

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### A. Reading

In acquiring English, the students have to be able to master the four basic skills of English which consists of speaking, listening, reading and writing. From those four basic skills, reading is considered as the main important skill. It has received more attention than any other aspects of education. Reading can be categorized into receptive skill, like listening. This means it involves responding to text, rather than producing it.

##### 1. Definition of reading

Reading has different definition based on different people. According to Sutari “reading is a process of getting the meaning of something written or printed by interpreting its characters or symbols. Reading is a second language that defined as process of grasping full linguistics meaning in the new language through the symbol used to represent it.”<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, Harris said that “reading is the meaningful interpretation of printed or written verbal symbols which also involves sensing, perceiving, achieving meaning, learning reacting in variety of ways.”<sup>2</sup> From these definitions, it can be said that reading is an effort from the

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<sup>1</sup> Sutari, *Basic Reader for Teaching*, 2000, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Albert. Harris, *Effective teaching and Reading* (New York: David Mckay company, 1962), 9.

students to get or transfer the meaning and information from the text by understanding, grasping, translating, and giving meaning to the written form. Therefore, it can be concluded that reading is not only looking at word in the form of graphic symbols but also getting meaning from word to word to understand the content of a text and to get information from the text.

## 2. The Importance of Reading

Reading skill becomes very important in the world of education. By reading, students may get beneficial information that is not given by teachers in the classroom. Furthermore, almost 50 percent of the national final examination items consist of reading skill. Therefore, the students should be trained in order to have good reading skill. Harmer states that, reading is useful for language acquisition, because it is needed for career, for study purposes, or simply for pleasure.<sup>3</sup> Reading and understanding are the important things that we need to use in our day life. Hudson explains that:

Only by reading, the people can acquire the speed and skill he will need for practical purpose when he leaves the school. In our literate society, it is so hard to imagine any skilled work that does not require the ability to read".<sup>4</sup>

In other word, reading skill is very crucial to be mastered by language learners, especially for the junior high school students because it will be useful for them when they decide to continue their study.

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<sup>3</sup> Jeremy Harmer, *How to Teach English*, (England: Pearson Longman,1998)p.68

<sup>4</sup> As cited in M. Luthfi Ariyanto, *The Effect of Lexical Simplification in Reading Texts on Reading Ability of the Second Year Students of SMA Negeri 1 Krian* (Unpublished S-1 Thesis. Surabaya: English Departement, IAIN Sunan Ampel, 2011), 12

## B. Understanding the Reading Text

Oberholzer stated that “understanding the reading text is far more important than knowing the mechanical skill of reading. Without comprehension, reading would serve no purpose.”<sup>5</sup> It means that understanding the text is very important to be achieved by the students because reading is not simply about mechanical skill. It helps the readers to understand the world, learn about the past and plan for the future.

In order to understand text, Westwood argues that readers must use information they already possess to filter, interpret, organize and reflect upon the incoming information they get from the text. He thinks that efficient interpretation of text involves a combination of word recognition skills, linking of new information to prior knowledge, and application of appropriate strategies such as locating the main idea, making connections, questioning, inferring and predicting.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, understanding the text is not an easy thing, so that is why there are many students find difficulties in understanding the text.

Moreover, Kuswidyastutik said that “someone’s understanding of a thing can be measured by whether or not he was in answering questions related to it and the difficulty can be seen from the mistakes he did while working on the questions.”<sup>7</sup> Since the common questions on the text are primarily about the main

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<sup>5</sup> Bronwen. Oberholzer, *The Relationship Between Reading Difficulties and Academic Performance*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Westwood. *What teachers need to know about Reading and writing difficulties*. (Australia: Acer press, 2001),31

<sup>7</sup> Kuswidyastutik, *identifikasi kesulitan belajar matematika siswa kelas IV SDN Kedungringin 1*.

ideas, finding reference, understanding the structure and an inference that can be drawn from the passages, the researcher considers that those questions are the basic difficulties faced by the students in understanding the text. Below, the researcher shows the possible difficulties faced by the students while understanding the text.

a. Extracting main ideas (skimming)

