

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a general description of the research. It covers the background of the study, the research questions, the purposes, the hypothesis, the significance, and the scope of the study. Moreover, the brief explanation of the research method will be also provided. At the end of this Chapter, the definition of main terms will be presented.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

English as one of the foreign languages has got much attention from the Indonesian government. This can be observed from the government's commitment to teach English at all levels of education; it is even started from the elementary school level. Nevertheless, the instruction, especially in elementary school level, is not yet satisfactory.

In elementary school, although English is one of the elective subjects, it is strongly recommended by the government to be taught (see the statement from *Depdikbud* RI No. 0487/4/1992 and The Decree of the ministry of Education and culture No. 060/U/1993 in Suyanto, n.d.). Furthermore, English has been stated in the curriculum of 1994 and developed in curriculum of 2004 and the current curriculum, the school-level curriculum (*Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan/KTSP*). Based on the competence standards and basic competences for elementary school level from *Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan* (2007),

which guides schools in developing their own curriculum, English lesson in elementary school is aimed at helping students to be able to communicate in English as language accompanying action, and at helping them to recognize the importance of English in encouraging people to take part in the global community. It is in line with Hamerly (in Suyanto, n.d.) and DeKeyser (2006) who stated that learning a foreign language will be better if it is started earlier. Moreover, it is similar with the purpose of teaching foreign languages to young learners in America, which is “preparing even very young children for life in a broad international community” DeKeyser (2006, 1). The English teaching involves the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) that need to be familiarized and mastered by the students.

However, the development of teaching and learning English is not good enough; thus, the result of teaching and learning in elementary schools in Indonesia is not yet satisfactory (Andini, 2007; Prapti, 2008; Listia and Kamal, 2009). It might have probably been influenced by the teacher’s ways of teaching. The methods used to teach the elementary school students emphasize on mastering grammatical structure, which makes the students feel burdened rather than enjoy in learning English (Andini, 2007; Prapti, 2008). Moreover, the students are often asked to memorize the material than to give their own opinions (Utami, 2004). In this case, the students are given English words with little context. Whereas, students will learn better if they are given the appropriate context and the opportunity to participate in “activities that are perceived to be used in real life and are culturally relevant” (Vosniadou, 2001: 11).

Regarding to the research site, although sometimes the teachers used some various methods (for instance: using songs, total physical response, etc.), the instruction was still dominated by asking them to memorize the English words and the structures as well, as it is experienced by the teachers there. It is because the goal of the learning was to be able to do the final test which is emphasizing in vocabulary and grammar made by the local government (the example of the test is available in appendix 13).

As a matter of fact, there are many ways that a teacher can apply to teach the language, so that the learning goals can be achieved. Hernowo (2005) states that fun learning environment can help students to learn effectively; that is highly recommended for teachers. However, it does not mean they have to make fun all the time. The word “fun” means the teachers use the friendly ways where the students enjoy studying English and the goals of the instruction are still achieved. Moreover, children need to learn by hands-on experiences (Musthafa, 2008), which allow them to be physically contacted in direct way with the material that is being learned.

One of the alternative fun instructions that can be used in teaching English is project approach (PA)/ project method/ project-based instruction (PBI)/ project-based learning (PBL), in which the students are expected to be involved actively by using their English in their English teaching and learning and by doing the simple project given. Project approach is a method which allows students to learn by doing a project (Thomas, 2000). It is relevant with the concept of fun and ‘hands-on experiences’ that has been mentioned earlier.

Some previous studies show that students find the PA as fun, motivating, and challenging approach because they can play an active role in doing the project (Katz, 1994; Challenge 2000 Multimedia Project, 1999 in Railsback, 2002). In addition, Karlin and Vianni (In Railsback, 2002) stated that in PA, children construct their new ideas or concepts based on their current and previous knowledge. It is also expected that PA can promote student's reading comprehension (Anton, 2010); since, they explore the project independently and get in touch with the vocabularies relate to the project. Consequently, they will get familiarized with the topic that can help them to comprehend the texts given, which still relate to the topic. Thus, referring the success of PA in some previous studies, it is worth trying to implement the PA in teaching English to the research site. From the explanation above, this study was aimed at identifying and describing the values of project approach in encouraging students' reading comprehension and investigating the students' responses towards the project approach.

