CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Reading is the skill that is commonly first taught or learnt when someone studies a second or a foreign language in an educational institution. After they have been able to read, they can better study the next phases that are more complicated. In a language lesson, reading is also taught to the students. But reading in English is still a problem for most Indonesian students although they have studied English from the elementary school. Only a few of them have good ability in reading.

Students’ good ability to read the textbook written in English is one of the main goals which are stressed on in the teaching of English in Indonesia. Reading comprehension plays an important role in the teaching and learning activities in high school of which as the major medium for acquiring knowledge and skills. Therefore, it can be assumed that reading comprehension is highly correlated with the students’ school performance. In other words, ”reading comprehension seems to be the major common dominators of school learning” (Bloom, 1976 in Witrock et al. 1985:512).

For the second year students, English is one of a difficult lesson to study. It is the most difficult subject for them. They like to study it but they do not know how. Most of them do not have basic knowledge of English. It is not all the teachers’ fault. It happens because the time allocation for English lesson is very
limited, only four hours a week. In a reading lesson, certain students will spend a rather long time to read a paragraph, even very often, a student who is assigned to read is laughed by his or her friends when he or she makes mistakes in reading aloud.

In the National Examination (UN), reading items often appear. The English material of UN is mostly loaded with reading comprehension test. This is an indication that reading comprehension is considered as an important course of which the students need to have lots of portion of its teaching and learning in order to prepare students to be fluent in reading English texts. Because of lack of knowledge in reading, most students tend to do the test at will without thinking which one is correct because usually the items are in the form of multiple choice items. So they just need to choose which option they want to choose. No wonder if they go out from the classroom very quickly because some of them do not like to think something that they do not know.

Being able to read well in English language seems to be a must for everyone in anticipating the global era information nowadays. “Reading is a needed channel of communication with the global community” (Bon Guy, 1993:1). There are various kinds of media of information, which are written in the English language as the means of transferring information or knowledge and the contact with other countries that is supposed to use foreign language for communication. Of course, it requires better skills of reading and good comment in English. So that, for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners good ability
in reading become necessary in order to be able to follow the remarkable development of the today’s world.

In teaching reading comprehension, teachers should also be aware that their students must have certain knowledge of grammar, for example, in helping students to differentiate a noun from a verb or an adjective, especially when looking up a word in a dictionary. This is a problem we as the teachers have faced in a class a lot and which contributes to comprehension of a text or part of a text. When exercising, teachers must ask the students to look for certain words that they can compare with their mother tongue. When we teach a synonym, antonym, or any other word, if possible we have to teach there some characteristics of English language so that they understand better. Another difficulty that we usually come across in reading comprehension is the interference of the mother tongue which also affects the process. Verb tense is also important in dealing with certain complex text.

There are many possible factors that cause the students’ reading problems or impede the students’ progress in reading. They possibly come from physical, cognitive, environmental and emotional factors (McGinnis, 1982:189). These causal factors may be related to each other. Such as a family environment of which the members have good reading habit with enough reading materials available at home will give a great influence on the students’ reading motivation. On the other hand, if the students’ family members have a bad habit of reading and not much reading material at home, it will also give a bad influence on the students’ reading motivation. Then, Bon Guy (1993:10) also adds that immaturity,
low economic status, personal adjustment problems, physical deficiencies and excessive pressure for achievement from home and school are the factors that may cause students’ reading difficulties.

The students’ use of reading is mainly looking for information, so when teaching them we must guide them how to do it. They must learn how to look for the main ideas, and details, they should know how to skim and scan from a text, how to use a dictionary, etc., in general, they should achieve comprehension. All that depends on a lot of factors such as: previous experience in their foreign language, certain mastery of the require vocabulary for comprehension, enough knowledge about grammatical structures used in the text, cultural information, previous background of knowledge about topics to be used, students’ own abilities for reading, students’ speed, motivation, interests, desires, etc. they are only able to use one or two strategies that are very basic. Because they are just read a text once or twice, they tend to fail in comprehending the content of the text. They also dislike repeating reading certain parts in a text. This is one of the causes that created failure in reading comprehension (Paris et al, 1990:609 in Nicaise and Gettinger, 1995:285). There are also some causes why students fail in reading lesson, such as their lack of knowledge of pronunciation, structure, and vocabulary.

When asked to answer question based on a passage, poor readers tend to focus on the question. So they spend more time on them. They are less aware about the difficulties that they face in reading comprehension (Duffy & Roehler, 1997 and Paris et al, 1990 in Nicaise and Gettinger, 1995:285). Oxford (1990:8)
adds that to make learning easier, more enjoyable, more self-directed and more effective, the concept of strategy has become influential in education today. In this case, the teacher plays an important role in teaching and creating strategic techniques of reading for helping the students improve their understanding on a text.

1.2 Research Problems

1. What is the students’ mastery of the reading skills?
2. Is there any correlation between the students’ problems in reading and their reading comprehension ability?

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To find out the students’ mastery of the reading skills.
2. To know the correlation between the students’ problems in reading and their reading comprehension ability.

1.4 Research Significance and Benefit

The result of the study would hopefully be of practical value for teachers, especially the teachers of reading comprehension and for students as well. Reading is a bogey for the students in English lesson, moreover when they are forwards in the National Examination (UN) that is dominated by reading items. Through this research, the researcher hopes that the problems that are faced by the
students up till now in reading lesson can be solved and they will be able to rule the reading skill. Also for the teachers hopefully they can facilitate the students to overcome their problems in reading. So what are hoped by the curriculum for Junior High School will be able to be achieved.

1.5 Hypothesis

The researcher set the following hypotheses:

There is a significant correlation between students’ problems in reading and their reading comprehension ability of the second year students of an SLTP in Lembang.

1.6 Scope of the study

This research was done in the second year students of an SLTP in Lembang. The lesson that became the focus in this study was English, especially in reading. The researcher wanted to find out the problems that the students face in reading a text and the correlation with their reading comprehension ability.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

There are some terms used in this research needed to be defined in order to avoid misunderstanding. They are reading problems and reading comprehension ability of the students.
- Reading problems is the problems that the students face in the process of teaching and learning of reading.

- Reading comprehension is the ability to construct the meaning from the text, using both print information and prior knowledge (Christie, 2003).

- Reading ability is the skill of readers to understand and to process information in the text (Anderson, 2000).

- Reading skills are the ten skills that the students’ mastery proposed by Ullman and Geva (1981) as given in Appendix 16.

1.8 Time and Research Location

To collect the data, the researcher held a research at an SLTP in Lembang. The samples are the second year students. The research was done in three weeks around April to May 2009. In academic year of 2008 – 2009, this school has 10 classes of the second grade which consists of 469 students.

1.9 Research Method

1.9.1 Research Design

This is a quantitative research with ex-post facto design. The students were given a reading comprehension test to know their competence in reading comprehension. After that, a questionnaire about their reading problems was distributed. Then to see the correlation between the independent variable (reading comprehension ability) and the dependent variable (students’ problems in reading)
and the strength of the connection without considering what went before and just to know what is going on. No treatment involved in the research (Hatch Evelyn, 1991:99).

### 1.9.2 Populations and Sampling Procedures

The populations of this study were the students in the second year of an SLTP in Lembang. Some of the students were involved in this research through cluster random sampling. Every group of the population has an equal and independent chance of being randomly selected and representative of the population (Fraenkel, 1990: 72). The amount of the samples involved from this school were obtained after grouping all the second year students of 469 students from ten classes into high achievement students and low achievement students based on their academic reports. Then 20% of both high and low achievement students were randomly taken as the sample. So, about 92 students of the second year of this school were the sample of this research.

### 1.9.3 Data Analysis

The data obtained from the instruments would answer the problems of this study. To see the correlation between the students’ problems in reading and their reading comprehension ability, statistical analysis of Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient were used. For an accurate computation, the partial correlation of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was applied.
1.10 Thesis Organization

This thesis consisted of five chapters. Chapter I talked about background of this study, presented problems, objective of the study, significance of the study, hypotheses, scope of the study, research methodology which consisted of research design, population and samples, and data analysis.

Chapter II discussed the review of related literature. It consisted of the importance of reading skills, definition of reading, definition of comprehension, reading ability, reading comprehension ability, reading purposes, types of reading, the test of reading comprehension, types of reading comprehension questions, the role of reading as a resource for learning, implication for teaching reading, and the previous research.

Chapter III was research procedure. It consisted of research design, population and sampling procedures, research instruments, variables and hypothesis, data collection techniques, procedure of the research, measurement procedures and data analysis. Research findings and discussion were delivered on in Chapter IV. Conclusions and recommendations are included in Chapter V.