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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

It has been acknowledged that English is an international language that is used by people around the world to communicate each other. It plays an important role in many aspects of life such as in science, technology, trade, politics, businesses, education, etc. English is used not only by native speakers but also by non-native speakers to communicate with each other for various purposes. English also helps people to develop their potential, to share their inner selves with others, or to act upon the world powerfully (Bacon, 2004:1).

English as the international language has been in great demands especially by foreign companies or corporations that are in needs of people who possess good skills in English both in speaking and writing. In Indonesia, for example, when someone wants to get a job in either an international and a national company, he needs to master the four skills in English: speaking, listening, reading and writing (Brown, 2001:232) which is not easy at all.

In Indonesia, reading as one of the language skills must be learned by the students of any educational level from elementary school to university. Reading English texts in particular plays a significant role in foreign language learning programs. Mastering reading skill is very important because it is one of the central tools for learning new information (Grabe & Stoller, 2001). Reading is one of the essential macro skills especially for students who study English as part of their



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education; therefore, they need to read books, carry out research, prepare reports, etc. Westood (2008:2) points out that reading is a fundamental skill upon which all formal educations depend. Thus, it is clear that having reading skill is very important for students to have at any level of education because it can help them to get much information in their learning process. Reading can improve the reader's knowledge and give a lot of help to improve listening, speaking and writing skills. Hammer (1998: 68) states that reading has become an essential skill. He adds that reading is useful for other purposes too; any exposure to English encourages students to understand what is written. It means that reading skill is an important skill to gain information and knowledge from any reading texts.

One of the important skills in reading is comprehension of text. Reading comprehension is a complex process of constructing meaning by coordinating a number of skills related to decoding, word reading, and fluency, the integration of background knowledge, vocabulary, and previous experiences. Moreillon (2007:10) points out that reading is making meaning from the printed and visual information. Linse (2015:69) also states that reading is a set of skills that involves making sense and deriving meaning from the printed words. In order to read, the reader must be able to decode (sound out) the printed words and also comprehend what we read. The deep comprehension of a reading material is the main goal of a reader to gain in reading process. Therefore, knowing the content of a reading text is a very crucial point for a reader because reading without comprehension is useless.

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According to King and Stanley (2004), there are five aspects in the process of reading comprehension; that is, finding factual information, finding the main idea, finding the meaning of vocabulary in context, identifying reference, and making reference that the students must do in reading comprehension. In fact, during the teaching and learning process in the classroom, the students spend much of their time on reading and learning information contained in a text because they often have difficulty to recognize the main idea of each paragraph in the text, supporting ideas or details as well as the topic of the text. Freese (1997) indicated that students might face while reading that cause them to be unable to comprehend a text. Besides, the teacher sometimes have difficulties when giving questions and asking the students about the contents of a reading text. On the part of the students, it is hard for them to get involved in a discussion with their classmates so that they are unable to comprehend the text as one of the purposes of reading (Rivers and Temperley cited by Mc Donough, 2003:90).

The above phenomenon is not very new to students in developing countries such as Indonesia as they are not encouraged to have a reading habit for various reasons. Based on the study conducted by Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, Conn., US (the Jakarta Post, March 12, 2016) at literacy and literate behavior, on the reading assessment result category, Indonesia was in the 60th place or the second-least literate nation in the world in a list of 61 measurable countries.

Considering the importance of reading, a greatest attention needs to be given at any level of education, especially in Vocational High School in the context of

this study. Teaching English at Vocational High School based on the 2013-curriculum (K-13) still focuses on reading skill. The main aim of teaching reading at Vocational High School in Indonesia is reading competence in which the students are expected to understand the meaning of interpersonal and transactional written texts in the form of recount, narrative, procedure, descriptive, news item, report, analytical exposition, hortatory exposition, spoof, explanation, discussion and review in daily life contexts. In short, the students are expected to comprehend reading text materials dealing with their daily lives. (Kemdikbud, 2015)

