CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Language is a primary need in human life. People use language as a tool to communicate each other. They use it for every activity to show their idea, thought, or desire to other people. People use language both in formal and informal situation. Moreover, communication is needed in human daily activities because without communication, they will not be able to interact to the other people.

Language is divided into three points; first language, second language, and foreign language. First language is language that is used by people since they were born, or usually called as a mother tongue. Second language is a language that is learned after the first language. The intensity of the second language use is not more than the first language. While, foreign language is a language that is used by other people in other country. People use it to communicate to wider people. In Indonesia, especially for Javanese people, their first language is Javanese, their second language is Indonesian, and their foreign language is English.

English ability is a necessity in communication and globalization era nowadays. Most of people in this world use English because English as an international language. Most of requirement for entering jobs is using English. Medium language to learn scientific and technological study is using
English, too. English as an international language, it is taught in almost all of countries in this world, including in Indonesia.

In Indonesia, English is introduced in kindergarten and elementary school. Then, it is taught specifically in junior high school, senior high school, and university. Teaching English in junior high school contains of four language skills, those are: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Those four language skills must be supported by other language aspects such as: Vocabulary, Structure and Pronunciation which is suitable with the theme of teaching-learning itself.

Reading is one of the difficult skills in teaching English. It relates to many students who are lack of vocabulary which make them unable to understand the meaning in reading. They are still confused to predict the suitable meaning in comprehend the reading texts. Reading is one of language skills in learning English. According to Smith in Fauziati (2010: 33), reading is defined as an understanding a message conveyed by the writer through visual and non-visual information. In reading, the readers have to interpret the message of a text which is written by the writer. This activity is closely related to the readers’ ability and the readers’ background knowledge.

Reading is an essential language skill in teaching English, as Harmer in Fauziati (2010: 32) has stated that:

Students need to be able to read texts in English either for their careers, for study, or simply for pleasure. Reading texts also provide opportunities for students to learn vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and even good models for English writing - the way sentences, paragraphs, or texts are constructed.
Teaching reading activities are divided into pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activity. First, pre-reading activity means the preparation of students for reading. In this activity, the students recall their background of knowledge which they have obtained to connect with the texts. Second, while-reading activity means the comprehension checking of the students. In this activity, the students check their comprehension in understanding the texts. The last, post-reading activity means the closing mark for reading. In this activity, the students are checked of their acquisition by answering some questions related to the texts. (Fauziati, 2010: 40-42)

English teachers in Indonesia apply varied activities to make their students easier in understanding reading English. Factually, the students may be fluent readers in Indonesian language, but they often cannot transfer their skills to reading English. When the students read English, they are disposed to focus on the word rather than on the whole text. They relied on the dictionary to translate the word meaning, consequently they read slowly and word by word. It is an inefficient reading habit. English teachers have to help students to change their habit by teaching the better strategies. (Simanjuntak, 1988)

One of Junior High Schools in Indonesia which applies teaching reading in English is SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta. SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta is an Islam-based school which has vision: becoming an excellent school by creating the optimal performance, iman, taqwa, and akhlakul kharimah. SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta is situated
in Muhammadiyah institution Kleco, at Jl. Slamet Riyadi 443 Surakarta. SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta is one of favorite junior high schools in Surakarta because of its achievement which can be competed with state-schools in Surakarta.

The writer is interested in conducting research in SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta because of several reasons. The first reason is because SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta is an Islam-based school that guides the students to be an Islamic individual. The second reason is because the components of school, including teachers and staffs, are competent and responsible. The last reason is because SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta is the place where the writer did her teaching apprentice. So, it makes the writer easier to conduct a research there.

According to the background above, the writer is interested in conducting a research entitled **Students’ Ability in Understanding Reading Passage Questions at the Eighth Grade of SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta in 2013/2014 Academic Year.**

**B. Problem Statement**

Based on the background of study above, the writer states that the problem statements as follows:

1. How is the students’ ability in understanding reading passage questions at the eighth grade of SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta in 2013/2014 academic year?
2. What is the most difficult question in understanding reading passage questions at the eighth grade of SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta in 2013/2014 academic year?

3. What are the students’ strategies in understanding reading passage questions at the eighth grade of SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta in 2013/2014 academic year?

C. Objective of the Study

Based on the research problem above, the objectives of the study in this research are:

1. To describe the students’ ability in understanding reading passage questions at the eighth grade of SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta in 2013/2014 academic year.

2. To find out the most difficult question in understanding reading passage questions at the eighth grade of SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta in 2013/2014 academic year.

3. To describe the students’ strategies in understanding reading passage questions at the eighth grade of SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta in 2013/2014 academic year.

D. Limitation of the Study

In this research, the writer focuses on the students’ ability in understanding reading passage questions at the eighth grade of SMP
Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta in 2013/2014 academic year. Then, the writer wants to find out the most difficult question in understanding reading passage questions and the students’ strategies in understanding reading passage questions at the eighth grade of SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta.

E. Significance of the Study

The writer hopes that this research can give some benefits in teaching English. There are two kinds of expected benefits in this research, those are:

1. Theoretical Significance

The writer hopes that this research can give reference for conducting such kind of research in the future. This research gives description about students’ ability in understanding reading passage questions, the most difficult question in understanding reading passage questions, and the students’ strategies in understanding reading passage questions.

2. Practical Significance

   a. For reader: this research is expected to give information about the students’ ability in understanding reading passage questions.

   b. For student: this research is expected to enrich the knowledge about how to understand the reading passage questions.

   c. For teacher: this research is expected to help the teacher teach the better strategies in understanding reading passage questions.

   d. For writer: this research is expected to give broader knowledge about teaching English, especially in teaching reading.
F. Research Paper Organization

In order to make this research paper is easier to understand, the writer divides this research paper into five chapters.

Chapter I is introduction. This chapter consists of background of the study, problem statement, objective of the study, limitation of the study, significance of the study, and research paper organization.

Chapter II is underlying theory. This chapter deals with previous study, and theoretical review which is divided into: notion of reading, reading technique, reading strategy, reading skill, teaching reading, principle in teaching reading, reading passage, reading passage question, and students’ ability.

Chapter III is research method. This chapter presents type of the study, setting of the study, subject of the study, object of the study, data and data source, method of collecting data, technique of checking the data credibility, and technique for analyzing data.

Chapter IV is research finding and discussion. The research finding elaborates the students’ ability in understanding reading passage questions, the most difficult question in understanding reading passage questions, and the students’ strategies in understanding reading passage questions.

Chapter V is conclusion and suggestion. Conclusion and suggestion are taken from the result of research which is carried out at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta.