CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes an overview of the study which consists of background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, significances of the study, clarification of related terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1 Background of the Study

As a foreign language, English is very important in our country. To survive in this era of globalization, people have to master all the skills in the English language. Alexander (1983) states that in learning English people have to learn the four language skills: (1) listening; (2) speaking; (3) reading; and (4) writing. Reading is one of the most important skills in learning language beside listening, speaking, and writing.

Reading activity is one of the ways for the students in school to improve their English proficiency. Harmer (2011) points out that reading is a beneficial medium to ease students in learning language such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and the way of constructing sentences, paragraphs, and texts. Reading turns out to be an effective way to learn English language, if learners know how to read words in English appropriately and know how to figure out the implication of words, sentences and the meaning of the text as a whole (Blank, 2006).

In Indonesia, there are still many students who lack in reading. Sixty nine percent (69%) of 15-year-old Indonesian students have internationally worst reading performance (*Media Indonesia*, 2003). Referring to the similar discussion, it is reported in *Kompas*, a daily newspaper, (2003) that around 37.6% of 15-year-old students are merely able to read the texts without understanding the meaning carried by the text. Only 24.8% out of them are able to correlate the texts with their prior knowledge. It means that many students still have insufficient ability to comprehend the texts.

1

In Junior High School, the students are expected to comprehend the content of the text and textual meaning by using descriptive text to identify main idea, specific information and the meaning of the words. The students are expected to understand what the passage is about and the extent of the information that is given by the teacher.

The students usually find some difficulties in understanding vocabulary and how to apply good pronunciation in reading activity. In order to solve that problem, a good strategy, method, or technique should be used in order to make students become active, enjoy and comprehend the main point of the reading text. According to McDonald (2012) there are four types of reading techniques, which include: (1) Skimming; (2) Scanning; (3) Intensive; and (4) Extensive. To improve students in reading comprehension, the researcher proposes the Intensive reading technique.

Intensive reading teaching technique becomes an instructional procedure design to enhance students' reading comprehension of a text. There are some research reviews about reading comprehension by experts. Nuttall (1998) stated Intensive reading is for a high degree of comprehension and retention over a long period of time. The aim is to arrive at an understanding, not only of what the text means, but also of how the meaning is produced. According to Patel and Jain (2008), the intensive reading is text reading or passage reading. In this reading, the students read the text or passage to get the specific information. Intensive reading is usually concerned with shorter text.

The students involved in this study are junior high school students which categorized into lower secondary students. As stated by National Middle School Association (2003), lower secondary students are those who are 10 to 15 years old. Related to teaching reading, it is appropriate to be implemented since they expected to get a good intake and can absorb anything on their long-term memory.

Teaching English to lower secondary students has a wide variety of material which is ranging from the vocabulary construction, pronunciation, and learning some kinds of text. Short functional texts as a kind of text which taught to the seventh graders is defined as a type of informational text to help the information receivers or readers grasp the information quickly. There are some types of short functional texts,

namely: announcement, advertisement, memo, invitation letters, label, postcards, and notice (Newman & Judith, 2012).

In order to help English teachers in teaching short functional texts, there are some techniques that can be implemented in English teaching and learning activity, one of which is mnemonic device. Solso (1995) described *mnemonic* as technique or device, such as a rhyme or an image, that serves to enhance the storage and the recall of information contained in memory. Mnemonics have been used in Western civilization since at least the time of the Greeks. Mnemonics make use of elaborative encoding, retrieval cues, and imagery as specific tools to convert any given information in a way that allows for efficient storage and retrieval.

Moreover, the implementation of *Mnemonic Device* in teaching English to young learners is appropriate as it relates to the characteristics of young learners that they could absorb information from what they see and hear then store it in their memories. Recognizing the students' characteristics would enrich the teachers' knowledge on how to deal with their students with certain age. Teachers would take the factor of the students' age into account in formulating a topic to deliver, starting from the learning objectives, activities, media, and assessment. Harmer (2001) claimed that people of different ages have different needs, competence, and cognitive skills. Thus, by being aware of the children's development of learning, teachers will be better in providing appropriate learning experiences for their students (Linse, 2005). As supported by Wilson and Horch (2002) who claimed that the young learner's brain goes through a growth spurt just before puberty and then a period of "pruning". This growth spurt and pruning are most noticeable in the pre-frontal cortex, which is the part of the brain where information synthesis takes place. Young children brain does not mature until 18 years of age which means that the most intellectual activities given to young learners, the most opportunity to strengthen the connection in the brain, will influence learning for the rest of the students' life (Wilson & Horch, 2002).

Bakken & Simpson (2011) also claimed that *mnemonic* technique used to increase the initial learning and retention of fact systems which young adults often encounter in school. This method also incorporates both auditory and visual cues to enhance the meaningfulness of the information to be learned and to promote strong

associations between questions and answers (Masteropieri & Scruggs, 1998 cited from Bakken, 2011). In addition, a study conducted by Miller (1967) has shown that *mnemonic* increased recall which proved by the number of the students who regularly used *Mnemonic Device* increased test scores up to 77%.

Since the research related to the implementation of *Mnemonic Device* in reading short functional texts by young learners has not been conducted, so that this study attempts to investigate the implementation of *Mnemonic Device* as a memorizing tool in reading short functional texts by young learners and identify the students' responses to the implementation of *Mnemonic Device* in reading short functional texts.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study explained above, the research questions of this study are formulated as follows:

1. How is *Mnemonic Device* implemented in reading short functional texts by seventh graders?
2. What are the students' responses to the implementation of *Mnemonic Device* in reading short functional texts?

1.3 Aims of the Questions

Considering the research questions formulated previously, the aims of this study are presented below:

1. to investigate how *Mnemonic Device* was implemented as a learning technique in reading short functional texts by seventh graders;
2. to gain the students' responses to the implementation of *Mnemonic Device* in reading short functional texts.

1.4 Significances of the Study

The results of this study will redound some benefits to the English Education Department, especially to increase the number of research collections on English learning technique that appeals to seventh graders. It also provides information for English teachers as an input which expands the view of teaching technique, especially in teaching English to seventh graders. The results of this study will also contribute to the benefits of the students, especially to help them in understanding short functional texts and apply mnemonic techniques in another learning context (out of learning short functional texts).

1.5 Clarification of Related Terms

1.5.1 *Mnemonic Device*

According to Guthrie (2002), *Mnemonic* derives from the Greek goddess of memory Mnemosyne, and means "memory enhancing". Currently, this word refers to the strategies, devices, or systematic procedures designed to improve one's memory. The main task in developing *Mnemonic* strategies is to find a way to connect new information to information students already have locked in long-term memory which means that if the pupils or students make enough strong connection, the memory will last a very long time, because this strategy had carefully linked it to things that will be a very familiar according to these procedures can be extraordinarily effective (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1998).

1.5.2 Short functional texts

Short functional texts (referred to henceforth as SFT) are types of informational texts to help the information receivers or readers grasp the information quickly. Since SFTs are intended to make the readers understand the texts quickly. There are some types of short functional texts, namely: announcement, advertisement, memo, invitation letters, label, postcards, and notice (Newman & Judith, 2012).

1.5.3 Young Learners

According to Phillips (1993), young learners mean children from the first year of formal schooling (five or six years old to eleven or twelve years old) and they have the short attention span or concentration than an adult. The term of young learners also refers to the meaning of those students who are 10 to 15 years old (National Middle School Association, 2003). Several experts explain that children learn differently from adults. Lewis and Bedson (2000) mention that young learners are those whose ages are between four to twelve years old. On the other hand, Wright (2003) states that young learners are at the ages of five to twelve. Different from those experts, Linse (2005) calls young learners if they are seven to fourteen years old. However, those opinions are influenced by the contexts where the children are (Pinter, 2006). For Indonesian context, young learners are those who are attending kindergarten, elementary school, or junior high school.

1.5.4 Reading

According to Harmer (2011) reading is a beneficial medium to ease students in learning language such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and the way of constructing sentences, paragraphs, and texts. Burhan (2012) also said that reading is a physical and mental activity to reveal the meaning of the written texts, while in that activity there is a process of knowing letters. Stephenson and Harold (2009) have notion that reading is a communication between information processing abilities and background understanding combined with social experiences including individual culture to generate comprehension and understanding of text.

1.6 Organization of the Paper

This research paper consists of five chapters, namely:

Chapter I Introduction

This chapter describes an overview of the study which consists of background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, significances of the study, clarification of related terms, and organization of the paper.

Chapter II Theoretical Foundation

This chapter elaborates some theories related to the implementation of *Mnemonic Device* in reading short functional texts by seventh graders. In detail, this chapter describes theories of Reading, *Mnemonic Device*, short functional texts, teaching English to young learners, and some previous studies of the implementation of *Mnemonic Device* in teaching English for young learners.

Chapter III Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research methodology which deals with the research questions, research design, participants and method of selection, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter IV Findings and Discussion

This chapter portrays the findings and discussion of the study. It is divided into two main parts which are the findings of the research that elaborates the results of data analysis which answers the research questions formulated previously and the discussion which interprets the data of this research.

Chapter V Conclusion and Suggestion

This chapter concludes the result of the study which obtained from the collected data. It also gives the suggestions for the better improvement of the next research.