CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives a brief overview of the whole content of the research, including the background of the research, the research questions, the purpose of the research, the scope of the research, the significance of the research, the clarification of related terms and the organization of the paper.

1.1 Background

During its development, the curriculum of education implemented in Indonesian has undergone several changes. The latest curriculum which is implemented in certain schools in the beginning of Education Year 2013-1014 is Curriculum 2013. One of the subjects that is becoming an issue to deal with the new approach in Curriculum 2013 is by creating learning activities through Theme-Based Teaching. As suggested by the Ministry of Education and Culture, for primary and junior high school levels, integrative thematic approach is used in all subjects. It means that in these levels, the process of teaching and learning is presented based on the themes that will be expanded to other subjects. In line with the previous idea, some experts describe Theme-Based Teaching as an approach to language teaching in which the whole course is structured around certain themes or topics (Brinton, 2001; Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 2003 as cited in Yang, 2009).

According to Yang (2009), *"Theme-based teaching has been adopted by primary schools in UK since the 1960s. However, there was not much previous research devoted to evaluate its effectiveness."* Meanwhile, in Indonesian context, Theme-Based Teaching has been implemented as the approach in teaching and learning process in School Based Curriculum (KTSP) (Sulfasyah, 2013).

Unfortunately, the literature related to the implementation of Theme-Based Teaching especially for teaching young learner has not well elaborated. However, Theme-Based Teaching is regarded as an approach that is suitable to be applied in teaching young learners since *"the use of this approach offers exciting*

possibilities for young learners and their teacher" (Cameron, 2001, p. 197). As an example, there was a study conducted by Yang (2009) in an English course for primary English as second language (ESL) students in a non-school setting in Hong Kong. The study was aimed to investigate the learners' perceptions and the impact of Theme-Based Teaching on their levels of interests in an English course. As the result, it was found that most of the participants involved in the study agreed that teaching activities and tasks were more integrated and organized with the adoption of theme-based teaching (Yang, 2009). She also adds that with the adoption of theme-based teaching, many children found learning English became more meaningful and interesting, and more vocabulary items centering on a certain theme could be learned easily (Yang, 2009).

Regarding to the positive achievement of the use of Theme-Based Teaching as described above, this research investigates the implementation of Theme-Based Teaching in teaching English young learners. Despite the fact that learning new language will be easier through listening and speaking than from written text, especially for young learners who are still learning to read and write, when they reached where they are already understand how to read and write, reading and writing new language can be started to be introduced, albeit it is still limited (vocabulary and grammar) (Cameron, 2001).

This research is focusing on how the implementation of Theme-Based Teaching in reading activities helps young learners improving their reading skill. In this case, the young learners are the students in the third grade of elementary school. The reason behind choosing the third grader of elementary school students as the respondents of this research is that they are already how to read and write in their L1. Consequently, they are considered to be ready to learn another language, in this case is English.

Therefore, this research is intended to find out how the teacher teaches reading skill to young learners by implementing Theme-Based Teaching in the reading activities presented in the classroom according to the theory of Theme-Based Teaching from Cameron (2001) and its principles from Brown (2001) by

synthesized it with the theory related to reading activities. Besides that, the students' responses toward the reading activities are also intended to be examined.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the problem that has been mentioned, the issues of this research are formulated as follow.

1. In what ways do the reading activities presented through Theme-Based Teaching help students to improve their reading skills?
2. What are the students' responses toward learning activities presented through Theme-Based Teaching?

1.3 Purposes of the Research

According to the research questions, the aims of this paper are: (1) identifying the impact of reading activities presented in learning activities for third grader students in one of elementary school in Bandung as a result of implementing Theme-Based Teaching in teaching reading to young learners; and (2) investigating students' responses toward the activities.

1.4 Scope of the Research

This study focuses on the implementation of Theme-Based Teaching in reading activities presented in the classroom as the attempt to help students improving their reading skill. Furthermore, this study also focuses on students' responses toward the activities that are delivered by using Theme-Based Teaching approach.

1.5 Significance of the Research

Expectantly, this study provides positive contribution for many people, especially for education and those who are interested in this area. In particular, the result of this study is expected to contribute to those who are directly in touch with education such as teachers or educators.

First of all, this study is expected to give the contribution to enrich the literature in the particular field related to the implementation of Theme-Based Teaching in teaching young learners.

Additionally, for teachers or educators, hopefully this study can help to give the idea of how learning activities are conducted through Theme-Based Teaching to teach reading skills to young learners. Moreover, the findings may motivate English teachers to improve their skill and knowledge in teaching reading to young learners to be more professional and creative.

In addition, for other researchers, hopefully the result of this study will be a useful source in terms of making a better contribution for the advancement of education.

1.6 Clarification of the Terms

For this study, there are three terms that need to be defined:

- Theme-Based Teaching

  Theme-Based Teaching is an approach to language teaching in which the whole course is structured around certain themes or topics (Brinton, 2001; Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 2003 as cited in Yang, 2009).
- Reading skill

  In this paper, the terms reading refer to the ability of identifying the visual information and understanding the text that is read by construing meaning (Cameron, 2001; Smelser & Baltes, 2001)
- Reading activity

  In this particular study, the terms reading activities indicate to any kind of activities presented by the teacher in classroom activity related to reading experience. In this sense, there should be tasks to be completed by the students, such as predicting, reading aloud, finding specific information from text, storytelling, etc.

1.7 Organization of Paper

The paper is divided into five chapters, as follow.

Chapter I

The first chapter gives a brief overview on the background of the research including the research questions, the aims of the research, the scope of the research, the significance of the research, clarification of related terms, and the organization of the paper.

Chapter II

This chapter begins by laying out the theoretical dimensions of the research, which are: (1) teaching reading, including the elements of reading to be mastered, the problems which commonly appear, and the principles of designing reading lesson; (2) young learners' characteristics, particularly in relation to language learning; (3) Theme-Based Teaching which starts from the definition, the principles, and also the advantages of Theme-Based Teaching (4) and reading activities that are relevant for young learners according to the characteristics with the implementation of Theme-Based Teaching

Chapter III

Go on to Chapter III, this chapter elaborates the methodology of the research including the research design, site and respondents, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter IV

Chapter IV then reports the result of the research in form the description of the findings and discussion.

Chapter V

Finally, Chapter V presents the conclusion of the research and suggestions for the next research as well as for teachers based on the results found by the researcher.

1.8 Concluding Remark

This chapter has discussed the use of Theme-Based Teaching as one of the alternatives that can be taken to deal with the revolution of Indonesia National curriculum. In terms of teaching young learners, the advantage of Theme-Based Teaching has been proven through some prior studies which found that Theme-Based Teaching contributes some positive effects. Reading skill is chosen as the focus of this study for the reason that in the age when children has already learn about written text in their first language, they are also can be introduce to read and write in foreign language, in this case is English.

Some terms have been clarified as well as the organization of the paper that has been stated concisely to provide introduction and description to the study.