

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I.1. Background of the Thesis

In Indonesia, English has been established as the first language in addition to the official and local languages of the country¹. As the first foreign language, it occupies a special position in the educational system. It is taught as a compulsory subject beginning from Junior High School². The objectives of teaching English in Indonesia are formulated in the Minister of Education Decree No. 096/1967 dated 12 December 1967. The objectives are specified as follows

1. Effective reading ability
2. Ability to understand spoken English
3. Writing ability
4. Speaking ability³

¹
Giri Kartono, "Kedudukan dan Fungsi Bahasa Asing di Indonesia", in Amran Halim ed., Politik Bahasa Nasional 2, Jakarta, 1977, 124.

²
P.W.J. Nababan, "Indonesia : The Language Situation", Language Teaching Issues in Multilingual Environments in South East Asia, 1982, 9.

³
Amran Halim ed., Politik Bahasa Nasional, PN Balai Pustaka, Jakarta, 1977, 144.

The order of the listing of the objectives above indicates the emphasis of teaching reading as the first skill to be achieved. This skill is important for Indonesian students to comprehend textbooks which 90% of them are written in English. Based on this condition, the 1984 English Curriculum of the SMA emphasizes the teaching of reading as a major achievement in the students language development.

In the syllabus of the 1984 "core curriculum" of SMA, this emphasis is expressed in the form of class time allotment. In this core curriculum English is given 3 periods (of 45 minutes) a week in each semester or 48 periods of effective classroom teaching-learning time. 28 periods of these 48 periods are devoted to reading and vocabulary. It means that 58% of the English teaching hours are devoted to reading comprehension and vocabulary. With more than 50% of teaching hours of reading course the students are expected to have competence in comprehending the content of practical, simple reading materials in English .

In reality, however, many SMA students still find it difficult to comprehend English textbooks. They know every word in a given text, and yet they still can not grasp the intended message in the given text satisfactorily. Sometimes it happens that a student understand all the sentences in the reading material, but still does not understand what it says as a whole⁵. The problem is that he tends to read word by word. He does not know which words or phrases or clauses express main information and which express additional information. In other words he does not know which chunks of information are important for his purpose of reading and which chunks express less important information.

Knowing which chunks of expression contains primary information and which chunk contains secondary information helps a reader comprehend reading material as a whole. One way to help students become good comprehenders is therefore to train them to recognize which sentences express primary information and which

5
Arune Wiriyachhitra, "A Scientific Reading Program" English Teaching Forum, July, 1982 Volume XX Number 3, p.21

sentences express secondary and tertiary information. Throughout this thesis the primary information is termed as the head of the information, and the secondary and the tertiary information are the details or tails. It is important for the student to recognize these heads and tails in order to develop better understanding in comprehending reading materials.

1.2. Statement of the Problem.

Closely related to the background of this thesis, the following problems are formulated :

- (1) What is the 'Head and Tail' in Reading Comprehension ?
- (2) What is the technique of teaching reading comprehension through 'head and tail' recognition ?

1.3 The objective of the Thesis.

In line with the background of this thesis, the main objective is to describe the technique of teaching reading comprehension through head and tail recognition. To achieve this goal, this thesis also provides an overview of head and tail and to discuss how to teach head and tail in reading comprehension.

1.4. The Significance of the Thesis.

It has been previously stated that good texts contain heads of (or primary or main) information and tails of (secondary, tertiary or supporting) information or details. Good comprehenders are able to recognize which sentences/clues express heads of information and which express tails of information. The discussion presented in this thesis is expected to give some contribution to the teaching of Reading Comprehension. In other words, it is a suggestion on how to teach Reading Comprehension through head and tail recognition.

1.5. Limitation of the Scope.

Directly related to the objective of this thesis this study is limited to teaching Reading Comprehension in SMA. The discussion deals only with the head and tail recognition in reading comprehension to SMA students of which the objective of learning English is stressed on reading English materials.

1.6. Methodology.

In carrying out this thesis, the writer uses library research. She quotes the related statements about sentence analysis and reading comprehension. Then

she concludes the suitable techniques for reading comprehension using sentence analysis. She also designs the techniques in application.

1.7. Definition of the Terms.

To avoid ambiguity in discussing the points in this thesis, the key terms used would be clarified.

There are three terms :

1. Head and tail :

The terms 'head and tail' are equivalent to headword and modifier in a phrase, subject and predicate in a sentence, head sentence and supporting sentences in a paragraph, and thesis sentence and topic sentences of the paragraphs in a passage.

2. Reading comprehension :

Reading comprehension in this thesis means getting message from the whole information of what he reads and understanding ideas presented by the author.

3. Reading materials :

Reading materials here refer to any written passages, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole .

6

MAK Halliday and R. Hasan, Cohension in English, London, Longman Group Ltd, 1976, p.1.

A unified whole means a meaningful unit of information. In this thesis the writer limits the discussion only to written passages.

1.8. Organization of the Thesis.

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter I deals with the background of the thesis, statement of the problem, the objective of the thesis, the significance of the thesis, limitation of the scope, methodology, definition of the terms, and organization of the thesis. Chapter II presents the Nature of reading comprehension. Chapter III explains the theory of head and tail recognition. Chapter IV deals with the application of teaching reading comprehension through head and tail recognition. Chapter V is the conclusion.