80 to be considered successful learner.

Furthermore, when they were interviewed, they answered that because they did not know some words, it was difficult for them to understand the story. Eventually, it led them to face difficulty in reorganizing the information from the story. Moreover, some words in the questions seemed to be tricky so that they

couldn't answer the question correctly. It can be concluded that students had difficulty in comprehending the reading text.

In fact, reading is a receptive skill that occurred as a mental process of the readers as they actively engage in the creation of meaning (Barnett, 1989, cited in Hadley, 2001:177). When the mental process occurred, there will be connections between what they read with their previous knowledge (schemata). Those will lead the readers to have different purpose of reading (Harmer, 1992:199). For example, when they read a newspaper, they have different expectation to when they read a novel.

However, the process of comprehension becomes more difficult for EFL learners since it is influenced by grammar, vocabulary, and the prior knowledge of the text (Hayashi, 1999 :125). Thus, Hayashi (1999) recommended teachers select texts that stimulate students to read so that the difficulties of grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension can be overcome. Yet, this raises a question on how to make the students interested in reading English text and how the teacher selects the reading material that encourages the students to read.

Therefore, reading children short stories can be a good learning material since it is considered to be adequate for the learners from all levels (from the beginner to the advanced learners) (Collin and Slater, 1991). Pardede (2011) explained that short story seems to be the most suitable to use in public school as it has these characteristics: it is short; it usually has one plot and a few characters; and there is no detailed description about the setting. It is expected that the

students will follow the storyline easier. Moreover, the story is expected to make the students interested in reading it.

Children short stories use simple language style, contain cultural information, and are comfortable in length so that students will enjoy in reading it (Chen, 2006). Besides, short stories are adequate to be used for EFL learners because 1) the length of the story is appropriate for one or two class session; 2) it is not complicated for the students; 3) it has variety of choices; and 4) it can be used for all levels (from beginner to advance) and for all ages (young learners to adults) (Collin and Slater, 1991:196). Thus, as long as the students read short stories, they can improve their vocabulary, their comprehension, and their analysis in submerging themselves into the story.

Few studies that have investigated the use of literature for teaching the students confirming their positive result (Rudman, 1993). Palardy (1997:67) stated that through literature, students “will have the opportunity to develop insights and understandings of the cultures and people of the world; to develop their imagery and visualization abilities; and to gain new perspectives by testing their ideas with those found in books”. Davis (1995, cited in Harmer, 2001:204) also said that giving enough exposure to L2 reading can lead students to enhance their comprehension skill and add their active and passive vocabulary.

From the statements above, the research is aimed to conduct a study related to the use of children short stories as a reading material to enhance students’ reading comprehension. The study uses qualitative approach through a classroom action research design.

It is expected that children short stories can help students to comprehend English text easier and increase their automatic recognition toward the vocabulary.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The research statements of this study are:

1. How can reading children short stories improve students' reading comprehension?
2. What are students' responses toward the use of children short stories in teaching reading?

1.3 The Aims of the Study

The aims of the study are:

1. To find out how the use of children short stories can help students improve their reading comprehension
2. To find out students' responses toward the use of children short stories in teaching reading.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The present study focuses on the use of children short stories in teaching reading comprehension for students in one of junior high schools in Bandung and

the students' responses toward the use of children short stories whether it helps them to improve their reading comprehension.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to bring benefits for several aspects:

1. Theoretical benefit

The present study hopefully can provide information for further research regarding the use of literature especially children short stories in English language teaching.

2. Practical benefit

The present study is expected to give description regarding the use of children short stories in teaching reading comprehension in one of junior high schools in Bandung. Hopefully, this study will help English teachers to be able to provide appropriate teaching strategies to improve students' reading comprehension.

1.6 Clarification of Terms

To avoid misconception, clarification of terms is provided as follow.

1. Reading comprehension can be defined as “an active thinking process through which a reader intentionally constructs meaning to form a deeper understanding of concepts and information presented in a text” (Blanton et al., 2007; Neufeld 2006; Rapp et al., 2007, cited in Westwood, 2008:31).

2. Short story can be described as a short piece of fiction aiming at unity of characterization, theme and effect. A short story usually focuses on one incident; it has a single plot, a single setting, and a small number of characters; and covers a short period of time (Wikipedia).
3. Children short story here referred to the short story that intended for the children in the native language country. The children short story used in this study is fantasy tales.

1.7 Organization of Paper

The Paper consists of five chapters:

Chapter I

This chapter is the introduction that consists of the background of this study, the statements of the problem, the aims of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the clarification of terms and the organizations of the paper.

Chapter II

This chapter describes the theoretical framework of the study which is the theory of reading, reading comprehension, reading strategies, teaching reading and the use of literature in English language teaching especially in teaching reading comprehension. Besides, this chapter also provides a review of the previous studies.

Chapter III

This chapter contains the research method of the study including research design, site and participants, data collection, research procedures, and data analysis.

Chapter IV

This chapter provides the findings related to the statement of the problems stated in chapter one. Then, it is followed by the discussion of the study.

Chapter V

This last chapter covers the conclusion of the study and the suggestions for further study.