The main idea is a statement that tells the author's point about the topic. The main idea provides the message of a given paragraph or the argument that is being made about the topic.<sup>8</sup> According to Vener identifying main idea is important because it is included in the overall idea of the paragraph.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, she argued that the author should locate the main idea in different places within a paragraph. The main idea is usually a sentence, it is usually the first sentence but it can be in the middle or in the last sentence. Therefore, this can make the main idea more difficult to find. The students may get confused to see what the main idea of a passage is, and where the main idea is located.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.irsc.edu/uploadedFiles/Students/AcademicSupportCenter/WritingLab/Finding-the-Main-Idea.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Diane Vener, *Study Skill* (<http://www.landmarkoutreach.org/publications/spotlight/finding-main-idea>) accessed on August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2013, 09 a.m

b. Reading for specific information (scanning)

Brown stated that “scanning is quickly searching for some particular piece or pieces of information in a text”.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Kahayanto argues that when scanning the reader lets his or her eyes wander over the text until he or she is looking for, whether it is name of place, a kind of food, specific word, or specific information.<sup>11</sup>

However, He thinks that to enable the student to scan effectively is not easy, he or she should know what kinds of information he or she needs; also, he or she should have the strong belief where he or she will find such information needed from the text.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, sometimes it is difficult for a student to see and distinguish between important and unimportant information in the text in order to find specific piece of information such as name, date, word or phrases, and references in the text.

c. Understanding text structure

According to Hess, Text structure is the organizational structures used within paragraphs or longer texts, appropriate to genre and purpose.<sup>13</sup> She continues describe the examples of text structure include: sequence/process,

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<sup>10</sup> H Douglas Brown. 2001. *Teaching by Principles*. San Francisco: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc. 45

<sup>11</sup> Kahayanto, E. *A Comparative Study on Students' Achievement in Reading I of the Education Study Program of Palangkaraya University who Entered Through PSB and SPMB in Academic Year 2003/2004*. (Unpublished Thesis. Palangka Raya, 2005), 11

<sup>12</sup> Kahayanto, E. *A Comparative Study on Students' Achievement in Reading I*, 11

<sup>13</sup> Karin K. Hess, *Teaching and Assessing Understanding of Text Structures across Grades*, 1.

description, time order/chronology, proposition/support, compare/contrast, problem/solution, cause/effect, inductive/deductive, and investigation.

1. Sequence (process): This pattern shows step or phases of a process or project of something in the text.
2. Description: This pattern covers a larger piece of writing which states the topic and facilitates the listing or elaboration of important descriptions, characteristics, or attributes.
3. Time order/chronology: This pattern reveal events from beginning to end. It is usually found in most narrative texts.
4. Proposition-support: This text structure begins by taking a side of a position on a topic and then supports the idea with examples or facts.
5. Compare-contrast structure: This pattern explains the likeness (comparison) and /or differences (contrast) among events or ideas.
6. Problem-solution structure: This pattern takes a problem and explains it thoroughly. Then the essay offers several solutions to the problem.
7. Cause-effect structure: This pattern illustrates the causes of an event or fact and how it affects other events, facts, situations, etc (the effects).
8. Inductive/deductive structure: A deductive structure presents a generalization/definition and then follows it with specific examples. While, an inductive structure presents illustration and examples and then moves the reader to draw a conclusion from the examples.

9. Investigation: This pattern uses a set of criteria to evaluate information or ideas that have been presented.

Furthermore, Barber said that each text structure is associated with different signal words. The signal words link ideas together, show relationships, and indicate transitions from one idea to the next.<sup>14</sup> Below the text structure signal word:

- a. cause–effect: therefore, as a result, leads to, so, because of, thus, in order
- b. Problem–solution: fortunately, unfortunately, therefore, however, like, unlike and in contrast.
- c. time–order: first, next, then, last, finally, meanwhile, following, before, after
- d. description: for example, for instance, in addition, also, too, some, most, all, other
- e. question–answer: what, where, why, who, how, when, does

Based on the explanation above, students may sometimes have trouble in seeing how a passage is organized or structured because they have to know and find the signals to recognize how sentences are joined together to make paragraphs and how paragraphs are combined into text.

- d. Dealing with unfamiliar words

One of the common problems facing by the student is simply not being able to understand a word or expression in the text. The reader will find the

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<sup>14</sup> Jacqueline Barber, *Teaching Text Structure* (The Regents of the University of California, 2010), 2.

difficulty in neither understanding the text, because he is not familiar with the text. A written text may be difficult to understand because it contains many words that are unknown to the student.<sup>15</sup> It may be because the students are lack of vocabulary or background knowledge about the word. If students find many unfamiliar words in the text, even though the students are allowed to open the dictionary, it is still so hard for students to comprehend the text. Therefore, unfamiliar key words about the text need to be taught to students before reading the material so that they can be easily understand the material.

