

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Reading is a process of constructing meaning through dynamic interaction between readers in the form of writing. It is because one of the skills that students should pay more attention to is reading. They read a text to know and understand its meaning. In addition to having a close relationship with the knowledge and information they gain through reading books; readers must understand and remember what they read. According to Blachowicz & Ogle (2008), reading is an important process by which people obtain information and ideas from books, newspapers, manuals, letters, contracts, advertisements, and other materials. It means that students can get information from anywhere by reading a text. Students can gain knowledge, vocabulary, and grammar and improve comprehension.

According to Harmer (2001), 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. Through reading, students have incidental contact with grammatical rules. Students develop an understanding of language structure and grammar and increase their vocabulary. 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. By reading, the students can demonstrate how well they understand English, so they must develop their reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is essential for students.

In addition, Pang et al. (2003) state that reading is about understanding written text. It is a complex activity that involves both perception and thought.

Reading consists of two related processes: 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. In relation to this study, reading comprehension is not a simple thing to be achieved. It cannot be accomplished in one day or month like what people often see in advertisements for many English courses. It is not that simple, as students must do a lot of practice to improve their reading comprehension.

Based on the observation at SMP Widya Sakti Denpasar, the eighth-grade students failed to pass the reading class. Understanding reading texts was a problem that many students faced in reading classes. Students did not know how to get ideas from text easily. The eighth-grade students of SMP Widya Sakti Denpasar also faced this problem. It took hard work to get students interested and fond of reading. Therefore, most students assumed that reading was something elusive and quite tedious to do. It was difficult for them to understand the meaning of the text. In addition, their ability to master vocabulary was inferior. Therefore, to obtain the meaning of a text, the students need to get stimulation from the teachers.

Many factors can influence reading comprehension improvement, including teaching techniques. An interview with an English teacher at SMP Widya Sakti Denpasar revealed that the teacher still employed a traditional technique in teaching reading comprehension. To assess the students' comprehension, the teacher just asked them to read the content and answer questions based on it. It was known that students struggled to understand and locate the major points of the texts. Furthermore, most students struggled to answer questions related to general information, specific information, textual meaning, and textual references from reading texts. It would be a challenge for the teachers.

Furthermore, the conventional teaching technique was ineffective for teaching reading nowadays. The teacher only discussed the content and invited the students to answer questions based on the textbook. This passive learning type made it easier for students to forget the content influencing their performance. They struggled to grasp the materials when they found difficult terms in the text. The employment of teaching methods was critical in the teaching and learning process. Teachers should employ ways to make class interaction lively and exciting. Based on the abovementioned issues, the researcher figured out that the teachers' technique was ineffective in teaching reading comprehension.

The teacher explained the material based on the textbook and told the students to answer the questions. This type of teaching tends to make students passive, and they easily forget learning material that affects their achievement. In addition, when the students found difficult words in the text, they failed to comprehend it. The use of the teaching technique in the learning process was crucial. This can impact students' development in reading; one of them is the improvement of students in terms of reading. The teacher should use a technique where they could make an interesting and exciting classroom interaction. However, based on the problem above, the researcher concluded that the teacher's technique was not really effective in teaching reading comprehension.

Small Group Discussion is a way of teaching reading comprehension in which students are divided into small groups. The technique is begun by the teacher giving the reading text to all the students. The teacher divides students into a small group, and each group consists of four students. The main steps to implement the Small Group Discussion are introducing, directing the discussion, and summarizing. In the introduction, the teacher introduces a well-known topic for all

students. In directing the discussion, the researcher identifies all group members if they have questions about the topic given or not. At the end of the discussion, summarizing is truly needed to ensure that all students understand what they have discussed. Summarizing is helpful for clearing up confusion, covering main points, ending a discussion, and conveying consensus.

