CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The objective of English language teaching is the development of communicative ability in English covering four language skills. The skills developed are reading, writing, listening, and speaking, with an emphasis on reading ability (Fauziati, 2009: 147). Fauziati, further, explains that the general goal of the English teaching in Indonesia is the acquisition of Communicative Competence with an emphasis on reading skill, and not speaking.

Based on the above explanation, it can be concluded that reading is the central to the English learning process. It is not merely a process of decoding. According to Carrel and Eisterhold (Alyousef, 2005: 143), reading is a process in which the reader reconstructs a message which has been encoded by a writer. Grabbe sees reading as an active process of comprehending (Paul, 2004). He describes reading as an “… active process of comprehending [where] students need to be taught strategies to read more efficiently (e. g., guess from context, define expectations, make inferences about the text, skim ahead to fill in the context, etc.”

By such a definition, it can be said that reading can be seen as an “interactive” process between a reader and a text which leads to automaticity or (reading fluency). In this process, the reader interacts dynamically with the
text as he/she tries to elicit the meaning and where various kinds of knowledge are being used: linguistic or systemic knowledge (through bottom-up processing) as well as schematic knowledge (through top-down processing). Since reading is a complex process, Grabe argues that “many researchers attempt to understand and explain the fluent reading process by analyzing the process into a set of component skills” (1991, p. 379) in reading; consequently researchers proposed at least six general component skills and knowledge areas, namely: 1) automatic recognition skills; 2) vocabulary and structural knowledge; 3) formal discourse structure knowledge; 4) content/world background knowledge; 5) synthesis and evaluation skills/strategies; and 6) metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring (Alyousef, 2005: 144).

By reading activity, people may gain important information that are not presented by teachers in the classroom. According to cognitive psychology and schema theory, the reader is an active participant who has an important interpretive function in the reading process (Wilhelm, 2005: 7). It means that in the cognitive model, people as readers are more than passive participants who receive information while an active text makes itself and its meanings known to him/her. Actually, the act-of-reading is a push and pull between reader and text. As readers, people actively make, or construct, meaning; what people bring to the text is at least as important as the text itself.

According to Fauziati (2009: 34), during reading, the reader processes his background knowledge and the printed text using specific skills and strategies to form expectations or predictions about the text, selecting and using the most productive cues to confirm or reject those predictions. Therefore, it can be concluded that the reader, in reading, constructs a
message which is encoded by a writer, in cyclical process of sampling from
the input text, predicting, testing, and confirming or revising these predictions.

The importance of reading for students, especially in an era defined by
standards, is related to the ability to develop deep and critical knowledge of
subject matter content. According to Snow (2002: 45) reading concerns with
the ability to develop deep and critical knowledge of subject matter content.

“Contemporary national benchmarks in science call for instruction to
be inquiry-based. The standards in history call for students to learn the
practices of historical analysis, including the use of primary documents.
Contemporary language arts standards call for students, at all ages, to read
authentic literature across genres (e.g., novels, memoirs, interviews) and
to write in various genres…. All of these opportunities provide potentially
powerful contexts in which students can learn to interpret text and can
learn how to learn from text.” (Snow, 2002, p. 45).

It is, therefore, by using teaching and learning strategies with content-
specific texts, teachers enable students to gain more facility with literacy
strategies as well as understand the subject matter better.

One of the most difficult tasks of a language teacher in the context of
teaching English as a foreign language is to foster attitude toward reading. It is
caused by the limited time and other constraints they face during the teaching
and learning process. Teachers are often unable to encourage students to find
entertaining and interesting information in reading materials. Therefore it
often creates a negative mind-set in students who consider the effort to interact
with reading materials as an unattractive activity compared to the process they
may get from visual electronic media.

However, reading programs may help students develop their language
skills necessary for success. But it is hard to implement an effective reading
program, especially in countries where English is treated as foreign language. The success of implementing reading programs will depend on the students’ interest.

In relation to reading, the survey research administered by National Education Department of Republic of Indonesia showed surprising results. It is proved that reading comprehension competence of elementary school students were in a low level. Almost 76.95% of students were unable to use dictionary. Among those who were able to use dictionary, there were only about 5% can search words in Indonesian Dictionary systematically (Syah, 1995: 34).

The same condition also happens in SMK As Salam Sukoharjo. The problem they experienced in English is concerning reading skill. Most students, about 89 students of 122 or equal to 72.95% are lack in English. It is shown from their passing grade in English that are below minimum passing grade required by the curriculum. As a more intensive observation undertaken, the problem is mostly in reading skill. Students are unable to comprehend the reading materials in the text. Therefore their understanding on material taught is quite poor.

Based on the fact above, it is necessary for language teachers to foster reading on their students. It may be done by selecting proper materials to the students. The reading programs may be useless if it is not done properly. Teachers should select reading materials that are relevant to the students’ needs and interests.
Teaching and learning process of English mostly emphasize reading, writing, listening and speaking integratedly. Besides those four language skills in teaching English such language components as vocabulary, structure, spelling etc must also be paid attention to. According to *The Outline of Teaching Material of English Teaching* (*Garis Besar Pokok Pengajaran* or GBPP) the competence standard should be mastered by SMK students in reading is to understand various meaning in written texts. The competence covers interpersonal, ideational, and textual meaning (Depdiknas, 2004: 16). It means that the students should master the above meanings in written texts.

Research shows that five important factors impact the literacy development of adolescents: motivation, skills related to the alphabetic principle, fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension (Hennings, 2000: 144). Based on such a reason, the teaching in reading comprehension should convey the above important factors to literacy development.

One of the approaches used in the English teaching-learning process cover Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The objective of the approach is the development of communicative competence, namely the ability to use English for communication in real life situation (Fauziati, 2009: 148).