### **C. Causes of Difficulty in Understanding Text**

Many different factors contribute as the cause of students' difficulties in understanding text. Some of those factors are located within the learner's background, some within the teaching technique, and some within the learner's environment.<sup>16</sup>

#### **1. Learner's Background**

The learner's background means something which comes from the learners themselves. It was related with the learner attitude toward reading, such as interest and motivation in reading and the prior knowledge that the learner have known before.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://esl.fis.edu/teachers/support/commun.htm>

<sup>16</sup> Peter. Westwood, *Reading and learning difficulties a process to teaching and assessment*, 26



a. Interest

Interest is being one of the important factors in order to increase the students' achievement in reading. Shalahuddin stated that "interest is a concern that contains elements of feeling. It can motivate the students to be active in their job or their activity."<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, De Bortoli argued that having an interest in and enjoying a subject affects not only the intensity, quality and persistence in specific learning situations but can also affect engagement in learning situations in general and enhances motivation.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, if the readers have interest to read, it will be easier for them to understand what they read. On the other side, if the readers have no any interest to read, it will be difficult for them to understand it.

b. Motivation

Motivation plays an important role in understanding the text. Motivation is an important factor that may contribute to success at school and to lifelong learning.<sup>19</sup> Motivation is some kind of internal drive, which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something. As Brown points out, motivation includes factors such as the need of

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<sup>17</sup> Mahfudh Shahuddin, *Pengantar Psikologi Pendidikan*, (Surabaya: Bina Ilmu, 1990), Cet. Ke-1, 95

<sup>18</sup> Lisa De Bortoli - Sue Thomson., *Contextual factors that influence the achievement of Australia's Indigenous* (Victoria: ACER Press, 2010), 28

<sup>19</sup> Lisa De Bortoli - Sue Thomson., *Contextual factors that influence the achievement of Australia's Indigenous*, 35

exploration, activity, stimulation, new knowledge, and ego enhancement.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, in line with the explanation of interest and motivation above, motivation and interest are interconnected. Ilmu said that “students’ interest will be higher if students have higher motivation.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, it can be concluded that the good interest and motivation result the good achievement of the students. It will be easier for the students to achieve something if they have interest and motivation to learn it. As well as it will be easier for them understand text, if they have interest and motivation to read the text.

c. Learners’ prior knowledge

Mellon stated that “students usually come into the class with the prior knowledge gained from the class or outside the class. It influences how they filter and interpret what they are learning.”<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Jacobovits believes that the student’s prior knowledge influences the student’s ability in learning a foreign language. Students who have a lot of knowledge will be easier to learn the new lesson.<sup>23</sup> It means that students with a lot of knowledge about reading will quickly understand

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<sup>20</sup> H. Douglas Brown, *Language Assessment. Principles and Classroom Practice*, (USA: Pearson Education. Inc, 2004), p. 160-166

<sup>21</sup> As cited in Farid Ilmu, *A Case Study of Students’ Interest in Learning Listening at MAN Surabaya*. (Unpublished S-1 Thesis. Surabaya: English Departement, IAIN Sunan Ampel, 2012), 13.

<sup>22</sup> Carnegie Mellon, *Principles of Learning* (<http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/principles/learning.html#LP03>) accessed on August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2013, 10 a.m

<sup>23</sup> Ahmad Sokhbirin., *A Study On The technique of Teaching English Speaking in Man Bangil*. {Unpublished S-1 Thesis. Malang: English Department, UMM. 2002.}hal 21

about something they read. On the other hand, students who have little knowledge (grammar or vocabulary) may have some difficulties in understanding something they read. For an example, a student who never knows and hears about what is the word *famous*, and in some occasions dealing with it will find the story hard to follow, so he must have prior knowledge that enables him to bring personal meaning to the events and feelings in the story.

