

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Reading ability is needed to be taught to children since early young ages. Nowadays, this ability is sometimes required to apply to elementary school. Some favorite primary schools, which are believed to provide better learning environment, may require the candidates during enrollment to be able to read as the prerequisite. Therefore, urban parents tend to support their children to learn reading earlier. However, the learning process should be enjoyable and unburden for them. The enjoyable learning atmosphere might encourage children to learn more and more by their own desire.

Besides, teaching young children to read is beneficial to build future successful reader. Future successful readers typically arrive at school with prior experiences and well established skill conducive to literacy (August and Hakuta, 2002). This can be gained when children are already introduced to literacy earlier. Moreover, a toddler aged less than 5 year can easily grasp huge number of information with a very excessive speed and it works better and more effective on younger age (Doman&Doman, 2006). With earlier ability to read, children have more access to gain meaning and information from the text they were exposed. Possessing good comprehension of written source enables children to achieve huge number of knowledge.

Instead of an innate capacity, reading is a skill required to be learned. To read means to recognize and interpret language that has been written. The reading process involves two levels, the lower level and higher level. Lower level processes include decoding or recognizing words in the text and accessing lexical entries. Meanwhile higher level processes include applying background knowledge to the text, inferring meaning that is not explicitly stated in the text, interpreting writer's intention and so on (Syukri, 2013). Thus, a reader has to master the lower level first in order to gain the higher level.

Reading English text is different from the Indonesian one. The difference lies in orthography. English has an exceptionally irregular orthography, whereas Indonesian has remarkably transparent language. Transparency means that the correspondences between the sound and writing symbols in Indonesian orthography are nearly one-to-one mappings (Widjaja & Winskel, 2007). The appearing differences might come as obstacle for Indonesian learner to read English text. The other obstacle might be caused by the use of English in Indonesia that is quite limited and occasional, so that learner might find difficulty to achieve comprehension in reading English text. English is used neither as a mean of communication in official domains nor social life. This is caused by the status of English in Indonesia a foreign language. However, English is still seen as priority as the most important foreign language to be taught (Lauder, 2008). Thus, many urban parents tend to require their children to learn English earlier for the reason of socio-cultural and socio-economic (Bushan, 2011).

Regarding to the irregularity, English has 26 letters (5 vowels and 21 consonants) of English alphabet which represent over 40 phonemes. (Ellis, Natsume, Straflopolou, Hoxhallari, Van-Daal, Polyzoe, Tsipa & Petalas, 2004). Therefore, letter or letters combination in English may have more than one phoneme. For example: letter <a> and letters combination <ou>. Letter <a> in English has different phonemes in each of these words: /æ/ in <cat>, /eɪ/ in <make>, /ɑ/ in <car>, and /ɔ/ in <talk> (Goswani, 2007). Then, the grapheme <ou> has different phonemes in each of these words : <through> has phoneme /u:/, <though> has phoneme /Oʊ/, <chough> has phoneme /ɔ/, and enough has phoneme /ʌ/. In addition, one phoneme in English can be represented by different graphemes. For example, phoneme /k/ can be represented by the graphemes <c>, <k>, <ck>, <ch>, and <q> like in these words <cat>, <kitten>, <duck>, <school>, and <queen>, respectively (Hepplewhite, 2006). Thus, the inconsistency between grapheme and phoneme requires the learner to learn reading with the appropriate reading approach.

Dealing with the matter of inconsistency, there are a lot of studies to find out the effective way for teaching reading, especially to teach beginner reader. The focus of teaching reading is vary based on the reading approach, whether it is phonics, whole language, or whole word approach. Sight word reading seems to provide solution to solve the problem regarding the inconsistency that is used to appear in English writing system. The inconsistency that appears in irregular word is used to be a problem for initial readers who learn reading by decoding, in which treats word from small unit of grapheme. Otherwise, unitization, in which word is

read as single unit with no pauses between word parts, is considered as important property of reading. Unitization also characterizes sight word reading (Ehri, 2005). Polloway, Patton and Serna (cited in Scruggs, 2008) define sight word reading as a whole word approach through which students learn to automatically recognize important and high frequency words without decoding. Thus, the teaching of sight word reading is the focus of whole word approach (Purewal, 2008). In this approach, words are treated as whole (Steinberg and Sciarini, 2005) instead of segment. By teaching beginner reader to read word as whole and not segmenting it into syllables or letters will minimize the risk of mispronunciation in reading word, thus the inconsistency in English writing system become no longer a matter.

