

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a brief description of the whole contents of the research. In detail, this chapter presents a background of the study, research questions, research purposes, research significant, and framework of thinking, hypothesis, and previous studies.

A. Background

This study is intended to investigate the students' comprehension in reading EFL through background knowledge and text. Reading is one of four language skills, which has an important aspect for students because it helps them to develop their understanding of contents. In addition, it also benefits for the students to gain new knowledge, enjoy literature, and do daily things that are part of their life, such as, read the newspapers, comics, novels, maps and so on (Pang, Muaka, Bernhardt, & Kamil, 2003, p. 6). According to Whitten et al., (1991, p. 378), Reading is interactive; the reader use information from their background knowledge as well as the information from the printed text. Background knowledge plays an important role in reading comprehension (Grabe, 2004, p. 50). Therefore, students can connect the meaning of the text based on their background knowledge.

This research is conducted at MTs Sabilurrosyad, Ciamis. According to English teacher at MTs Sabilurrosyad, it is revealed that the students faced challenges when reading: lack of motivation, attention during reading, limited vocabulary and less

experience that make students not understand completely what text is about. When the teacher asked the students, some of them answered but most of them seem confused. Research of Indonesian EFL learner's motivation in reading English text showed that the EFL learners who have more experiences are more interested to read English text (Salikin, Bin-Tahir, Kusumaningputri, & Yuliandari, 2017). Students' less experiences in this case background knowledge can be activated by the teacher. This will influence students' motivation in reading, and ultimately their reading skill will increase.

Therefore, the students must read, discuss, and write about subjects that are conceptually more difficult, often drawing from knowledge learned in other subject areas (Fisher & Frey, 2013, p. 1). The students are required to have familiarity with the selection and interest on the passage (Tabatabaei, 2013, p. 1029). Activating background knowledge can develop familiarity and interest (Hidi, 2001, p. 198).

Based on the problem above, the researcher considers to activate EFL students' background knowledge to enhance their reading comprehension. In this case, teachers are required to activate and apply previously learned concepts in the passage.

There are two previous studies regarding the implementation of background knowledge. The first is done by Murtha (2017) which discussed reading text and video in the learning process. The subject of the research is the fourth and fifth grades students, while the researcher was used qualitative design. The results showed a positive impact of activating students' background knowledge in reading

comprehension. It helped the students visualize the text better. Specifically, in the Underground Railroad story. The second is done by Hill (2012), which investigated the interaction among the test takers' background knowledge and the language proficiency on TOEFL iBT in reading performance. The subject of the research was college students, graduate students, high school students which divided into lower proficiency group and higher proficiency group. The result of the study shows the effect of understanding background knowledge and its interaction with language proficiency in the context of the second language in reading comprehension.

Thus, this research is different from the previous study. This research is purposely to investigate the process of activating EFL students' background knowledge to enhance their reading comprehension by using K-W-L strategy and E-T-R method. The subject of the study is students of the 9th grade of MTs Sabilurrosyad. A Quasi-experimental design is used in this research which is the subject is one class.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background of the research above, the research problems are formulated as follows:

1. What is students' skill in reading comprehension at the 9th grade students at MTs Sabilurrosyad before their background knowledge is activated?
2. What is students' skill in reading comprehension at the 9th-grade students at MTs Sabilurrosyad after their background knowledge is activated?

3. How significant is the differences between the 9th students' reading comprehension before and after their background knowledge is activated?

C. Research Purposes

Based on the specific problems formulated above, the purposes of the study are as follows:

1. To know the 9th grade students' reading comprehension skill before their background knowledge is activated
2. To know the 9th grade students' reading comprehension skill after their background knowledge is activated
3. To know the significant differences between the 9th grade students' reading comprehension before and after their background knowledge is activated

D. Research Significances

This research is significant theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research can add teacher's knowledge about activating students' background knowledge in reading comprehension class.

Practically, the teacher is expected to activate students' background knowledge to make the material easier to be conveyed, and students more understand the text.