## 2. Teaching Technique

Teacher is one of school environmental factors who has important role to increase students learning achievement. Teacher is a subject in education who has duty to transfer the knowledge to the students.<sup>24</sup> A teacher is an important person in teaching learning process, especially for teaching reading, because the teacher also determines whether their students to be good readers or not. Teacher also will become source of learning difficulties if he/she does cannot choose the right technique to teach the material. Wang argued that although teachers are very knowledgeable about the subject they are teaching, they often rely on one teaching technique to impart this information.<sup>25</sup> They sometimes do not realize that the techniques they use are not in accordance with the subject matter they convey. Therefore, the teacher should be careful

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<sup>24</sup> Diane Larsen-Freeman and Michael H. Long, *An Introduction to second language Acquisition Research*, (New York: Longman, 1990). 220

<sup>25</sup> Xiaomin Wang, *Professional Development Module on Teaching Techniques* ([http://www.texascollaborative.org/teaching\\_module.htm](http://www.texascollaborative.org/teaching_module.htm)) accessed on August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2013, 11 a.m

in choosing the technique to teach because it related to the students' understanding of the material.

### 3. Learner's Environment

The environment factors also can influence the students in mastering and in learning English. According to Finocchiaro:

“Someone who lives in environmental with the society that has high educational and has good attitude toward reading will support her ability to master reading that has been learned at school can be applied functionally outside school.”<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, someone who lives in an environment that has reading habits will be supported by her environment indirectly. And it happens not only in learning reading but also in learning English, without practice and applied it outside school he will not understand English perfectly.

Home and school are the two kinds of learners' environment that can influence their learning reading achievement.

#### a. Home condition

It cannot be neglected that parents play important role in the home. Every student needs attention from her/his parents to reach her/his learning achievement.<sup>27</sup> Since learning English is not the same as learning Indonesian, children need parents' guidance to learn about English especially reading English text because they will read

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<sup>26</sup> Ahmad Sokhbirin, *A Study On The technique of Teaching English Speaking in Man Bangil*. {Unpublished S-1 Thesis. Malang: English Department, UMM. 2002.} hal 42

<sup>27</sup> Diane Larsen-Freeman and Michael H. Long, *An Introduction to second language Acquisition Research*, (New York: Longman, 1990), 214

something with different sound, vocabulary and structure from that of Indonesia. Learning reading without parents' guidance will make students feel difficult in learning. They will have difficulties in understanding something they read or they will misunderstand about the texts they read.

b. School condition

The school condition also can be the cause of students' learning difficulties. School which lack of learning media, such as English books will influence the students' ability in learning reading. The lack of learning media such as English books, magazines or newspapers makes the learning reading process become ineffective and will be hamper students' understanding about the material.

From all of the explanations above, teachers need to be able to identify the difficulties experienced by their students and also the cause of the difficulties. By knowing these problems, teachers can reorganize teaching reading in the next semester or in the next class in order to provide better English lesson.

#### **D. Descriptive text**

Descriptive text is one of the texts taught in junior high school besides procedure, recount, narrative, and report text. Based on English Curriculum for Junior high School, descriptive text is defined as a text which describes

something, someone, or place in details.<sup>28</sup> The purpose this text is to tell the reader what the writer feels. According to Depdiknas the components of descriptive text are.<sup>29</sup>

1. The generic structure of descriptive text:

a. Identification

It identifies things, person, or something to be described.

b. Description

It describes the characteristic of thing, person, or place.

2. Language feature

a. Using specific nouns

The noun is something that will be described in the text. For example: my home, teacher, cat, etc.

b. Using simple present tense

c. Using detailed noun phrase

It is use to give detail information about the subject. For example:  
it has large open rowboat.

d. Using many kinds of adjective

It is used to describe, number, and classify an object. For example:  
two strong hand, a smart girl, etc.

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<sup>28</sup> As cited in Ninis Fauziyah, *Using Brochure As A Media In Teaching Reading Descriptive Text Among The Eighth Grade Students Of Smp Bilingual Terpadu, Krian* (Unpublished S-1 Thesis. Surabaya: English Departement, IAIN Sunan Ampel, 2012), 14.

<sup>29</sup> Depdiknas, *kurikulum 2004 Standart kompetensi Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris SMP dan MTS*,(Jakarta: Pusat Kurikulum Balitbang Depdiknas), 52.

e. Using relating verbs

It is used to give information about the subject. For example: my sister is very beautiful.

f. Using action verbs

It is used to tell the condition clearly. For example: my dog licks my foot.

g. Using thinking verbs and feeling verbs

They are used to express the writer's personal view of the subject. For example: I think he is a kind boy.

h. Using figurative language

Descriptive used figurative speech such as, simile, metaphor. For example: the young lady is white as a chalk.

i. Using adverbials

It is used to give additional information. For example: at the big house.

Isern explains that reading a descriptive text is like drawing a picture for the readers because the writer's purpose is to paint a picture in words.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, in reading descriptive text, the readers should be able to close their eyes and imagine what the picture described in the text, and what the picture looks like through reading the text. However, in fact, it is very difficult to imagine something which is not real. The students have to understand the whole content of

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<sup>30</sup>Kelly. Kennedy-Isern, *The write path: Basic of paragraph writing*, 50.

the text in order to get the point and be able to answer the question from the text. Therefore, there are many students who have difficulties in understanding descriptive text.

### **E. Previous Studies**

In this part, the researcher will review some previous studies related to this research.

1. The first research is come Albader with his research entitled “Difficulties in Second Language Reading”. This research focused on the learners’ reading comprehension skill in TOEFL exam. In this research Albader mentions the difficulties that someone faces in reading in a second or foreign language. The difficulties cover all aspects of linguistics, such as grammar (*syntax*), pronunciation (*phonetics*), and meaning of words (*semantics*). Moreover, he concludes that it is difficult for the students to read so many technical and scientific terms in a very short time in TOEFL exam.<sup>31</sup>
2. The second research is done by McNamara entitle “Understanding the Fourth-Grade Slump: Comprehension Difficulties as a Function of Reader Aptitudes and Text Genre”. The goal of this research is to develop a better understanding of young readers’ difficulties in comprehending text, and how those difficulties vary as a function of reader aptitudes and text genre. The results of this study highlight the importance of text genre and reader

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<sup>31</sup> Yousuf B. Albader. *Difficulties in Second Language Reading*. School of Linguistics & English Language Bangor University



knowledge when examining reading comprehension abilities and difficulties.<sup>32</sup>

3. The third research was done by Ade with her title “A Study on Students’ Difficulties in Comprehending Recount Text; A Case Study at SMAN 1 Gangga on First Grade Academic Year 2012/2013”.<sup>33</sup> This research was proposed to discover the ability of students and types of difficulties faced by students in comprehending recount text. The result of this study showed that there are several common problems or difficulties faced by students such as: analyzing the text content, allocating their time to study English outside the school because they prefer doing other activities and understanding the meaning of sentences and words caused lack of vocabularies mastery and word power.
4. Another research was done by Sasmita with her title “Identifying Students’ Abilities in Understanding English Reading Texts: A Case Study at The Second Year Students of Smkn 1 Gangga in Academic Year 2012/2013”.<sup>34</sup> This study was aimed to find out the students’ level of abilities in understanding English reading texts and the factors may make the students

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<sup>32</sup> Rachel Best, Randy G. Floyd, and Danielle S McNamara. *Understanding the Fourth-Grade Slump: Comprehension Difficulties as a Function of Reader Aptitudes and Text Genre*. 202 Psychology Building, University of Memphis

<sup>33</sup> Ade, *A Study On Students’ Difficulties In Comprehending Recount Text; A Case Study At SMAN 1 Gangga On First Grade Academic Year 2012/2013*. (online). <http://fkip-unram.ac.id/ejurnal/index.php/inggris/article/view/222> accessed on April 15<sup>th</sup> 2012, 7 a.m.

<sup>34</sup> Eka. Sasmita, *Identifying Students’ Abilities in Understanding English Reading Texts: A Case Study at The Second Year Students of Smkn 1 Gangga in Academic Year 2012/2013*. (online). (<http://fkip-unram.ac.id/ejurnal/index.php/inggris/article/view/235>) accessed on April 15<sup>th</sup> 2012, 8 a.m.

had difficulties in understanding English reading texts. Based on the research findings the factors that may make the students have difficulties in understanding English reading texts were related to vocabulary, grammar knowledge, and reading interest.

From the previous studies above, the researcher can conclude that difficulties in understanding the reading text are very important to be known by the students and the teacher. Since every student probably has different difficulties in understanding the reading text, the researcher got an inspiration to do a research based on this topic.

However, the problems faced by the students in one school might be different from the other schools. This research will differ from all of those previous researches from some aspects. First, in this research the researcher emphasized on the difficulties in understanding reading text faced by junior high school students. This is important to help the teachers be aware of the problems and consequently try to solve the problems in the earlier level of study and improve the students' reading competence. Second, this research will focus on the students' difficulties in understanding descriptive texts. This was based on the preliminary study result that there are many students who still face difficulty in understanding the descriptive text. Moreover, the differences are also about data collection technique and the data analysis used in this research.