

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Mastering English is crucial in international communication because every sector uses English; for example, to communicate directly or indirectly, to understand what the customer said, and to reply to an email. Therefore, English is essential to learn. In education, when learning English, students are expected to be able to master all language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Reading is an important activity in every language. The reading activity allows the readers to know the information from various texts. It means in reading activities, the students should be able to concentrate on reading the text to get information. In the reading process, the students are not necessarily to read the text aloud, but the important thing is how the text is understandable according to the reading objectives.

According to Harmer (2001:99), getting students to read English texts is an important part of the teacher's job. In the first place, many students want to be able to read texts in English either for their careers, study purposes, or simply for pleasure. Anything we can do to make it easier for them to do these things must be a good idea. Reading is helpful for language acquisition. Reading also positively affects their vocabulary knowledge, spelling and writing. Reading text also provides good models for English writing. We can encourage students to focus on vocabulary, grammar, or punctuation at different times. We can also use reading material to demonstrate how we construct sentences, paragraphs, and whole texts.

Reading comprehension should be mastered by students. In reading, students can find out general information, specific information, textual meaning,

and textual reference of the text. The students can comprehend the text well if they have those abilities. Teaching reading comprehension should be arranged communicatively. It should be noted that in completing a reading comprehension task, having enough prior knowledge is very significant, and having a good understanding of the whole meaning of the text enables the students to answer and express their ideas about the topic.

Based on the observation in SMP Sila Dharma Denpasar, the eighth-grade students had a problem with reading comprehension. The researcher found that the students had low ability in reading comprehension. When they read the text, they find difficulties pronouncing words and finding the main idea in the text. The reason might also come from their teacher. The teacher used conventional techniques of asking and answering questions in teaching and learning activities in the classroom. It can be that the teacher used a monotonous strategy in teaching reading comprehension. Besides, the teachers were stuck with conventional ways oriented only to achieving cognitive aspects. The teachers believed in teaching techniques in their learning. This happened because the teachers only know the teaching knowledge of verbalism. They could only read but could not comprehend the text.

Some students can observe another fact of the low comprehension of reading. The students had difficulty analyzing the main idea. Students still found it difficult when the teacher asked about the main idea and the meaning of difficult words. The next indicator was the lack of students' mastery in vocabulary because whenever the teacher gave questions about difficult words found in the text, the students always seemed puzzled. The students were also less interested during the lesson. This lack of enthusiasm for learning was also seen in students' awareness of following the lesson when preparing before the lesson began. Therefore, it was

important to use learning techniques to increase students' enthusiasm for following the learning and improve their reading comprehension skills.

The researcher used small group discussion techniques to solve the problems in teaching reading comprehension. The grouping techniques were expected to motivate the students in the learning process, where they can get a positive effect to improve their reading comprehension. The grouping technique lets the students exchange ideas with other students in their groups, and the higher achievers can share their knowledge with their group. This can help the lower students improve their skills in small group discussions because they can share arguments related to the topic. Small group discussions help students express their ideas with their friends while giving them the confidence to communicate.

The strength of using small group discussion technique is to develop students' abilities to express their ideas freely and debate arguments or refine their critical understanding of a particular topic. Every group member was given the reading text with exercises to assist them in finding general information, specific information, textual meaning, and textual reference. Small group discussion teaches reading comprehension in which they are divided into small groups. Each person in the group is assigned to read about the text, discuss the main idea and topic, find synonyms and antonyms, and find the problematic word and a part of speech.

A small group discussion technique is recommended in teaching reading because the students can be actively involved in learning activities in the classroom. Moreover, the researcher believed that the small group discussion technique could improve the student's knowledge in reading comprehension. That is why the researchers want to use this technique. Based on the explanation above, the researcher was interested in conducting a study on improving reading

comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMP Sila Dharma Denpasar in academic year 2022/2023 through small group discussion.

