CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter discusses the background and states the purposes of the study and research questions. It further describes the significance of the study. Finally, it outlines the structure of this thesis as a whole.

1.1 Background of the Study

Reading is a very important skill for both our life in general and language learning in particular. For our life, it enables us to access written worlds of ideas (Hood et al. 1996 p. 33), feelings as well as knowledge of the ages and vision of the future (Alderson, 2000, p. x). It also facilitates us to gain access to science in various field of study and to sense others' feeling, attitude or behavior and to know what happened in the past or what may happen in the future. For language learning, it can improve other general language skills and help to think in the target language, enlarge vocabulary and improve writing skill (Mikulecky and Jeffries, 1996 p. 1).

The importance of reading can be seen from the fact that the main part of national examination in junior and senior high schools was to do with reading skill. It is to measure students' reading competence as being targeted by the national content standard (see Depdiknas, 2005).

Various questions on English national exam are intended to assess students' reading comprehension. The questions commonly deal with assessing the students' skills in getting explicit and implicit information, guessing words/phrase/clause meaning in context, identifying main idea, communicative purpose of the text and the coda from a story (BSNP, 2011; Hood et al. 1996 p. 44, see also Depdiknas, 2011). Such questions basically are to inspect the students' understanding or comprehension as a reflection of their mind (Dorn and Soffos, 2005 p.2) after reading; as the essential goal (Brassell and Rasinski 2008, p. 11) and as the product of reading (Alderson, 2000 p.5). Thus, the difference of students' comprehension levels is hopefully revealed through such questions.

Some theorists assert that comprehension has some levels. Some academics categorized it into three levels: literal, inferential/interpretive and

applied/assimilative/critical/evaluative levels (Heilman, 1961; Alexander, 1989 p. 125; Muhamad, 1999; Alderson, 2000; Berry, 2005; Brasell & Rasinski, 2008 p. 17; Cuesta College, 2011; see also Gunning, 2010). Others add two other levels: reorganization and appreciation comprehension levels (Clymer 1968 in Pettit and Cockriel, 1974; Burnes, 1985 in Setiadi, 2010 p. 92; Brown, 1995; RIC Publication Staff, 1996; Snow, 2003; Briskin, 2005). These levels of comprehension vary among readers.

Teaching reading comprehension levels with their own strategies or skills is quite demanding for English teachers. Although comprehension can be taught directly (Fielding and Pearson, 1994), its teaching requires teachers to be well-informed, creative, and innovative (Depdiknas, 2007) about theories, approaches, methods, models, media or findings. On the top of that, the teachers are required to have opportunities to experiment the various approaches, models or methods (Arends and Kilcher, 2010).

Two of the models to teach reading are Student Teams-Achievement Division as a cooperative learning (STAD CL) model (Slavin, 1989; 1995) and Direct Instruction (DI) as a competitive model (Adams & Engelmann, 1996 in Kozloff, 2003; Moore, 2008; Kozloff et al., 2001; Lang and Evan, 2006). Cooperative learning (CL) is a teaching technique and philosophy employing small groups (Killen, 1998 p. 82; Jhonson et al., 1993 p. 3 in McCafferty et al. 2006 p. 3; Lie 2004 p. 28) so that learners work together to maximize their own and their peer's learning and receive rewards based on their group's performance (Olsen and Kagan 1992; Richards and Rodgers, 2001 p. 192; Sach et al., 2003). Competitive model is a teaching model wherein students individually compete to be rewarded as the winner of the competition (Lie, 2004 p. 23-24).

Previous findings show that both STAD CL and DI have their own benefits for teaching reading comprehension. On one hand, STAD CL can improve reading comprehension (Slavin, 1995; Jhonson et. al, 2000; Wichadee 2005; Norman, 2005; Jalilifar 2010) and achievement (Jhonson et al, 2000). On the other hand, DI is a good model for teaching reading comprehension providing students specific skills or strategies that are necessary for reading proficiency (Moore, 2008; Gregory et al., 2005; Kozloff, 2003); could raise student achievement in reading (Iver, et al. 2003) and was an appropriate model for students with low intelligence and improved students' meta-cognitive skills (Jager, 2002 p. 88).