## **1.2 The Research Questions**

Developed from what have been mentioned above, this study was focused on answering the following research questions.

1. Can project approach facilitate the students in improving their reading comprehension?
2. What are the students' responses toward the project approach?

### **1.3 The Purposes of the Study**

Derived from the research questions, the purposes of this study were:

1. to identify and describe the effect of the project approach in encouraging students' reading comprehension; and
2. to investigate the students' responses towards the project approach.

### **1.4 Hypothesis**

Hypothesis is a tentative statement or prediction about the outcome of a study (Hatch & Farhady, 1982; Fraenkle & Wallen, 2007). Moreover, there are two kinds of hypotheses: null and alternative hypothesis. However, Hatch and Farhady (1982) claimed that, in the most common case, the null hypothesis is used since "we do not usually bother to ask the question if we are already sure which way it will turn out" (ibid: 4). Thus, the hypothesis stated for this study is:

Ho: there is no significant difference in students' posttest scores between the experimental and control group.

### **1.5 The Scope of the Study**

This study would be conducted at one of the elementary schools in Parongpong, on the fifth grade students in their English subject. Moreover, it used observation, interview, questionnaires, and tests to investigate the implementation of project approach, adapted from Katz (1994) and others relevant to this study. The tests, pre-test and post-test would be given to students before and after the

observation respectively. Furthermore, the interview and the questionnaires would be given after the observation.

### **1.6 The Significance of the Study**

The result of this study is expected to give some worthy contributions to the theory, educational practice, and professional practice in EFL context in Indonesia. The theoretical significance of this study is that it is expected to enrich the literature about the teaching methodology of English, especially the implementation of project approach toward students' comprehension about the content of the materials given. Moreover, practically, this study provides information related to project approach as one of alternative methods in teaching and learning English, especially for elementary school students, grade five. Finally, in terms of professional practice, it is hoped that English teachers could develop materials and teaching strategies which help the students to understand the English.

### **1.7 Research Method**

Based on the research questions which were mentioned earlier, quantitative method was used to investigate the implementation of project approach in facilitating students' in their reading comprehension and the students' response toward the method. Furthermore, this study could be categorized as a quasi-experimental study, which included experimental and control groups without random sampling (Nunan, 1992; Hatch and Farhady, 1982). The data was

collected through some instruments: tests (pre- and post-test); observation; interviews; and questionnaires.

The data from pre- and post-test would be statistically analyzed and compared by using t-test. The aim was to see the difference between the initial ability of the students and their ability after getting the treatment. Moreover, the statistical data would be processed by using SPSS 17.0. Meanwhile, the data from the interview and the questionnaires would be analyzed by using a thematic analysis. In this case, the students' comments were categorized into some themes that become the focus of the research. Further elaboration of this methodology part will be conveyed in Chapter Three.

### **1.8 Operational Definition of Terms**

It is needed to have a clear view about what we are going to deal with before starting a research. Thus, the main terms that are highly related to this study are going to clarify in this part. The terms are:

1. Project Approach : the instruction that was implemented in the fifth grade classroom in an elementary school in Parongpong which is related to the students' reading comprehension. It consisted of three phases, adapted from Katz (1994).

2. Reading Comprehension : the students' ability in understanding the texts given. In this study, the texts consist of more or less 100 words and afterwards followed by four to six questions for each text.

### **1.9 Concluding Remarks of Chapter One**

This chapter has discussed the introduction part of this study. It provided the background of the study, the research questions, the purposes, the hypothesis, the significance, the scope of the study, research method, and the definition of main terms, in general. Furthermore, the details of the theoretical foundation will be explained in the next chapter.