1.2 Research Problem

This present study was conducted to improve reading comprehension using small group discussions. It is important to improve students' reading comprehension because it can provide general information, specific information, textual meaning, and textual reference so that students can understand the text well they can. Based on the abovementioned observation, it is important to identify the research problem to improve the students' reading comprehension. The research had to choose a specific problem to be answered and applied in this study: can reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMP Sila Dharma Denpasar in academic year 2022/2023 be improved through small group discussion?

1.3 Objective of the Study

It has been mentioned in the background that reading is one crucial skill that all English learners must master in the research objective to redirect the current research. Indeed, it is needed to inform the goal to be achieved. It is guided in making any necessary decision and starting point for the research. This study aimed at determining whether reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMP Sila Dharma Denpasar in academic year 2022/2023 can be improved through small group discussion.

1.4 Limitation of the Study

The discussion of reading comprehension is lightly considered complex to deal with in a single study coverage, so the research limitation is needed considering

the broadest and complexity of improving reading comprehension in general. The present study was limited to improving reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMP Sila Dharma Denpasar in academic year 2022/2023 through small group discussion.

The reading comprehension was focused on main competence, according to the syllabus basic competence 3.10: Applying text structure and language competence to comprehend the social function of the short and simple descriptive text of person, animal, things, and place based on the context. The basic competencies of the study were for the students to understand the meaning of the descriptive text and answer the question based on the text the researcher gave. The indicator of this study was identifying general information, specific information, textual meaning, and textual reference in descriptive texts.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research was concerned with using small group discussion to improve the students' reading comprehension. Therefore, the present research findings are expected to indicate significant theoretical and practical information on the importance of implementing small group discussion in teaching reading and positively affecting reading comprehension for students. The result of this study is expected to be useful for students, teachers, institutions, and researchers. The significance of this study can be divided into the following terms:

Theoretically, this research was expected to give more empirical and provable evidence in investigating the implementation of small group discussion in teaching reading comprehension. Some information and theory were provided in this study could be taken to enrich the available reference. The present study also

aimed to make students aware of reading activities that were very important for them, whether in learning languages or their daily lives.

Practically. This research was expected to give feedback to English teachers. This research was expected to help the English teachers, especially those who taught the eighth-grade students of SMP Sila Dharma Denpasar, improve their reading comprehension. The result of the research was expected to motivate and inspire the students to increase their ability to understand the text and improve their critical thinking skills in solving the problems encountered in real life. Besides, the present study is expected to help future research to make the benefit of improving reading comprehension through small group discussion.

1.6 Definition of Key Term

The result of this study later can be useful for the teacher when preparing reading classes and when the teachers teach reading comprehension using small group discussion to implement their students. Some definitions of key terms used in this study need to be operationally defined to avoid misunderstanding from the readers. The key terms that exist in this study are as follows:

1. Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is the ability of the eighth-grade students of SMP Sila Dharma Denpasar in academic year 2022/2023 to understand reading text, especially in finding general information, specific information, textual meaning, and textual reference.

2. Small group Discussion

Small group discussion used in the present study is a technique that requires the students to work in a group in which there are three steps: introduction,

directing the discussion, and summarizing the discussion. In the introduction, the teacher explains the learning material. In the directing, the students discuss the reading text and answer the question in the group. In summarizing, the teacher and the students summarize the texts.



CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

A theoretical review is a scientific investigation expected to contribute some practical significance to research based on relevant theoretical constructs and empirical evidence. A review of related theory is an important part of scientific research because it allows the readers to understand the foundation of the research problem. The background of this study is associated with some theoretical frameworks, which are discussed as follows: reading comprehension, small group discussion, and assessment of reading.

2.1.1 Reading Comprehension

Reading is a complex and complicated process. The meaning of complexity in the reading process involves some factors of the readers. Some factors can be internal factors and external factors. Internal factors of reading are intelligence, interest, attitudes, talents, motivation, and the purpose of reading. External factors can be in the form of social and economic background and traditions. It means external and internal factors from a coordination complex are interrelated to support reading comprehension. Good readers are aware of how well they understand a text while reading and take active steps to overcome difficulties in comprehension.