Besides, the importance of reading can also be seen from the fact that the main part of the national examination and the entrance test for universitas is aimed at assessing students' reading comprehension. For Vocational High School students, the national exam in English is mainly for the purpose of measuring students' reading competence as being targeted by the national content standard. (Kemdikbud, 2015). More specifically, various types of questions in English national examination demand students to have reading skills in obtaining explicit and implicit information, guessing words/phrase/clause meaning in context and identifying main idea, communicative purpose of the text and the coda from a story (Hood et all: 1996). Basically, such questions are intended to examine the students' understanding or comprehension as a reflection of their minds (Dorn and Soffos, 2005:2) after reading; as the essential goal (Brassell and Rasinski, 2008: 11) and as the product of reading (Anderson, 2000:5). Thus, the description of students' comprehension level is hopefully revealed through such questions.

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Based on the data taken from the school documentation of SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota of the Academic Year 2016/2017 (Kemdikbud: Daftar Kolektif Hasil Ujian Nasional Tahun Pelajaran 2015/2016), it was reported that the average students' total score was only 41.67 whereas the passing score to be achieved was 55. It means that the students of SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota still could not achieve the passing grade. More students were not able to identify the topic of the text, the main idea of each paragraph, and the message stated in the passage. What happened was contradictory to what Grabe and Stoller (2002:9) views that reading is the ability to draw meaning from a printed page and interpret the information appropriately.

On the basis of the preliminary study, vocabulary was also a problem for the students. The English teachers said that the standard score in English (Ketuntasan Belajar/KB) at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota is 71, but still more students gain low English scores or lower than the KB. During the teaching learning process, the students had difficulty in recognizing words and describing what the ideas from the text even their teacher asked them to consult a dictionary. For many times, if the words were unfamiliar to them, they asked the teachers to translate the words into Indonesian. In addition, the students had difficulty in understanding words, phrases, clauses, and sentences in English. and to find synonym and antonym of certain words. Comprehending vocabulary in context was also their problem. Sometimes, the students tended to focus their full of attention on unfamiliar words, they searched the meaning of words in their dictionary. Some of the students also did not show their creativity. It could be seen when the teacher



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encouraged them to try to guess the meaning of difficult words in the text, and some of them preferred to open the dictionary and find the meaning of the words from dictionary. As a result, the students did not have good understanding of the text and also they still had difficulties to answer the questions related to the content of the text.

Another finding from the preliminary study was that the teacher said about some phenomenon that happened in the class. Some students were still passive in the class. It could be seen when the teacher gave the students time to discuss about the topic, the students did not give good response, and then, the students always kept silent when the teacher gave them chances to ask about the topic. The teacher explained that this condition happened because the students still found it difficult to understand the text and made them uninterested in learning the text and at the end, they could not give good response. In other words, the students lacked interest in reading.

According to a research finding cited in Zurina (2013), reading interest has been linked and related to vocabulary development, comprehension, fluency and general intellectual development (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Moreover, according to Grabe (2003) and Stansberry (2009) cited in Zurina (2013), reading interest also contributes to academic success as students who love to read will be able to write well and have more ideas which will make them more creative and innovative. It means that students who have little or no interest in reading will not be able to force themselves to pick up a book and read for reading purpose (Zurina: 2013).

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The last, from teacher side, teacher did not provide the students with the strategies that help them in understanding the meaning of the text. For example, the teacher only repeated her action on displaying students reading text, finding the difficult words, translating unfamiliar words, and answering the questions without any preview section in the beginning to trigger students' prior knowledge. Actually, the teachers have been developing their teaching strategies to make the students understand and comprehend the reading materials easily.. But in the reality, the students still have comprehension difficulties in reading text and make them have little or no interest in learning a text. In addition, it was fact that sometimes the teacher provided the students with the difficult materials. The teacher was rarely to conduct the reading test in order to find the students' reading ability level. It means that monotonous and inappropriate teaching technique also caused the low ability in reading comprehension. The above students' problems match with a research finding cited in Zurina (2013) indicating that reading interest has been linked and related to vocabulary development, comprehension, fluency and general intellectual development (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Grabe (2003) and Stansberry (2009) cited in Zurina (2013) view that reading interest also contributes to academic success for students who love reading will be able to write well and have more ideas which will make them more creative and innovative. It means that students who have little or no interest in reading will not be able to force themselves to pick up a book and read for reading purpose (Zurina: 2013).