Small Group Discussion in the teaching and learning process has several strengths. This technique can make it easier for students to understand the text. In addition, students can gain preliminary knowledge before they read the text, and then after reading it, they can also discuss it with their friends to express their ideas. From its strength, this technique is interesting to apply to junior high school students as an effort so they can more easily understand the content of reading texts and they can be more active in discussing. It makes them more interested in using Small Group Discussion in the teaching and learning process, especially reading comprehension. Therefore, Small Group Discussion is appropriate for improving reading comprehension and prior knowledge of the students.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that Small Group Discussion can help the students improve their reading comprehension. The researcher tried to conduct Small Group Discussion to teach reading comprehension to help the students find general information, specific information, textual meaning, and textual references in the recount text. Several studies have successfully demonstrated using Small Group Discussion to improve students' reading comprehension. That is why, in the present research, the researcher is strongly interested in conducting scientific study entitled "Improving Reading Comprehension of the Eighth-grade Students of SMP Widya Sakti Denpasar in the Academic Year 2023/2024 through Small Group Discussion."

1.2 Research Problem

This present study was conducted to improve reading comprehension using Small Group Discussions. Improving the students' reading comprehension was important to understand general information, specific information, textual meaning, and textual references. Based on the observation, it was important to identify the research problem to improve the students' reading comprehension. The researcher had to choose a specific problem to be answered and applied in this study. The current research problem was constructed as follows: can reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMP Widya Sakti Denpasar in the academic year 2023/2024 be improved through Small Group Discussion?

1.3 Objective of the Study

It has been mentioned in the background that reading was a crucial skill that all students in school must master in the purpose of research to direct current research. To make the present study has direction, it is necessary to declare an objective to be achieved. It guides any essential decision and is a starting point for doing the research. On the other hand, many methods to teach reading comprehension are currently being applied to improve students' achievement, especially in reading comprehension. To be able to answer the statement of the research question above, the objective of the study was to figure out whether reading comprehension of SMP Widya Sakti Denpasar in the academic year 2023/2024 can be improved through implementing Small Group Discussion.

1.4 Limitation of Study

As what has been widely known, reading comprehension is a complex and broad variable to be investigated. Many things can be considered by people who

wish to research the wide field of reading comprehension and its complexity to improve reading comprehension in general. Since reading has a lot of aspects to be observed, the researcher needed to narrow down the area of the current research. Thus, the researcher limited the investigation to improving reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMP Widya Sakti Denpasar in the academic year 2023/2024 through Small Group Discussion. The researcher focused on the teaching module and learning objectives that had been determined.

Based on the systematic-phased learning objectives (*Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran*) of the eighth-grade students of SMP Widya Sakti Denpasar, the learning objective stated that when students are given reading texts, they are able to identify general information, specific information, textual meaning and textual reference correctly. The focus of learning was identifying the abovementioned aspects of reading comprehension through Small Group Discussion. The reading comprehension that would be improved was limited to recount texts. Students can identify general information, specific information, textual meaning and textual references of the reading texts that they read. Moreover, reading comprehension in the present study was also focused on identifying general information, specific information, textual meaning, and textual references.

1.5 Significance of Study

This research concerns the teaching and learning process in reading comprehension through Small Group Discussion aimed at improving reading comprehension. It is expected to improve reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMP Widya Sakti Denpasar. The significance of the present research was to know how the technique worked in overcoming the problem faced

by the students in reading comprehension. One of the important principles and practical reflections considered in undertaking the present investigation is the significance of the expected research findings. The current research findings are expected to yield theoretical and practical significance.

Theoretically, the research results using Small Group Discussion are expected to contribute to teaching English. The results can be beneficial as theoretical evidence about implementing the theory based on the problems faced, especially for teaching reading. Moreover, the results of this study are expected to enrich theories. They can be the available references for future studies related to Small Group Discussion in improving reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students. Thus, it can contribute new research findings about the implementation. The findings are expected to be used as evidence that Small Group Discussion is one of the effective techniques for improving reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMP Widya Sakti Denpasar in the academic year 2023/2024.

Practically, the results of this study are expected to give feedback to the English teachers, the eighth-grade students, and other researchers. For the English teachers, the research was expected to improve teachers' knowledge and technique in improving the students' achievement in reading comprehension. It also helps the teachers create valuable and practical conditions in teaching reading to create a much more interesting and enjoyable classroom. For the students, it is useful to increase their reading comprehension by knowing the meaning of words and identifying general information, specific information, textual meaning and textual reference of the text. For the other researchers, it is expected to make other researchers know deeply about the application of Small Group Discussion to conduct better future research, particularly reading comprehension.

