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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of The Problem

Reading regarded as a language skill of high priority to develop in teaching and learning English as a foreign language is an activity to extend and consolidate one's knowledge of the language. In order for the students to do such activity, students are required to have a good reading ability. Reading is one of the most important skills in which the students are expected to gain ideas or information from the texts. Besides, in reading activity, the students should be able to read effectively and efficiently in order to grasp meaning of the words. In line with the idea above, Cunningham and Shagoury (2006) have stated that the final goal of reading is to understand a variety of texts.

Wang (2006, p.47) has suggested that "reading ability refers to the reading skill that a reader brings to the text. Those skills are readers' ability to control their own comprehension, decode unknown words and apply fix-up strategies." He also stated that dealing with unfamiliar words is the way to improve the students' reading ability. It is clear that reading is not simple. It needs a great deal of practice and skill.

Besides, Jacob et al. (as cited in Willis, 2008) pointed out that reading is not similar to spoken language that is naturally a part of human development. Unlike oral communication, there are no specific regions of the brain dedicated to reading. The complexity of reading requires multiple areas of the brain to operate together through networks of neurons. It leads to brain dysfunctions that involve



reading. It is not surprising that many students have significant reading difficulties since their cognitive task does connecting symbols to sounds, sounds to words, words to meaning, meaning to memory, and memory to thoughtful information processing (Willis, 2008). Perfetti in Collins (2011, p.43) has stated that “the ability to read is traditional criterion of beginning school achievement and later academic success.” Students who are good at reading tend to have more chances to succeed in learning while students who are bad at reading do not.

State Islamic Junior High School Andalan Pekanbaru which is located at Amal Hamzah Street, Pekanbaru City is one of the educational institutions. This school requires an English subject as a compulsory subject. To meet students’ needs of reading, English subject is programmed by using School-Based Curriculum (SBC) which requires reading as one of the skills that must be taught. Moreover, School-Based Curriculum (SBC) is also as a guide for teaching and learning English in this school. English is taught twice a week with duration 1 hour which is 40 minutes. In School-Based Curriculum (SBC), especially in terms of reading, the eighth grade students are expected to have the ability to understand the meaning of functional text and simple essay in the form of descriptive and recount (Department of National Education, 2006). In the indicator, the students are expected to have the ability to recognize various information of the texts, to recognize unfamiliar words of the texts, to recognize language features of the texts, to recognize main ideas in the texts and to recognize referential words in the texts.

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Based on the idea above, it is clear that many aspects of reading ability need to be mastered by all of the students in the school. If the students are not able to master the aspects mentioned in the description above, the teaching and learning process in reading will not run effectively.

Based on the preliminary observation when the writer was having teaching practice at State Islamic Junior High School Andalan Pekanbaru, it was clear that some of students still had many difficulties in learning English especially in reading. The students' reading ability was still far from what the curriculum expected. It could be identified from the range of the students' passing grade at State Islamic Junior High School Andalan Pekanbaru. The students' passing grade was 70. Yet, some of the students could not reach the students' passing grade at the school although many efforts had been done in terms of teaching reading itself.

The problems above were caused by some factors that came from inside and outside the students themselves. One of the factors was self-esteem. Many researchers through different studies are concerned with affective variables that play important roles in affecting reading ability. And affective factors have been becoming debatable matters in the field of EFL/ESL that may not be ignored.

As suggested by De Andres (2002), in terms of language learning, the concern of affective variables in some modern teaching classes drive at relieving inhibition and anxiety as well as improving learners' motivation and self-esteem. Self-esteem, inhibition, motivation, anxiety, empathy, extroversion, attitude, and imitation are some of affective factors that influence students' reading ability.

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Affective factors should be surveyed in language learning because concerning on affective aspect could lead to more effective reading as language learning (Arnold and Brown in Hinton, 2013). Brown (2007, p.154) has also maintained that “self-esteem is the most pervasive aspect of any human behavior and no successful activity can be carried out without some degree of self-esteem”. Self-esteem is also defined as the way we value our selves. It is the way we think and feel about ourselves. In short, self-esteem is an essential factor that takes a big role in reading ability in which we should take it into account. Whether students succeed or fail mostly depends on the degree of their self-esteem. Therefore, the writer would like to relate self-esteem and reading ability.

Based on the teaching and learning process that was done at State Islamic Junior High School Andalan Pekanbaru, the writer found that the students’ reading ability was still low. Just particular students could recognize unfamiliar words of the texts. Although the teacher had taught the students the texts in a good way, some of the students still had inadequate ability to recognize language features of the texts which are useful to assign meanings to the texts. Besides, there were some students who still had low self-esteem. It had been shown from students’ attitude and behavior. For instances, some of the students felt incompetent while responding to particular situations in teaching and learning process, they did not accept that making mistakes is a natural part of learning in which it made them afraid of experiencing mistake especially when recognizing main ideas of the texts. Then, some of the students were not independent to



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recognize various information of the texts. Besides, they gave up easily when facing difficulties. Thus, those problems can be seen into the symptoms below:

1. Some of the students could not recognize unfamiliar words of the texts.
2. Just particular students had adequate ability to recognize language features of the texts which are useful to assign meanings to the texts.
3. Some of the students were difficult to identify the generic structures of the text.
4. Some of the students felt incompetent while responding to particular situations in teaching and learning process.
5. Some of the students were afraid of experiencing mistake especially when recognizing main ideas of the texts.
6. Some of the students were not independent to recognize various information of the texts.
7. Some of the students could not cooperate well with their friends to understand the texts.
8. Some of the students felt unworthy in taking on challenges and risking failure.
9. Just particular students had adequate ability to understand the texts.