E. Framework of Thinking

Reading comprehension is a process of understanding the written text that has been read. According to Campbell (2008, p. 11), the learning activity on the related topic of background knowledge is focused on enhancing reading comprehension.

This state is revealed that background knowledge emerged because students need to be able to read and to learn in all subject areas. According to Mcnamara, Kintsch, Songer, Mcnamara, & Kintsch, (2009. p. 2), to optimize learning, it should be made comprehension process as easy as possible. Moreover, as educators, the teacher should make sure that the students actively and intentionally construct the meaning of a text.

According to Walker (2008) in Rahmawati, Padmawati, & Ratminingsih (2014, p. 2), reading skill has always been an important part of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), because reading gives many advantages for students, such as, they received more information after reading, sharing the news and it is also can enrich their reading knowledge (Rusmiati, 2017, p. 1).

Meanwhile, according to Nunan (1991, p. 72) in Rahmawati; et al., (2014), reading is a complex and purposeful socio-cultural, cognitive, and linguistic process of students which simultaneously use their knowledge of the written and spoken the language, their understanding of the topic of the text. Furthermore, he also added, students are socialized in reading, and motivation for learning to read the text. It is not only for enjoyment or getting information, but because the aspiring students to gain access to a 'community' readers. Based on the state above, learning reading is more suitable and relevant to the students' real life (Gatbonton & Tucker, 1971). It can make reading more interesting and motivating (Alfaki & Siddiek, 2013, p. 46). According to Manarin (2012) in Murtha (2017, p. 2), 30 percent students described and connected readings to the other knowledge. Furthermore, Fisher, Ross, & Grant

(2010, p. 23) stated that lack of background knowledge has an impact on students' ability to ask questions and their curiosity. Asking questions is a challenges thinking process which allows students to take their learning activity to an advanced level (Murtha, 2017, p. 3). Therefore, activating students' background knowledge is essential to develop their curiosity and motivate them to read the text in the learning activity.

F. Hypothesis

The hypothesis is a prediction about the research whether proved or disproved. According to Hatch & Farhady (1982), the hypothesis is a tentative statement about the outcome of the result. The hypothesis must be experimental and logical-based or explained.

This research has two variables: Students' Background Knowledge as variable X and Students' Reading Comprehension as variable Y. There are two kinds of the hypothesis of the research; the first is an alternative hypothesis (H_a) and the null hypothesis (H_0), as follows:

H_a : There is a significant difference in students reading comprehension before and after activating their background knowledge

H_0 : There is no significant difference in students reading comprehension before and after activating their background knowledge

G. Previous Studies

There are two previous studies regarding the implementation of background knowledge. First, the study is done by Murtha (2017), which investigated reading text and video in the learning process. The subject of the research is the fourth and fifth grades student, while the researcher was used qualitative design. However, the result showed a positive impact on reading comprehension when provided reading text, and video inactivated students' background knowledge.

The second is done by Hill (2012) which investigated the result of the interaction between test takers' background knowledge and language proficiency on TOEFL iBT in reading performance. The subject of the research was College students, Graduate students, High School students which divided into lower proficiency group and higher proficiency group. Furthermore, there was significant between the effect of understanding background knowledge and its interaction with language proficiency in the context of the second language in reading comprehension, it also useful for test developer in encouraging fair assessments.

The third is done by Alfaki & Siddiek (2013) which investigated the role of activating background knowledge in reading comprehension through text previewing. They found a serial correlation in previewing the text through THIEVES as pre-reading activity and reading comprehension improve significantly.

The fourth, the research is done by Chen, Chen, & Sun (2014). They combined the concept of prior knowledge with social tagging methods to help students learning reading comprehension in English. They also incorporate tags into a tag-based

learning approach. The result showed that the proposed plan is benefits to students by embedding the information in social knowledge, their online reading is improved efficiency.

Thus, this research is different from the previous study. This research is purposely to investigate the process of activating EFL students' background knowledge to enhance their reading comprehension by using K-W-L strategy and E-T-R method. The subject of the study is students of the 9th grade of MTs Sabilurrosyad. A Quasi-experimental design is used in this research which is the subject is one class.

