

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **A. The Background of the Study**

Language as a means of communication plays a very important role in social relationship among human beings. English as one of the international languages is very important since it enables communication across nations. In Indonesia, English is one of the compulsory subjects taught in elementary school, junior high school, senior high school and university as the first foreign language.

Reading skill as one of the subjects related to language learning is to acquire knowledge and to grasp new information. Many students often have reading as one of their most important goals. They enable themselves to read for information and pleasure, for their career, and for study purposes. However, most students at any levels of education get difficulty in reading English texts.

The requirements of reading comprehension increase as students attain higher grades when they are expected to comprehend more complex materials that are often concrete to require well developed reasoning skills as well as an ability to apply appropriate background knowledge in a variety of contexts.

Panmanee (2009, p. 2) states teacher needs to find effective training for students to use different reading strategies for different purposes in order to help them develop reading comprehension. Carlston (2006) also states students who read without strategy and even highlighting text cannot comprehend the text actively. As a

result, it is important for teachers to teach reading comprehension effectively as an effort of increasing the students' reading skill. The effective reading comprehension models involve both the teachers and students in an active, on-going pursuit of meaning construction.

During the past decades, an approach called "Cooperative Learning" seemed to attract a lot of attention and became popular. Cooperative Learning can be seen as a learning method which helps students participate in lessons equally and effectively. Cooperative learning principles and techniques are tools which teachers use to encourage mutual helpfulness in the groups and the active participation of all members (Jacobs & Hall, 2002). Cooperative Learning exists when students work together to accomplish shared learning goals. Traditionally, classes always consist of good students and weak students. The weak students sit in isolation as they lose confidence in their ability to learn English. Therefore, Cooperative Learning can function to minimize that difference. Group members can complement each other's strengths and weaknesses in English. Each student has a different background and ability in English, which he or she can bring to the group.

Slavin (cited in Khaerunisa, 2011, p. 12) states that "Cooperative Learning is a variety of teaching methods in which students work in small groups to help each other learn academic content." Students work together to learn and are responsible for their team mates' learning as well as their owns. The basic elements are: first, positive interdependence, which occurs when gains of individuals or teams are positively correlated. Second, individual accountability which occurs when all

students in a group are held accountable for doing a share of the work and for mastery of the material to be learned. Third is equal participation, which occurs when each member of the group is afforded equal shares of responsibility and input. And the fourth, simultaneous interaction, which occurs when class time is designed to allow many students' interactions during the period.

Many studies have been undertaken to measure the success of Cooperative Learning as an instructional method regarding social skills, student learning, and achievement. Cooperative Learning is applied in almost all schools, content areas, and increasingly, in college and university contexts all over the world (Johnson, 2009), and is claimed to be an effective teaching method in foreign/second language education by scholars abroad.

However, few studies have been published that specifically target the use of cooperative learning as teaching method to increase student achievement, especially at Indonesian high school students. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the effects of Cooperative Learning techniques on the reading skills of the students at SMP Nusantara who learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

## **B. The Research Problems**

Based on the description in the background section above, the problem of this researcher was specifically formulated as following question: "Is there any significant effect of Cooperative Learning on reading comprehension skills of the eighth students at SMP Nusantara?"

### **C. The Research Objectives**

This research was carried out to get empirical data necessitated to know the effect of using Cooperative Learning on reading comprehension skills of the tenth grader students at SMP Nusantara.

### **D. The Significances of the Study**

The researcher highly expected this study could give useful information and contributions to the teachers and other researchers.

1. To researcher, the results of this research are expected to be the guidance for the researcher in constructing and implementing Cooperative Learning to teach reading in junior high school levels.
2. To teachers, the results of this study hopefully provide information about the effectiveness of Cooperative Learning on students' reading comprehension skill as well as can be used as an item to enrich the teaching learning process.
3. To other researchers, the results of this study way provide a basis for conducting researches on the same area.

### **E. The Scope of the Study**

Due to the researchers' time and budget constraints, the participants in this study were limited only in two classes, A and B, at the same grade of the eighth grade students of SMP Nusantara. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to other

students in other schools. In addition, Reading Comprehension types are measured and limited to narrative; therefore, the results cannot be generalized for other types of reading comprehension.

## **F. Operational Definitions**

For the purpose of the study, the following terms are defined operationally:

1. **Cooperative Learning:** is a teaching strategy in which small groups of four or five students of different levels of ability use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject.
2. **Reading comprehension:** is a process that requires the way to decode through the development of an extensive repertoire of sight words, learning the meanings of vocabulary words encountered in the texts, and learning how to abstract meaning from text.
3. **Ask Together – Learn Together Technique:** This technique is based on the principle of sheer cooperation among learners and it does not give the opportunity to do nothing.