From the problems above, since the teacher at the eighth grade of State Islamic Junior High School Andalan Pekanbaru has taught them through using good lesson plan and appropriate text books which are relevant to the curriculum and even she uses different methods, techniques and strategies creatively while teaching reading, the writer concludes that the factors involved in affecting the

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students' reading ability are students' affective variables. The description of the problems above characterizes self-esteem as the dominant variable that influences students' reading ability. Besides, low self-esteem could be the significant reason of these problems. On the other hand, if the facts above are always ignored teaching and learning process at State Islamic Junior High School Andalan Pekanbaru will not run well and the indicator might not be achieved. Hence, the writer is interested in carrying out a research entitled: **The Correlation between Students' Self-Esteem and Their Reading Ability at the Eighth Grade of State Islamic Junior High School Andalan Pekanbaru**

## B. Problem

### 1. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background and symptoms of this research, the problems are identified into the following identifications:

- a. What made some of students unable to recognize unfamiliar words of the texts?
- b. What problem did some of the students have in terms of ability to recognize language features of the texts which are useful to assign meanings to the texts?
- c. Why were some of the students difficult to identify the generic structures of the text.
- d. Why did some of the students feel incompetent while responding to particular situations in teaching and learning process?

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- e. Why were some of the students afraid of experiencing mistake especially when recognizing main ideas of the texts?
- f. What reason did some of the students have in terms of not feeling independent to recognize various information of the texts?
- g. Why could some of the students not cooperate well with their friends to understand the texts?
- h. Why did some of the students feel unworthy in taking on challenges and risking failure.
- i. What made some of the students unable to understand the texts?

**2. Limitation of the Problem**

In relation to the identification of the problem stated above, the writer needed to limit the problem because of having limited time and fund. There are many interesting aspects to study regarding self-esteem and reading ability, but the writer focused on students' self-esteem and students' reading ability in understanding recount text in which it involved recognizing unfamiliar word of recount text, various information of recount text, referential word of recount text, main idea of recount text, and language features of recount text.

**3. Formulation of the Problem**

The writer formulates the research problems as follows:

- a. How is the students' self esteem at the eighth grade of State Islamic Junior High School Andalan Pekanbaru?

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- b. How is the students' reading ability in understanding recount text at the eighth grade of State Islamic Junior High School Andalan Pekanbaru?
- c. Is there any significant correlation between students' self esteem and their reading ability in understanding recount text at the eighth grade of State Islamic Junior High School Andalan Pekanbaru?

**C. Objective and Significance of the Research****1. Objective of the Research**

- a. To know the students' self-esteem at the eighth grade of State Islamic Junior High School Andalan Pekanbaru.
- b. To know the students' reading ability in understanding recount text at the eighth grade of State Islamic Junior High School Andalan Pekanbaru.
- c. To know the correlation between students' self esteem and their reading ability in understanding recount text at the eighth grade of State Islamic Junior High School Andalan Pekanbaru.

**2. Significance of the Research**

- a. Hopefully, the findings of this research are able to benefit the writer as a novice researcher in learning how to conduct a research.
- b. The findings of this research are expected to be valuable and useful for both teachers of English and students of State Islamic Junior High School Andalan Pekanbaru.



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- c. Besides, the results of this research are also expected to be used as a reference for those who want to conduct a research in the field of teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language.
- d. Finally, the findings of this research are expected to be able to enrich the theory of teaching reading.

**D. Reason for Choosing the Title**

There are some reasons why the writer is interested in conducting this research as follows:

1. The title of this research is not yet investigated by other previous researchers.
2. The title of this research is relevant to the writer's status as an English Education Department student.
3. Finally, the location of the research supports and facilitates the writer in carrying out the research.

**E. Definition of the Terms**

There are many terms which are involved in this research. In order to avoid misunderstanding to the terms used in this research, the following terms are necessarily defined as follows:

**1. Correlation**

According to Richards and Schmidt (2010), correlation is a measure of the strength of the relationship between two or more sets of data. In this research, the writer would like to find the correlation between students' self-esteem and their reading ability in understanding recount text. Self-esteem is variable X and students' reading ability in

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understanding recount text is variable Y. variable X is independent variable while Y is dependent variable.

## 2. Self-Esteem

As suggested by Coopersmith in Brown (2007), self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitude that individuals hold toward themselves. In this research, the term of “self-esteem” is referring to how the students value themselves. It is the way the students think and feel about themselves to the world around them.

## 3. Reading Ability

Wang (2006) stated that reading ability is the reading skill that involves monitoring comprehension, decoding unknown words, and applying fix-up strategies. These three aspects which are involved in reading ability are used to understand the meaning of unknown phrases and text. Therefore, In this research, the term of “reading ability” refers to students’ reading ability in understanding recount text.