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The research finding also corresponds to what was stated in the the RedRice Bali news reporting that Indonesian people had low interest in reading. It was also in line with the data from The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2015 which mentioned that the reading interest of Indonesians was very low noticeable from the fact that of 1000 Indonesians only 21 of them who regularly read books (March 28, 2016). This news was also supported by Republika, an Indonesian newspaper that the Indonesian public interest in reading was very low compared to that of several neighboring countries as exposed by Siti Sularsih, head of RI Library on the sidelines of the inauguration of Regional Board Of Promoting Reading Interest of South Sulawesi, in Makasar (Republika, co.id: May 12, 2016: p. 5).

What happened in the teaching and learning process at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota from teachers' side was that the teacher did not provide the students with appropriate strategies that could help them comprehend the text being read. For example, the teachers only asked the students to deal with the reading text and asked them to find difficult words, translate unfamiliar words, and answer the questions without any preview at the beginning to trigger students' prior knowledge. Although the teachers had tried to develop their teaching strategies to make the students understand and comprehend the reading materials easily, the students found it difficult to comprehend the reading text so that they had little or no interest in reading. Another problem was that sometimes the teachers gave the students the reading materials beyond their level. They rarely administered reading tests to know the students' reading ability level. It means

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that monotonous and inappropriate teaching technique also caused the low students' ability in reading comprehension.

To overcome the students' low ability in reading comprehension and low interest to read, teachers should be creative and wise to apply appropriate ways or strategies in their teaching to achieve the learning objectives or create teaching and learning process that can facilitate students to learn English easily and seriously. Therefore, the teaching materials should be well-designed to make the students active and creative in order to create an effective and pleasant teaching and learning process. Through the appropriate teaching methods and teaching strategies, teachers can increase the students' interest, motivation and can also develop reading materials for students' better comprehension. Durkin (1993, p. 4-1) stresses the importance of preparing teachers to teach comprehension strategies. Furthermore, it is suggested that teaching a combination or package of reading comprehension strategies is more effective than teaching isolated strategies.

Related to the previous studies in reading comprehension, many researchers have researched the techniques used to enhance reading comprehension and make the lesson more enjoyable. One of the techniques proposed by some experts to widen up our mind is by mind-mapping. It is not only used in restricted professions and in education, but also almost in all fields. According to Buzan (2005:1), Mind Mapping is a very powerful tool for brainstorming, creative thinking, problem solving, organizing of ideas and note taking. By using Mind Map, people can see the way that pieces of information fit together, as well as

recording the raw facts contained in normal notes. Mind Map encourages creative problem solving, as it hold messages in a format that the students' mind finds easy to remember and quick to review. A research finding of Ardakani and Lashkarian (2015) indicated that mind mapping served as an effective technique to reading comprehension and reading speed for improving reading comprehension that matched the research finding of Siriphanich (2010). Malekzadeh (2015) also conducted a study and the result showed that mind mapping technique was influential in enhancing the students' reading comprehension.

One of the factors that can improve the students' reading comprehension is the students' reading interest in learning. Krapp (1999:23) said that at the beginning of this century, famous psychologists advocated that interests were the most important motivational factors in learning and development. Miller (1974) stated that interest plays a key role in reading improvement. Smith and Robinson also supported this idea (1980:309, 319) stating that without interest, all the hard work of developing reading skills will not be available and "Interest is the touchstone to reading achievement". They also added that interest was the generator of all voluntary reading activities.

Mind Mapping plays an important role to improve learning achievement. Buzan mentioned in his book that one of the mind mapping benefits is stress-reduction and for pleasure and also automatically can inspire interest in the students (1994: 116, 232). This makes Mind Mapping more adaptive and the lesson more creative and enjoyable.