Considering the benefits of STAD Cooperative Learning and Direct Instruction above, this study attempts to shed light on the effects of STAD CL and DI on students' reading comprehension in general and comprehension levels in particular.

1.2 The Purpose of the Study

This study is intended to investigate how STAD cooperative learning (STAD CL) and Direct Instruction (DI) are implemented in a classroom, to find out which instruction is more effective in improving reading comprehension in general and comprehension levels in particular, and what the students' responses are to STAD CL or DI.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the purposes of the research above, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How cooperative learning (STAD CL) and direct instruction (DI) are implemented in the classrooms?
2. Which instruction, STAD CL or DI, is more effective in improving the students' reading comprehension?
3. Which instruction, STAD CL or DI, is more effective in improving each of the students' reading comprehension level?
4. What are the students' responses to STAD CL or DI?

1.4 Definition of the terms

There are many terms used in this study, so to add precision to this study (Cresswell, 1994 p. 106; 2003 pp. 142-3), it is necessary to clarify the terms. Below are listed the operational definition of the used terms.

- Reading is defined as the interaction between a reader and a text to combine information from the reader's background knowledge, his/her purpose and the text to build meaning (Mikulecky, 1990 p. 2; Anderson in Nunan, 2003; Snow, 2002, p. 2 see also Alexander, 1989).

- Reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language (Snow, 2002 p. xiii). In this study, the term reading and reading comprehension are treated synonymous (Mikulecky, 1990 p.2).

- Comprehension levels are the levels of understanding about the author's intended message of a text (Haris et al. 1981 in Setiadi, 2010 p. 88). In this case, only three levels are investigated: literal, inferential and evaluative (Alexander, 1989 p. 125; Muhamad, 1999; Berry, 2005; Brasell & Rasinski, 2008 p. 87).

- Student Team Achievement Division (STAD) in this study refers to the cooperative learning models consisting of class presentation, teams, quizzes, individual improvement and team recognition (Slavin, 1995 p. 71).

- Cooperative Learning (CL) in this study refers to a teaching procedures employing small team so that learners work together to maximize their own and their peer's learning and receive rewards based on their team's performance (Killen, 1998 p. 82; Jhonson et al., 1993 in McCafferty et al. 2006 p. 3; Olsen and Kagan 1992; Richards and Rodgers, 2001 p. 192; Sach et al., 2003).

- Direct Instruction (DI) refers to a pattern of teaching that consists of the teacher's explaining a new concept or skill to students, having them test their understanding under teacher direction in controlled practice, guided practice and independent practice (Binder & Watkins, 1990; Killen, 1998 p. 2; Stein et al., 1998; Kozloff, 2003 Joyce, 2011).

- Responses in this study refer the students' opinion about the effect of STAD CL or DI on their reading skills in each comprehension level and when they were facilitated by the instructions.

1.5 Significance of Study

This study is expected to provide its significance at least in three points of view, referring to Creswell (1994 p. 111; 2003 p. 149).

Theoretically, this study may add empirical support to existing theories, literature and scholarly research findings of STAD cooperative learning and direct instruction (DI) in teaching reading comprehension.

Practically, the results of this study may help to clarify the benefits of applying STAD CL and DI in teaching reading so that more teachers can replicate the study and apply the CL or DI in their daily teaching to improve students' comprehension.

Professionally, this study may encourage the teachers in the research site or in the regency to apply STAD CL and DI in their teaching; and promote the theory-based teaching in classrooms of all schools in the regency.

1.6 Structure of Thesis

This thesis is organized into six chapters. Chapter I presents the background, the purpose, the research questions, significance of the study and the structure of the thesis. Chapter II discusses theoretical reviews on reading comprehension, STAD Cooperative Learning and Direct Instruction with their recent research finding. Chapter III describes the methodology for collecting and analyzing the data, including design, participants, data collection techniques, and data analysis. Chapter IV discusses the teaching programs as the implementation of both STAD CL and DI with the result of observation and quizzes. Chapter V presents the findings and discussion of the obtained data from tests, questionnaire and interview. Finally, Chapter VI presents the conclusions and limitation of the study followed by suggestions for further research.