According to Duffy (2009:14), reading is a section that focuses on vocabulary and comprehension. Comprehension is the essence of reading because the goal of written language is the communication of messages, and vocabulary is fundamentally important for understanding messages. It is because when the readers could not recognize the meaning of a vocabulary in a text, the readers will

be hard to get meaning; hence, they could not understand the message from the text well. A long process is needed to understand a text because it involves some aspects to help readers get an understanding.

Moreover, Pang et al. (2003:6) state reading is about understanding written texts. It is a complex activity that involves both perceptions and thought. Reading consists of two related processes such as word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition refers to perceiving how written symbols correspond to one's spoken language. Comprehension is making sense of words, sentences, and connected text. Readers typically use background knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, experience with text, and other strategies to help them understand written text.

Reading comprehension is constructing meaning by coordinating complex processes, including word reading, word and world knowledge, and fluency. In understanding reading text, people have defined reading comprehension based on their purpose and reason in reading. Generally, people like to read books, magazines, newspapers, or other printed materials. Reading has many factions daily and gets something new that has never been heard before. Besides, in learning English, reading is one of four major skills. Therefore, there are some definitions of reading comprehension from an expert. Woolley (2011:15) states that reading comprehension is making meaning from text. The goal, therefore, is to gain an overall understanding of what is described in the text rather than to obtain meaning from isolated words or sentences. In understanding read text information, children developmental models of the purpose of the text ideas during the reading process.

On the other hand, harries et al., in Brassell and Rasinski (2008:16), state that reading comprehension is the contraction of the meaning of the interpreter and

the message. Written communication through a reciprocal, holistic interchange of ideas between the interpreters and the message. The presumption is that meaning resides in the interpreter's internal problem-solving and thinking process. The content of the meaning is influenced by that person's prior knowledge and experience. This definition also suggests that reading comprehension requires an action on the part of the readers. The action involves the use of existing knowledge on the topic of the text as well as the text itself to create meaning. The problem in reading comprehension is making meaning from the text.

According to Serravallo (2010:43), reading is thinking, understanding, and understanding a text's meaning. Reading must be directed toward comprehension and catching the idea that the text provides. Before reading, the students think about what they already know about the text's structure or topic. They make a connection to their lives and their world, as their ability to read is an important educational goal. For children or adults, the ability to read opens up a new world and opportunities to develop knowledge.

Concerning the statement above, reading comprehension can be defined as a process of getting appropriate meaning from the written form. Reading comprehension is the main action of reading itself. Without comprehension, readers cannot understand the meaning of the reading text. Reading comprehension is also how to understand the context and the meaning of the text presented.

2.1.2 Small Group Discussion

Cooperative learning is a pedagogical practice that involves students working together in a small group to accomplish shared goals. In comparative learning, each group member must complete their goal and ensure that others do

likewise if the group is to achieve its goal. The technical term for this dual responsibility is positive independence, an essential component of cooperative learning. The other vital elements are promotive interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and small-group skills, and group processing.

Small group discussion allows presenters to announce a topic or idea for group discussion among participants. A small group discussion follows democratic guidelines and allows everyone to contribute many ideas for others to discuss and reflect upon. Discussion allows for exchanging ideas within the group context under a presenter's direction. Whenever a group assembles in the same place, they will talk with one another. It is human nature to be curious about our questions to talk with another. Small group discussion, also known as cooperative learning, involves a high degree of insert action. Gillies (2007:1) states that cooperative learning involves the students working together in a small group to accomplish shared goals. Small group discussion is a technique for teaching. In this technique, the students are divided into small groups consisting of five students.