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Since the conditions mentioned above came from both students and teacher, it was necessary to offer an appropriate reading comprehension strategy, i.e. Mind Mapping in order to overcome the problems. Therefore, it was necessary to conduct a research entitled “The Effect of Using Mind Mapping Technique on Students’ Reading Comprehension and Reading Interest at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota”.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Nowadays, reading is a very important skill and should be mastered by the students in learning English. By reading, students can get information and knowledge. In short, reading helps the students to develop their knowledge. In conjunction with the background of the problems, there were some problems in the teaching-learning of reading. The problems might come from students and teachers. However, those problems needed to be solved immediately.

First, the students had difficulty in comprehending the content of a reading text because they lacked vocabulary so that it was difficult for them to understand words, phrases, and sentences in the text. This condition affected the students’ ability to find the main ideas and supporting details, word meanings (synonym and antonym), and to answer the questions given based on the text.

Secondly, the students got difficulties to answer the questions related to the content of the text given. They could not get the message in the text; they were not able to identify the topic of the text, the main idea of each paragraph and the inference of the passage. They might understand each word separately, but how to link them together into meaningful ideas was often difficult for them. According

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to McNamara, the struggling readers could decode words, but had not developed sufficient skills to comprehend the underlying, deeper meaning of the sentences, the paragraphs, and the entire text.(McNamara: 2007: xi). As the result, they could not achieve the passing score in the national final examination (UN) and also obtained low English scores or lower than KB (Ketuntasan Belajar; 71).

The last problem the students encountered was that they lacked interest to learn reading. It could be seen when the teacher gave them time to discuss about the topic. They did not give good response, and then they always kept silent when the teacher gave them the chances to ask about the topic. This condition happened because the students had difficulty to understand the text. Zurina (2013) revealed that, reading interest has been linked and related to vocabulary development, comprehension, fluency and general intellectual development (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). It is also stated that students who have little or no interest in reading will not be able to force themselves to pick up a book and read for a reading purpose.

Another problem was on the part of the teachers. Teacher did not provide the students with the strategies that help them understand the meaning of the text and arouse the students' interest towards reading comprehension. In addition, the students were not placed in a reading atmosphere where they could share their reading experience cooperatively and improve their creativity. For example, the teacher only asked the students to read the reading text, then find the difficult words, translate unfamiliar words, and answer the questions based on the text which was considered monotonous. Brown (2001) stated that strategy was a



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specific method of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular ends, and planed designs or controlling and manipulating certain information. The condition made the students reluctant to learn English, especially reading.

With regard to the above problems some questions needed to be addressed:

What makes students obtain low reading comprehension? What are the causes that make the students have difficulties in comprehending the text? Why do the students have difficulties in identifying topic and main ideas in the text? Why do the students also have difficulties to find out synonyms and antonym in the text given? What make the students have difficulties to determine the reference in the text? Has the teacher implemented the strategy or technique in teaching reading comprehension properly? What efforts should be made to enhance students' reading comprehension? Is Mind Mapping able to cope with the students' problem in reading comprehension? Is Mind Mapping able to arouse the students' reading interest?

According to Brandner (2015), a mind mapping is an organizer that can help students visualize what they are reading and detect connections between individual pieces of information. Budd (2004, p. 35) defines Mind Mapping as “a graphic organizer in which the major categories radiate from a central image and lesser categories are portrayed as branches of larger branches.” It can be used to generate ideas, take notes, develop concepts and ideas and improve memory (Buzan, 2000).

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As it has been stated previously, to comprehend a text the students must have background knowledge which is divided into two, background knowledge of the language and background knowledge of the world (Stanovich, 1991; McNamara, 1991). Mind Mapping is an easy way to get information into and out of the brain and make up of words, lines and pictures (Buzan, 2003). In other words, mind mapping is graphical representation of ideas and concepts. As a visual thinking tool, it help to organize, structure, analyze and retain new information.

1.3. Limitation of the Problem

There may be a number of strategies that could be applied to enhance students' reading comprehension. However, no one strategy is the best for various reasons. Each strategy has its own strengths and weaknesses. In a situation a certain reading strategy may be applicable and in another situation it may not be suitable to be used. In this research the study was restricted to the application of Mind Mapping technique being considered one of the appropriate strategies to be employed to encourage the students to improve their reading comprehension.