1.6 Definition of Key Term

The current research entitled “Improving Reading Comprehension of the Eighth-grade Students of SMP Widya Sakti Denpasar in the Academic Year 2023/2024 through Small Group Discussion”. In defining the key terms, the research findings can be useful when teaching reading comprehension using Small Group Discussion. The key terms used for the present study should concern the context used to make comprehension clear. Some key terms used in this study need to be operationally defined to avoid misunderstanding from the readers. Thus, the researcher tries to give a clear understanding of the terms used in this study: reading comprehension and Small Group Discussion. They were defined as follows:

1. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is defined as the ability of the eighth-grade students of SMP Widya Sakti in the academic year 2023/2024 to understand a recount text, especially in finding general information, specific information, textual meaning, and textual reference.

2. Small Group Discussion

Small Group Discussion is a teaching technique used by the researcher to improve the students' reading comprehension, which has three steps: introduction, directing the discussion, and summarizing. In the introduction, the researcher introduced a well-known topic for all students. In directing the discussion, the researcher asked all group members whether they had questions about the topic. At the end of the discussion, summarizing the discussion was truly needed to ensure that all students understood what they had discussed. Basically, summarizing is helpful for clearing up confusion, covering main points, ending a discussion, and conveying consensus.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

Scientific research should be based on some theoretical and relevant background. A theoretical review is the result of a scientific investigation expected to contribute significantly. The theoretical review should include relevant theoretical facts from various pieces of literature. This makes the research more accurate and avoids misunderstandings from readers. It can make it easier for readers to understand the error of this research. In addition, it is also to show relevant theories and concepts from this research. This chapter has several essential points to support this research, including many theoretical reviews of much of the literature. Therefore, this chapter explains and discusses several areas, including reading comprehension, Small Group Discussion, and reading assessment.

2.1.1 Reading Comprehension

Reading is about comprehending written text. Reading is one of the four major English skills that should be mastered because it is crucial. Reading comprehension is how readers interact and construct meaning from texts, apply prior knowledge of English grammar and decoding skills, improve their reading fluency, and broaden their ability to understand what they read and see from the literal to the inferential and critical levels. Reading can gradually increase students' knowledge and positively impact their other language skills. On the other hand, reading can help them improve their ability to learn about the word. They will achieve these goals if they understand the reading text. Meanwhile, comprehension is understanding words, sentences, and connected texts.

Wooley (2011) states that reading comprehension is making meaning from text. Therefore, the goal is to understand what is described in the text rather than obtain meaning from isolated words or sentences. Serravallo (2010), states that reading comprehension is at the heart, which means really reading. Reading is thinking, understanding, and understanding a text's meaning. Reading must be directed toward comprehending and catching the idea. Before reading, the students think about what they already know about the text's structure or topic. They make connections to their lives and the world as they read. Learning to read is an important educational goal. For children or adults, the ability to read opens a new world and opportunities to develop their knowledge.

Furthermore, Lems et al. (2010) describe that reading comprehension is not statistic competency. It varies according to the reading purposes and the text involved. Some benefits can be derived from reading texts; for example, reading texts can give opportunities to study vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and how the researcher constructs sentences, paragraphs, and texts. By reading, students will get information that can enrich their knowledge and enhance their mental concepts. Moreover, McNamara (2007) states that reading comprehension arises from cognitive processes and activities, including word decoding, lexical access, syntax processing, inference generation, reading strategies, and post-reading activities.

Snow (2002) defines reading comprehension as simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. Comprehension entails three elements: the readers doing the comprehension, the text to be comprehended, and the activity in which comprehension is a part. Furthermore, Chard & Santoro (2008) define reading comprehension as a highly cognitive process involving the intentional interaction

between the readers and the text to create meaning. Therefore, comprehension is not a passive process but an active one. The problem in reading comprehension is making meaning from the text. The problem is solved by the action of the readers, including the reading purpose and the ability to draw upon prior knowledge.

According to Klingner et al. (2007), reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning by coordinating several complex processes that include word reading, word and world knowledge, and fluency. When prerequisite skills are in place, reading becomes a thriving interaction between the text and the readers' background knowledge. In their relationship, comprehension is constructing meaning, involving an integral interaction between the text and the readers. Comprehension is part of the reading element because understanding the context of the text is essential in reading activities. If the readers can understand the context correctly, they can have fluency in reading because the meaning of reading is to gain knowledge, and the bonus is fluency in the reading process.

