

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents: (1) background of the study, (2) problems of the study, (3) objectives of the study, and (4) significance of the study

#### **1.1 Background**

English is an international language in the world that many people use it to communicate between one person to others. English is now used and taught as a foreign language in all around the world. Crystal (2003) states that English language is known as a foreign language after first language or mother tongue that has a function to complete it. It can be done although the people do not meet up face to face or just through by media, for example: many people can communicate about their thoughts and feelings to other person easily by internet. Gaol, Kadry, Taylor, and Shen Li (2014) explain that English is emerging to be the global language especially for business and some sectors. For example: politic, economic, etc.

In Indonesia, English is a required subject in the curriculum of school. Sari and Saun explain that English has become one of the important subjects that exist in the school from junior high school to senior high school (as cited in Zurnailah, 2017, p. 18). In short, English is not only as an international language used for communication between one person to others, but also as an important subject that must be learned by students in schools.

There are four language skills in English, and one of them is reading. Reading is very important for students because it can improve their own knowledge. Kalmane (2012) explains that reading is one of four language skills besides listening, speaking, and writing. Through reading, students can get new information about things that they do not know yet, and they can understand, comprehend, and then apply it to daily life to access other sciences. Taylor, Graves, and Broek (2000) mention that reading is one of the most uniquely human activities and it is all of cognitive activities. The purpose of reading is to learn from the text, to recognize the depicted facts or events, to connect them to each other, background knowledge, and to memorize the result so it can be used later by the reader. It is supported by Kartawijaya (2017) who states that reading is an active process. It involves interpreting passages of text, not just receiving a message. Thus, it is logical that reading is the basic way to get information, because when students have a good competence in reading English, it will help them to obtain and enrich their knowledge.

Readers need to know, understand, and comprehend what they read to get the information. Comprehension is needed because it is a way to get the goal of reading. Taylor, Graves, Broek (2000) mention that comprehension means a variety of things. It is the ability to recall a text, to answer questions about a character's motive, to extract themes, to critique the structure, or the combination of it. One of the functions of comprehending English text in

reading is a process to construct the meaning of content of text. Klinger explains that reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning that includes words in text, knowledge, and fluency (as cited in Susiana, 2016, p.65).

Eventhough reading is very important, many students have difficulties or problems in comprehending English texts. They have limited vocabulary, lack of knowledge about the text, do not know the types of grammar used in the text and other factors that influences their comprehension. Tompkins argues that sometimes comprehension difficulties derived from the student's limited vocabulary knowledge or lack of fluency (as cited in Westwood, 2003, p. 112).

While, Cornoldi and Oakhill (1996) explain that almost all schools in the world deal that the students have difficulties in understanding a written text. In many instances, whether they have a good intellectual abilities or not, they have a superficial ability to cope their problem with written texts and to use language appropriately. Moreover, some children cannot find what they read in written texts. They are not able to comprehend the most important elements or to connect in different parts of texts, or to be able to search out the pieces of information that they are looking for. It supported by Perfetti and colleagues (Perfetti, 1985, Perfetti, 1994, perfetti, Marron, and Foltz, 1996) who argues that poor comprehension may be a consequence of inadequate

processing, lack of knowledge, or some combination of both processing and knowledge-based weaknesses (as cited in Snowling & Hulme, 2005, p. 253).

In addition, Balajthy and Lipa-Wade (2003) explains that reading difficulty is experienced by students because of their inability to recognize or understand the meaning of printed words or sentences, strategies to comprehension are inefficient and inappropriate, and the students believes that saying words without understanding the content of text is sufficient. It is supported by Vaughn, Bos, and Schumn explain that learners who struggle to learn in reading are often discouraged in the world of school, eventually dropping out without mastering this basic skill (as cited in Hlaithwa, 2013, p.16). Besides that, Klinger (2015) argues that the students' who have poor comprehension is often less interested in reading, their motivation in reading is often low, they prepare minimally, prior to reading, they use few strategies to their learning from text, and they have inadequate vocabulary and background knowledge which to connect and get new ideas from learning.

Problems in reading comprehension were also experienced by the students in MAN 3 Palembang, through a preliminary study on May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018. It was found out that the students had difficulties in comprehending English texts because English was not their first language. According to the teacher who taught English subject in MAN 3 Palembang. Many students had

difficulty in comprehending English Texts. They were: first, students were lack of basic vocabulary. Second, students were lack of knowledge about the texts itself. Third, students got difficulties when they answered the questions because they did not know the contents of texts, meaning of texts, grammar used in the texts. Fourth, students got difficulties in finding the main idea because they did not know the message from the writer. Meanwhile, according to the twelfth grade students in MAN 3 Palembang, the students said that they had the difficulties because of vocabulary that they did not know, and it influenced their comprehension of the content and meaning of text itself. They were also confused about the structure of grammar used in the text. Therefore, the researcher would like to know more about the problems or difficulties that they faced in reading.

There are some studies investigating students' difficulties in comprehending English texts. First, the study conducted by Hidayati (2018). It showed that the student mostly got difficulties in understanding vocabulary, poor mastery of grammar, the difficulty in understanding long sentences, lack of media learning, less support from the family, lack of knowledge of strategies in reading comprehension. Another study carried out by Zuhra (2015) that students faced difficulties because they did not comprehend the questions that were asked. The students also faced the difficulties because of their weaknesses in vocabulary mastery. Grammatical complexity was also

a reason why the students failed to answer the questions correctly. They also revealed that they faced the difficulties in answering the reading comprehension questions because the texts used were long. From the result of interview, the researcher found that the students had an inadequate knowledge of vocabulary and sentence structure but they lacked knowledge about different types of reading comprehension questions.

The literature and previous research indicate that many students experienced various problems in comprehending English texts. However, previous studies investigated the problems through qualitative method which the students' answers were limited. Besides, those studies were conducted to students in general public schools. There has been little research explore the problems through the participants view to have deeper understanding and done in Islamic school, such as Madrasah Aliyah.

Based on the reasons above, I am interested in conducting research entitled **Students' Difficulties in Comprehending English Texts: An investigation at State Madrasah Aliyah in Palembang**

## **1.2 Problems of the Study**

1. What were the students' difficulties in comprehending English Texts at State Madrasah Aliyah in Palembang?
2. What were the factors causing the students' difficulties in

comprehending English Texts at State Madrasah Aliyah in Palembang?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

1. To explore the students' difficulties in comprehending English Texts at State Madrasah Aliyah in Palembang.
2. To explore the factors causing students' difficulties in comprehending English Texts at State Madrasah Aliyah in Palembang

### **1.4 Significances of the Study**

From this study, it is hoped that this study will give insight about students' problems related to the process of teaching and learning in English, especially in English Reading Text. The following are advantages of this research.

#### **1. For students**

This study can improve students' ability in reading comprehension, and also can be a solution to solve their difficulties in comprehending English texts caused by some factors, such as: grammar, vocabulary, etc.

## **2. For teachers**

After knowing the students' problems and their difficulties in comprehending English texts this study hoped can be a reference to improve teacher's method in teaching and learning process, and can choose the appropriate teaching method based on their students' problem and difficulties in comprehending English texts.

## **3. For Researcher**

This study is expected to enrich the information about the students' difficulties in comprehending English texts in teaching and learning process.

## **4. For other researchers**

This research is expected to be able to help the other researchers who will conduct research at the same subject as a source of material and reference for the future studies.