1.4. Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of using Mind Mapping technique on students' reading comprehension and reading interest at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota.

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This study was done to meet the following objectives:

- a. To find out a significant difference of using Mind Mapping technique towards the students' reading comprehension before the treatment between the experimental group and the control group at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota.
- b. To find out a significant difference of using Mind Mapping technique on students' reading comprehension after the treatment between the experimental group and the control group at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota.
- c. To find out a significant difference of using Mind Mapping technique towards the students' reading comprehension between the pre-test and post-test of the experimental group at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota.
- d. To find out a significant difference of using Mind Mapping technique the towards students' reading comprehension between the pre- test and post-test of the control group at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota.
- e. To find out a significant difference of using Mind Mapping technique towards the students' reading interest before the treatment between the experimental group and the control group at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota.
- f. To find out a significant difference of using Mind Mapping technique towards the students' reading interest after the treatment between the experimental group and the control group at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota.
- g. To find out a significant difference of using Mind Mapping technique towards the students' reading interest between the pre- questionnaire and post-questionnaire of the experimental group at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota.



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To find out a significant difference of using Mind Mapping technique towards the students' reading interest between the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire of the control group at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota.

1.5. Research Question

The problem of the study is formulated in the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant difference of using Mind Mapping technique towards the students' reading comprehension before the treatment between the experimental group and the control group at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota?
2. Is there a significant difference of using Mind Mapping technique towards the students' reading comprehension after the treatment between the experimental group and the control group at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota?
3. Is there a significant difference of using Mind Mapping technique towards the students' reading comprehension between the pre- test and post-test of the experimental group at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota?
4. Is there a significant difference of using Mind Mapping technique towards the students' reading comprehension between the pre-test and post-test of the control group at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota?
5. Is there a significant difference of using Mind Mapping technique towards the students' reading interest before the treatment between the experimental group and the control group at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota?

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6. Is there a significant difference of using Mind Mapping technique towards the students' reading interest after the treatment between the experimental group and the control group at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota?
7. Is there a significant difference of using Mind Mapping technique the towards students' reading interest between the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire of the experimental group at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota?
8. Is there a significant difference of using Mind Mapping technique towards the students' reading interest between the pre- questionnaire and post-questionnaire of the control group at SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota?

1.6. Significance of the Study

The study aimed to increase the KB (Ketuntasan Belajar) score for English subject and to improve teachers' strategies in teaching and learning process that became an effort to make students more interested and motivated in learning English and also to encourage them to be more active, creative and innovative in the teaching and learning process. In addition, through the changes of teachers' strategies in teaching and learning process, they are able to determine whether Mind Mapping is good to be implemented in teaching reading comprehension and to motivate the students to practice reading comprehension. Through the use of appropriate teaching strategy, the students will have good reading interest as well as learning strategies to gain better learning achievement.

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Yu-mei (2009), states that reading interest is one of several important factors that may affect the students' English achievement. So, with the so called K-13, the teachers give more opportunities to the students to develop themselves to be creative in solving problems and to improve their English skills. Thus, using appropriate teaching strategies such as Mind Mapping is beneficial not only for the teachers but also for the students to increase their motivation and interest in reading for better understanding.

17. Rationale of the Study

This study was conducted to find out whether Mind Mapping technique was good to apply in teaching learning process of reading comprehension and could arouse the students' reading interest to practice reading comprehension. Before describing why reading strategies are important for language learning, the fundamental construct should be defined. Educators and researchers view that learning a foreign language should be meaningful, reflective and learner-centered so that learners can develop learner autonomy for lifelong learning. Learning strategies can help to make language learning easier, faster, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situation (Rubin, 1987 and Oxford, 1990). Through careful and deliberate planning, learners can be efficient in attaining, processing, storing and retrieving new sources of information.

One of the research findings supports the previous researches (Oxford, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot 1990; Cohen 1998) that successful language learners are those who use a wide range of key language learning strategies. Because of the role of a teacher as a facilitator in the class, the academic achievement is as a



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standard of the students' success in learning and a sign that the students are successful in achieving their goals if they get high achievement. Thus, teachers should direct their students to use an appropriate strategy to achieve their goals.