According to Harmer (2004:117), in general, it is possible to say that small groups of around five students provoke greater involvement and participation than large groups. They are small enough for real interpersonal interaction yet not so small that members are over-reliant upon each individual. By using small discussion, the students will be easier and actively participate in the reading class. They meet as small gatherings and large meetings and offer many opportunities for creating flexible interchange of ideas and lively, meaningful participation. The main point in setting up a discussion group is ensuring that each member participates and follows the discussion. They can compare their ideas with their friends in the group.

According to Kendall and Khuon, (2006:6), one of the first considerations with small-group instruction is identifying which students will work together. Flexible groups based on students' needs provide students with targeted instruction for a short period. Often, groups are formed just for students struggling with a specific strategy, such as making questions. That means the group does not always consist of the same students, as used to be the case, with the "bluebird group" being the low-reading group. With strategy instruction, the group is formed based on data. Students are assessed in various ways to determine their knowledge of using the strategy as they read. Then teaching is planned based on the assessment results. After the teaching, students are again assessed, and groups are reconfigured based on their instructional needs. It is an ongoing cycle—assessing, planning instruction, learning, and assessing again to plan the next instructional step, and regrouping students. Small groups are not formed based on ability but rather are data-driven, and they are frequently regrouped based on assessments.

Richards and Rodgers (2001:196) state that group formation is important in creating positive interdependence. Setting up groups includes deciding the group size and assigning students to groups. Group can be teacher-selected, random, or student selection is recommended as the usual model to create heterogeneous groups on such variables as past achievement, ethnicity, or sex. Many cooperative learning techniques can help English teachers improve the students' reading comprehension; one of the techniques is small group discussion.

Small group discussion can allow students to participate actively. Through small group discussion, the students can develop opinions and ideas from the other students about their reading process and respond to the text. The technique involves them intensively. Besides, there is an exchange of information, personal experience,

and problem-solving in a group. According to Serravallo (2010:6), some benefit of small-group instruction is a small-group conference. Addresses instruction goals by matching students' needs with a purpose and method to create efficiency so more children can be seen more frequently for intervention or enrichment, allows students to feel like part of them as they work on the same goal with other students, builds peer support as they mentor one another toward their goals.

According to Kendall and Khuon (2006:2), small group strategy lessons are the solution we found to teaching reading comprehension strategies to English Language Learners. They know how to express their ideas and manage the problem through small group discussion. In addition, they need to know how to share resources fairly, take turns, and engage in democratic decision-making. The students can be passive recipients. I have been given opportunities to interact with my peers, but through small group discussion more fun. Small group discussion makes meetings interesting. According to Brewer (1997:23), the steps of applying small group discussion in the teaching-learning process can be described as follows:

1. Introduction

At the beginning of the study, the teacher introduces the material, and the rule of the discussion, such as the teacher explains the instruction on how to do small group discussion, the teacher explains about the purpose of the study, and the relation between the materials that they have learned with the materials that they will learn later.

2. Directing discussion

The teacher then directs the discussion. The teacher should ask the students if they have a question about the topic, and this question can start the discussion, or the teacher can prepare a question list.

3. Summarizing the discussion

At the end of the study, the teacher and the students make a summary about the topic. Sometimes the students may be confused or retain wrong ideas as right. Therefore, the teacher should ensure that all students understand the discussion.

2.1.3 Assessment of Reading Comprehension

According to Brown (2004:185), the assessment of reading ability does not end with the measurement of comprehension. Assessment of basic reading skills may be carried out in several different ways, such as reading aloud, multiple choice, comprehension questions, and short answer task. In beginning reading, assessment is normally done by listening to the students reading aloud. Teachers assess word recognition and fluency in this way. The second is multiple tests which makes it easy to give the score quickly with a choice of four or five options. Next, comprehension question is used to assess students' ability by providing a reading passage and answering the questions. The last is the short answer task. A reading passage is presented, and the students read a question that must be answered in a sentence or two. The answer must be grammatically correct. All types of assessments aim to measure the extent to which the students understand the content and information of the reading passage.