Pang et al. (2003) state reading is about understanding written texts. It is a complex that involves both perception and thought. Reading consists of two related processes: word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition refers to perceiving how written symbols correspond to one's spoken language. Besides, comprehension is making sense of words, sentences, and connected texts. In relation to this study, reading comprehension is not a simple thing to be achieved. It cannot be accomplished in one day or month like what people often see in the advertisements of many English courses. Reading comprehension is not as simple as students must practice to improve their reading comprehension daily.

Nunan (2003) states that reading is a fluent process of readers combining information from a text and their background knowledge to build meaning. It means

that the readers must relate the information in the text with their background knowledge to comprehend the text they have read easily. By reading, readers also learn about language components, such as grammar and vocabulary. To comprehend the text, readers must also master those language components and the meaning. Moreover, Richards & Renandya (2002) define reading comprehension as the primary purpose of reading. Through this activity, it is sometimes overlooked when students are asked to read overly difficult texts.

On the other hand, Harries et al. in Brassell & Rasinski (2008) 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 problems in reading comprehension are making meaning from the reading texts.

Harmer (2007) argues that reading is useful for language acquisition. In addition, students understand what they read. The more they read, the better they do. It is important for readers who have a good acquisition of reading comprehension. With good acquisition, readers can read different types of textbooks, magazines, newspapers, or various reading materials. Reading can improve students' reading comprehension skills and help them to find information based on reading material they have read clearly. Reading comprehension has several advantages for students. Reading texts briefly can also improve their

vocabulary knowledge. In addition to increasing vocabulary knowledge, reading students will expand their knowledge and develop conceptual ideas.

Based on all theories, the researcher uses Serravallo's theory (2010), which states that reading comprehension is at the heart, which means reading. Reading is thinking, understanding, and understanding meaning. Reading must be directed toward comprehending and catching the idea. Before reading, the students think about what they already know about the structure or topic. They make connections to their lives and the world as they read. Learning to read is an important educational goal. For children or adults, the ability to read opens a new world and opportunities to develop knowledge. Therefore, reading comprehension is defined as constructing meaning from textbooks, newspapers, magazines, and articles on the internet. Some examples of reading sources can increase their ability and knowledge.

2.1.2 Small Group Discussion

Cooperative learning is a pedagogical practice involving students working in small groups to achieve a common goal. In cooperative learning, each group member must complete their goals and ensure that others do the same if the group wants to achieve its goals. The technical term for this dual responsibility is its positive interdependence, an essential cooperative learning component. Other important elements are promotive interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing. Gillies (2007) 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 that requires the students to cooperatively work in a group. In this technique, the students are divided into small groups consisting of four students.

Furthermore, Jolliffe (2007) explains that cooperative learning requires the students to work together in a small group to support each other to improve their learning and those of others. To work effectively, certain five key elements need to be in place. The five elements include positive interdependence (students must feel that they need each other), individual accountability (every member has learned the material), group processing (it helps all group members achieve while maintaining effective working relationships among members), small group and interpersonal skill (motivate to use individual skills to group to function effectively), face to face (building effective communication between the students).

Small group discussion is a technique in which the group is divided into small groups of a maximum of five persons. Small groups of around five students provoke greater involvement and participation than larger groups (Harmer, 2002). Small Group Discussion makes it easier for students to participate actively. They meet as small gatherings or as break-outs of large meetings and offer many opportunities for creative, flexible interchange of ideas and lively, meaningful participation. According to Gillies (2007), students were successful at scaffolding and challenging each other's learning during small group work if their teachers modelled these behaviors in their interactions with their students.

Students meet as small gatherings or as break-outs of large meetings and are offered many opportunities for creative, flexible interchange of ideas and lively, meaningful participation. The main point in setting up a discussion group is ensuring each group member participates. Serravallo (2010) states that small groups give children the chance to hear other students' thinking about their reading process and responses to texts. In the group discussion to monitor the participation of member in group, a group must have a leader. The leader in group has function to