Another dilemma that English teachers have is that a class may consist of students with different learning styles, expectations, interests and motivation in English learning. It is almost impossible for teachers to meet every student's need or get them all involved in the classroom activities under these circumstances. Moreover, because of the prevalent approach to teaching already mentioned, a number of students have developed passive attitudes and will not be able to take responsibility for their learning. They depend on their teachers for the transmission of knowledge and expect them to explain the meaning of the reading materials. Many students do not develop an interest in reading; they only study English for the purpose of passing the exams. The loss of motivation and inactive attitudes may be impediments to their English learning.

Therefore, the students' reading interest and strategy in learning play an important role for better achievement especially in reading comprehension. This is in line with what Gutrhe, *et.al* (2006:284) states, "Interest in reading is a motivational construct that has been described as a personal interest." In teaching and learning process, the teachers need to stimulate the students to be interested in reading the material. Teachers must support the students in the teaching and learning process by giving the students a chance to develop their language.

Mind Mapping is a method used to optimize learning capacities and understanding of how the elements of complex structures are connected. Murley

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(2007) explains that Mind Maps graphically show ideas in a relational context, with the main topic at the center of the map, major subtopics on branches radiating from the main topic, and sub-subtopics around each subtopic. Al-Jarf (2011) supported this idea by pointing out that mind-mapping is used to enhance learning. Visual learners find this technique useful as an illustrative tool that assists with managing thought, directing learning, and making connections. Al-Jarf (2011) also adds that mind-mapping enables students to better organize, prioritize, and integrate material presented. This technique can help the students to map ideas in the text by grouping single ideas to connect them to comprehend the text. Sirriphanich's (2010), Mahsa Hariri's (2013), Malekzadeh and Bayat's (2015) and Ardakani and Anita Lashkarian's (2015) Maryam *et al* (2015) researches proved this, the improvement in reading comprehension.

Then, because mind-mapping welcomes more flexibility than outlining does, students' creativity is subsequently encouraged. Memory retention is enhanced as mind-mapping allows displaying all related topics on the same mind-map with emphasis and connections indicated by images, symbols, and colours. Not only does it trigger students' creativity, but also attract students' attention. The benefits of mind mapping include providing the students with a more attractive and enjoyable format for their eye or brain to look at and remember. In other words, practicing mind-mapping can also make the students enjoy learning reading. Rizkiya (2013) and Mahsa Hariri(2013) reported the result of their research that the students showed positive and responsive attitudes toward using mind-mapping and affect their reading activities.

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1.8. Definition of Terms

To avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation to happen, the key terms in the study are defined as in the following:

a. Mind Mapping is a useful technique to use while reading since the non-linear format allows someone to view the entirety of his notes at a glance, then easily place new information in the appropriate branch or make connections between ideas.

b. Reading comprehension is the process of making meaning from text (Woolley, 2011:15). The goal of reading is to gain an overall understanding of what is described in the text and to obtain meaning from isolated words or sentences. In other words, reading comprehension is an ability to understand a text in a term of finding the meaning of the story, identifying the main idea, identifying explicit and implicit information of a text. The reading comprehension in this context refers to the reading comprehension of the students of SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota.

Reading interest can be defined as a situation arising as a result of students in themselves a strong desire to perform reading activities. (Economics Education, 2010).

Merriam-Webster.com : a feeling of wanting to learn more about something or to be involved in something. Besides, it is also defined as a quality that attracts someone's attention and makes him/her wants to learn more about something or to be involved in something. Moreover, it is defined

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something (such as hobby) that a person enjoys learning or doing. If it is related to reading activity, it means that they enjoy reading activity.

Furthermore, Dictionary.com defines that: interest is the feeling of a person whose attention, concern, or curiosity is particularly engaged by something.

Another definition of interest is something that concerns, involves, draws the attention of, or arouses the curiosity of a person to do something. The reading interest in this study refers to the reading interest of the participants under the study.