To read words holistically is also beneficial to facilitate reader to access the meaning and correlate it with the surrounding environment. A research conducted by Steinberg, Kushimoto, Tatara, & Orisaka in 1979 (cited in Steinberg and Sciarini, 2005) showed that words are learned faster than letters. The research came in evidence that meaningful words are easier to learn than meaningless items such as letters. They conducted a study with a group of English speaking pre-school children who could not read. They were presented the same written English words and letters, i.e. 'finish', 'dollar', 'a', and 'n'. The researchers asked children to call the words by phonic letter names, e.g. 'finish' was called 'a', and 'dollar' was called 'n', while, conversely the written letters was identified by speech words, i.e. 'a' was called 'finish', and 'n' was called 'dollar'. The result clearly showed that written items (individual letters) called by speech words were

learned much faster than the written items (words) called by letter name. This finding shows that the visual complexity of written text plays only a minor role in learning and the most important is what is said together with the written form.

Other research which supports beginner reader to start reading word holistically is conducted by Ehri (2005). Ehri (2005) identified the development phases of reading into four, that are pre-alphabetic, partial alphabetic, full alphabetic, and consolidated alphabetic. In her research, she considers that beginner readers recognize words wholefully at the beginning phase, then partially recognize parts of the words, starts from initial and final letters. The process keeps going till children recognize all letters that build their sight vocabularies. The letter recognition is needed to secure words in memory and as preparation for the writing process. At the last phase, children are able to do more complex activities such as blending and rhyming. These phases of development might suggest the further literacy development of sight word learner.

Previous studies of teaching reading to beginner readers by applying sight word reading intervention has ever been done by Kamada (1995) and McInnis (2008). Kamada (1995) made a case study of bilingual toddler to read English and Japanese texts by applying modified instruction of Doman. Besides, McInnis (2008) investigated emerging phonemic awareness skills and printed sight word recognition abilities in toddlers using plain text and Morpho-phonetic Face words. In addition, there is also a study about the teaching reading to initial reader that appears in the context of English as foreign language done by Faustina (2013). Faustina (2013) investigated the effectiveness of teaching reading by using Jolly

Phonics in an Indonesian child to read English text. Faustina (2013) found that Jolly phonic was effective to teach the child regular words and didn't work well in teaching the irregular one. Otherwise, McInnis (2008) revealed that sight word reading was effective in significantly improving early literacy and emerging phonological awareness skill in beginner reader.

The study of teaching reading English text by using sight word reading intervention used to appear on beginner readers who live in English speaking country (McInnis, 2008). However, the similar study has ever been conducted in Japan (Kamada, 1995), in which English is considered as a foreign language. Meanwhile, the teaching reading English text to initial reader whose first language is Indonesia has ever been applied by using phonics approach (Faustina, 2013). Since the study of sight word reading in Indonesia is quite limited, the writer tried to conduct research in teaching Indonesian initial reader aged a four year old to read English text by applying this teaching approach. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of sight word reading in teaching a four year old Indonesian child to read English text. To see the effectiveness of sight word reading, the writer applied Early Reading Screening Instrument (ERSI) pre-test and post-test, thus, the writer could measure participant's reading ability before and after intervention. In this way the effectiveness of sight word reading intervention can be seen.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, the author formulates the problems

as follow: How is the effectiveness of sight word reading in teaching a 4 year old Indonesian child to read English text?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the statement of the problem above, the objective of the study is to find out the effectiveness of sight word reading in teaching a 4 year old Indonesian child to read English text.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study is expected to give contribution to research in psycholinguistics in answering how the reading acquisition appears after children receiving sight word reading intervention. Also, it is expected to give contribution for research in English language teaching, primarily teaching reading in foreign language. This study is aimed to know the effectiveness of sight word reading to teach a four year old Indonesian child to read English text. Thus, by knowing the effectiveness of sight word reading, preschool teachers may apply it at school. Furthermore, this might also be beneficial for parents who intend to introduce their children to reading skill at home.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Sight Word Reading : The way readers read familiar words by accessing the words from memory. With practice, all words come to be read automatically by sight which is the

most efficient and unobtrusive way to read word in the text (Ehri, 2005)

Whole Word Approach : A reading approach that focuses the teaching reading on improving learner's ability to automatically recognize every single word automatically by sight (Purewal, 2008)

ERSI (Early Reading Screening Instrument): An individually administered assessment that includes four task areas, namely alphabet knowledge, concept of word, phoneme awareness and word recognition, which are in combination can provide a more comprehensive and detailed picture of reader's word knowledge (Morris, 1998)