CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of this study. This chapter consists of the whole contents of the study including the background, research questions, aims of the study, the scope of study, significance of the study, clarification of key terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1 Background of the Study

It has been known that reading is one of the crucial skills that need to be trained in learning a language. In academic context, Anderson (2003) argues that reading is the most important skill to master in order to ensure success for EFL or ESL learners. By developing reading skill, learners can pick out certain information more effectively (Karbalaei, 2010).

In fact, according to school based curriculum (KTSP) (2006), reading is an essential basic skill which needs to be learnt by junior high school students in Indonesia. The use of this skill can help them to comprehend or acquire information of a text. It can also help them to speak and write in a more accurate and in effective way (Durukan, 2010). Moreover, Mikulecky and Jeffries (1996) assume that reading comprehension is a part of life that is very important to access information of the texts. However, a text may seem like a pile of information that does not usually mention the meaning explicitly. Therefore, it is very important to give pupils reading comprehension exercise to let them get the thoughts of the text that were in the author’s mind.
According to Reilly (2008), reading comprehension is an essential ability to understand what has been read to capture the inferred meaning. To comprehend the text, pupils may try to make sense of what they read by relating experiences and knowledge that are relevant to the ideas on the text (National Institute of Literacy, 2008). In other words, to do that activity, Kendeou and Broek (2003) state that combination of prior knowledge is considered important to comprehend texts.

However, students seem often meet difficulties in comprehending the text given. It is in line with Fitrawati (2009) who states that many learners face difficulty in understanding textbooks in English. It indicates that their reading comprehension needs to be improved. Dealing with that statement, it can be said that it is significant to make junior high school students accustomed to reading English texts. In view of this, it is necessary for the teacher to choose the appropriate method(s) that can be used for teaching English at secondary school in order to improve students’ reading ability.

In accordance with that, one of the suggested methods proposed by Wichadee (2006) in providing reading activities is cooperative learning. Cooperative learning is a part of a group work of teaching-learning techniques where students can interact with their peer to acquire and practice the elements of a subject matter or to solve the problem in teaching-learning process (Durukan, 2010). In other words, students can share their ideas about the subject matter, develop their ability to work as a team, and train them to make their own decision in a group. Moreover, Slavin (1995) and Macpherson (2007) believe that
cooperative learning have some advantages such as, improving students’ performance and achievement in various subjects and aspects of the language, and helping the students to achieve the learning goals.

By this technique, students are allowed to work in groups to share their ideas which aim to help each others’ by discussing and arguing according to their understanding about the topic given to maximize the learning process.

In addition, great deals of research had been conducted to seek the effectiveness of cooperative learning for teaching reading. In English as second language, Wichadee (2006) reports the success of Cooperative learning (CL) method. From his study, Wichadee (2006) shows that cooperative learning method can increase students’ reading comprehension skill. Besides, he asserts that CL can be an effective way to deal with the problems faced by English teachers in Thailand.

Based on the issue above, this study attempted to describe the use of cooperative learning in junior high school learners’ reading activity and the learners’ responses toward it. The type of cooperative learning strategy to be employed in this study is Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) method. The scope of this study exposed the use of cooperative learning in reading activities in English for junior high school learners.
1.2 Research Questions

There are two questions on the use of cooperative learning strategy in learners’ reading comprehension, as follows:

1. What are the benefits of using Cooperative Learning: STAD technique in junior high school learners’ reading comprehension?
2. What are the students’ responses toward the use of Cooperative Learning: STAD method in teaching reading comprehension?

1.3 Aims of the Study

The aims of this study are to find out:

1. The benefits of STAD technique in junior high school students’ reading comprehension activity.
2. Students’ responses toward the use of cooperative learning: STAD technique in their reading comprehension activity.

1.4 The Scope of this Study

This study limits its investigation into two aspects. The first is on how cooperative learning will help junior high school students to comprehend the reading text in English, and about the learners’ responses on the use of cooperative learning in their reading activity. Those concerns are within the context of English as foreign language.
1.5 Significance of Study

This study is expected to provide theoretical, practical and professional benefits, as follows:

1. Theoretical benefits

The research finding can be used to enrich theories and methods in teaching reading to junior high school learners.

2. Practical benefits

These research findings are expected to be useful for learners and the implementation of teaching method of English.

a. Students

- Students can improve their ability in comprehending the English text by sharing their ideas in a small group.
- Students can gain self confidence in expressing their idea before talk to the entire members in the class.

b. The implementation of teaching method of English

- The implementation of cooperative learning in teaching reading English text for junior high school students is expected to give valuable input for teaching reading within the context of English as foreign language.
- It is also hoped that this teaching method can give solutions for junior high school students’ learning problems, especially in teaching reading comprehension.
Also, these practical benefits could also be useful for readers who are interested in teaching secondary school learners.

3. Professional benefits

The finding of this research is expected to give benefit for teachers and school.

a. Teacher

- The teacher can know students’ ability in comprehending English texts.
- The teacher can improve the strategy on teaching reading for junior high school.

b. School

- The research findings can be used to improve the teaching English, especially by using cooperative learning.

1.6 Research Methods

This research employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods that used case study approach. It is usually used to depict social phenomenon as experienced by its participants (Yin, 2003 cited in Hood, 2009). The decision to use this method was based on the intention to get an in-depth understanding and detailed information about particular participants by investigating the process that occurred in this kind of method in teaching-learning process. As stated by Cohen (2005) that case study may be used to examine a particular case in order to gain insight into the case. In line with that definition, this study was conducted to find
out how the use of cooperative learning method can stimulate students in comprehending the texts. Moreover, this study used to describe specific phenomena on the use of cooperative learning.

This research was conducted in a class of eight grade students at one public school in Bandung. Data collection techniques used were observation, interview, and written documents (such as, lesson plans, students’ improvement points and team recognition points). As stated by Gall and Borg (2003) multiple instruments of data collection, such as observations, documents analysis and questionnaire can be used in qualitative method. Moreover, quantitative data were collected through dependent t-test. The intention to gain the data from the three instruments was aimed to enhance the validity of the case study findings (Gall and Borg, 2003). Afterwards, the analysis of research instruments was presented in a form of descriptive explanation. Finally, the next step was drawing conclusion of the whole presented data.

1.7 Clarification of Terms

a. The use

The use refers to the implementation of cooperative learning in the classroom of senior high school students.

b. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is defined as intentional thinking during which meaning built through interaction between texts and readers (Harris and Hodges, 1995). In this research, the term of reading refers to reading in English for EFL that related to the topics at junior high school.
c. Cooperative learning

In this study, cooperative learning is a formal way of arranging activities where students interact with each other in a small group to acquire and practice the elements of a subject matter and to meet common learning goals (Macpherson, 2007).

d. Student Team-Achievement Divisions

Student Team Achievement Divisions (STAD) is a learning method as a part of cooperative learning. This method consists of five major components which include class presentations, teams, quizzes, individual improvement scores, and team recognition (Slavin, 1995).

1.8 Organization of the Paper

This paper is organized into five chapters, as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This section contains introduction which discusses the background, research questions, aims of the study, the scope of study, significance of the study, clarification of key terms and the organization of the paper.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Foundation

This section focuses on the theoretical foundation that are relevant to the study, with the use of cooperative learning as a method in teaching reading comprehension as the main issue.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This part gives clear discussion about the research method employed to the study that includes the research design, participants, data collection techniques, the research procedures, and the data analysis.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

In chapter 4, the analysis and discussions of the results in the study are presented.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This chapter presents the conclusions of the study and also provides the recommendations in accordance with the study.