There are several methods in teaching reading skill. Vacca et al., (1987: 140) proposed four methods in teaching reading skill, namely: building a schema for stories, building and activating schema, guiding interaction between reader and text, and using questions to promote comprehension.
One of the methods in using questions to promote comprehension is Question-Answer Relationships (QAR). This method was developed by Raphael to help learners know what information sources are available for seeking answers to different types of text questions (Vacca, et al., 1987: 165).

QAR is a reading method in which the students categorize comprehension questions according to where they got the information they needed to answer each question (Raphael & Au, 2005: 206). Students are asked to indicate whether the information they used to answer questions about the text was textually explicit information (information that was directly stated in the text), textually implicit information (information that was implied in the text), or information entirely from the student’s own background knowledge.

Teaching reading using QAR method offers a high level literacy that is important for learning across the curriculum (Raphael & Au, 2005: 206). The high level of literacy itself according to Snow (2003: xiii) is defined as the achieved level in which the reader can read a variety of materials with ease and interest so that the reader is capable to acquire new knowledge and understands new concept, capable in applying textual information appropriately.

“reader can read a variety of materials with ease and interest, can read for varying purposes, and can read with comprehension even when the material is neither easy to understand nor intrinsically interesting … [P]roficient readers … are capable of acquiring new knowledge and understanding new concepts, are capable of applying textual information appropriately, and are capable of being engaged in the reading process and reflecting on what is being read” (Snow, 2003: xiii).
The QAR method has been researched for more than 20 years. It has proven itself to be a successful teaching method for reading comprehension. In a study by Raphael (2005), the QAR method was described as implementing phrases that both teacher and student could use to communicate together. The dialogue was kept simple so that all learners could participate in higher-level thinking questions in hopes to increase comprehension achievement, and ultimately increase scores on standardized tests.

Honig, Diamond, and Gutlohn (2000) agreed that the QAR method enhanced students' ability in answering comprehension questions and that a three-way relationship exists amongst questions. The connection between comprehension and the significance of questioning was revolutionized in the late 1970s when a system was developed that categorized questions. Much like Bloom's Taxonomy developed in 1956, the Pearson and Johnson Taxonomy classified questions into three categories: (a) literal, (b) inferential, and (c) evaluative (Honig et al. 2000).

The similar result on QAR method was gained in a study by McMahon (2010). The results indicate that good readers often read for enjoyment purposes and liked the overall experience of reading. In contrast to the good readers, poor readers rarely ever read because they thought it was boring. Although it is important that students perform well on their assessments, it is equally important for them to enjoy learning. When providing a teaching strategy that is easy for everyone to understand, students are likely to participate and be less discouraged due to lack of understanding.
One study found no significant increase in comprehension when teaching QAR in the classroom. A study by Ezell et al., that was held in 1997 compared different instructional approaches of QAR in a fourth grade classroom. The purpose of the study was to determine which instructional method would be the best approach when teaching QAR. The researchers compared direct instruction with peer-assisted instruction and found that both groups made gains, which poses the question if QAR was the reason for student gains. It was important to include the research when deciding on the instruction to incorporate into the action research (McMahon, 2010: 12).

Based on the above results, it can be concluded that the QAR method has been used and studied in all content areas to improve students' understanding. Many studies have integrated the QAR method into daily instruction to improve test scores. The QAR method is an effective way to promote the higher level thinking in students. Students who clearly understand the relationship between questions and answers are becoming more effective, strategic readers.

Thus, by using a combination of the teaching instructions mentioned to teach the QAR method, students' comprehension abilities improve. The objective is that once they are taught this strategy and have had repeated practice, they will be able to apply it independently. More importantly, students gain the ability to make personal connections when reading.

Based on the condition of the learning process undertaken, the learning process in reading is expected to be more effectively undertaken.
Therefore the writer eagers to examine the models as approaches to teach writing. The tittle of the paper thesis will be “The Effectiveness of Teaching Reading Comprehension Using QAR (Questions-Answer Relationship) Method: Experimental Study at X Grade Students of SMK As Salaam Academic Year 2011/2012”.

B. Limitation of the Study

The research only focuses on effectiveness of the teaching reading comprehension using QAR method in improving students’ reading skill of Xth grade students of SMK As Salaam of Sukoharjo Academic Year of 2011/2012.

C. Research Questions

As stated in the introduction, the more general aim of the present work is to know and analyze the effectiveness of teaching reading skill using QAR method. In accordance with the conceptual and theoretical framework outlined above, the research questions are outlined as follows:

1. Is the method of QAR in teaching reading skill effective in improving students’ reading skill?

2. Is the method of QAR in teaching reading skill effective in improving students’ learning motivation in reading?
D. **Objectives of the Study**

This paper is written to introduce the readers to the topic that becomes the current issue in teaching reading skill. The general objective of writing the paper is to investigate the effectiveness of teaching reading skill using QAR method. The specific objectives of the research are as follows:

1. To describe whether or not the method of QAR is effective in improving students’ reading skill.
2. To describe whether or not the method of QAR is effective in improving students’ learning motivation in reading.

E. **Benefits of the Study**

The writer expects that the research paper may provide some benefits both theoretically and practically. The benefits of the study can be outlined as follows:

1. **Theoretical Benefit**
   a. The result of the research paper can be used as an input in English teaching learning process especially on improving students’ reading skill.
   b. The result of the research paper can be used as additional reference for those who want to conduct a research in English teaching learning process.
2. Practical Benefit
   
a. The thesis may give a broader knowledge about teaching learning process to readers.

b. The thesis may provide more understanding in the application of different teaching technique in reading to give new learning experiences for the students.

c. The thesis may be useful to provide guidance for the teachers to motivate students in learning.