Assessment is the way to measure the knowledge of the learners, and it is the way to know how far the learners understand the materials. Paris and Stahl (2005:3) state that reading comprehension assessment is a critical component of any national research effort to improve understanding of reading comprehension and how it can best be taught.

Assessment is the ongoing process of gathering, analyzing, and reflecting on evidence to make informed and consistent judgments to improve future students learning. Caldwell (2008:5) states that reading assessment has four basic purposes. First, a teacher uses assessment to identify students' good behaviors. Second, a teacher must identify areas of weakness concerning the good rather than behaviors to align instruction with their needs. Third, a teacher must determine whether a specific book is too difficult for a student. Last, a teacher needs to document evidence of progress on the part of the students. The assessment form must be varied and relevant to the lesson, addressing the different learning styles.

The test is a subset of the assessment. Brown (2004:3) states that a test, in simple terms, measures a personal ability, knowledge, or performance in a given domain. In every learning experience, there best comes a time to time to pause and take stock, to put our focal process to their best use, and to demonstrate accumulated skills or knowledge. The first business in exploring classroom assessment understands how assessment differs. Tests are always an identifiable period in the curriculum when learners muster all their facilities to offer peak performance, knowing that their responses are being measured and evaluated.

Reading comprehension assessment is a critical component of any research effort to improve our understanding of reading comprehension and how it can be adequately taught. Pang et al. (2003:18) state that two forms of reading assessment exist. The first is to determine how well children are reading to help them improve (diagnosis). Diagnostic assessment of how much progress has been made. Both forms of assessment are needed for effective reading instruction.

This research assessment of reading comprehension was focused on the students' understanding of the meaning of the text. They can find the text's main

idea and answer the question. When the researcher gave a post-test to the students, the researcher explained it first to the student. It is important to anticipate students who do not understand the instruction and then explain first about the instruction of the text that was given. The purpose of this cycle is to know the students' reading comprehension ability on the text about general information, specific information, textual meaning, and textual reference on the text so students can comprehend and ready answer the question about reading comprehension. The instrument was a short answer task given to the students in cycle I.

2.2 Empirical Review

To show the strength of the present study, it is important to do an empirical review. Empirical review is about reviewing studies conducted by other research's that might be similar to the present study. Some studies have been done to research the effectiveness of small group discussion. This part was focused on reviewing some research that have been done. Empirical reviews are the review of relevant research results, in which it reviews the previous research that relevant to the present research. Two similar researchers related to this result the relevant studies used as reference are described below.

The first study was from Sawitri (2017), entitled "Improving Reading Comprehension Through Small Group Discussion of the Tenth Grade Students of SMKN 3 Sukawati In Academic Year 2017/2018". The result of the study found that the students were more active and inserted in a learning activity in the classroom. The students could work together and have equal opportunities to learn. The classroom action research proved that small group discussion could improve reading comprehension, and the students got progressing scores at the end of cycle

II. The students were more interested in using small group discussion of the tenth-grade students of SMKN 3 Sukawati. Based on the first study from Sawitri, to make clear instruction in the classroom activity, the research would use the steps of small group discussion to make students interested and active in the classroom.

Another similar study was from Bau (2018) entitled “Improving Reading Comprehension of the Eighth-grade Students of SMPN 3 Abiansema in Academic Year 2018/2019 Through Small Group Discussion.” The research objective was improving reading comprehension through small group discussion in SMPN 3 Abiansema academic year 2018/2019. The study results found that small group discussion could improve their ability in reading comprehension. It can be seen from the students’ progress who can get a significant score in cycle II.

The researcher above gained the same result in which the findings showed that after conducting two cycles, there was a constant increase after the researcher implemented small group discussions. The researcher did not use clear steps for small group discussion. In addition, when researchers do not provide instructions, the teaching and learning process confused the students, so learning situations cannot run effectively and efficiently. In this study, to clarify the steps, the researcher would carry out the steps of small group discussions adapted from Brewer (1997) to make instructions and make situations effective and efficient.