CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Language is a communication tool to convey information, ideas, opinions, as well as messages. Communication can be done starting from the smallest environments such as the scope of the family and local society to national or international relations. To communicate internationally, English should be mastered. English is one of the languages currently used as an international language. For that reason, English has a significant role in the world of education. The higher the education someone wants to achieve, the higher level of English is needed. Considering the fact mentioned before the government takes relevant action. It is the implementation of English in the curriculum as a compulsory subject at the elementary, junior high up to high school. This implementation mainly aims to create graduates who are able to compete in a global world.

Mastering English means mastering the four skills supporting the language namely speaking, reading, writing and listening. From all the skills, reading is one of the skills that is easily found in the daily life. The reading facilities are found everywhere. It is exposed not only in a systematic publication like newspaper or magazines and text books but also on the street exposition through any announcements or advertisements. The reading material exposure is abundant. Anyhow if the reading ability is not good, students will not be to able to comprehend messages conveyed in it. Anticipating this, reading lesson has a
purpose to develop the students’ ability to extract the message the text contains (Nuttall, 1988: 20).

To meet this objective, the reading materials compiled in the school curriculum are aimed at how to get information. The topics are varied from daily life to political, social, economic issues, health, religion and the like. Students with good reading comprehension can understand the information conveyed by the author from the text. To get information from the reading text effectively and efficiently, Arnaudet and Barrett (1997: 33) said that “A good understanding of the organization of an introductory text book-a paragraph-a chapter section-a chapter- or even an entire book-depends to a large extent on the students’ understanding of two key terms: Controlling idea (main idea) and supporting idea. So, the indicator the readers understand reading is if they can find out the main idea and supporting ideas and if they can conclude what the text is about”.

Like what has been mentioned above, the key for success in reading is the ability to find and understand the main idea of the text. Once a student can find the main idea of a text, it seems he will be able to easily identify the supporting ideas that complete the text. In the end it will lead them to understand the text and get all the information conveyed. By understanding the text, students will have no difficulties in answering questions about the text and of course it will improve their academic achievement. Finally, they must reach the KKM score which is 68.

It seems so simple to make students master reading skill but unfortunately the facts reveal the opposite. The students rarely understand the contents of the text after reading. They were not able to get the main idea, detail information,
vocabulary, reference and make inference. This happens because they have difficulties in finding the meaning of words in the reading context. They are also sometimes confused with the grammar in the reading text. Although students are curious enough to search for information or to comprehend the reading text, they fail to understand or to interpret it because of these grammatical reasons. The result of the preliminary research that the researcher did at Class XA students of MA Salafiyah, was the students mean score was 45. It means that the students did not achieve the KKM yet.

In addition there are some factors affecting student’s difficulties in understanding reading. They are teaching methods, teaching strategies, school’s facilities and students’ motivation.

In a classroom context, teachers often do not have enough techniques to explore the strategies and methods to develop students' reading comprehension. Reading is merely reading followed by answering questions. It becomes a hard work for students without teachers showing them how to answer the questions efficiently and accurately. In this situation, reading becomes a favorite activity among teachers but a frustrating activity for students during the teaching learning process. The condition is worsened by school condition that does not support students in developing their talent and interest in reading. Schools, especially private ones mostly have only two classes per grade and around twenty to twenty five students in a class. Of course this creates only low level of competition among students and in turn low motivation in self development. The absence of the library or even various reading sources is another example of factors
weakening students’ motivation in reading. With such a low motivation, it is quite impossible for students to comprehend the text.

It is a common class situation that in a reading class not all students participate actively to understand the reading text. Many students are passive and even did nothing at all. They just wait for information of an answer from his friend. They have no motivation to try to do the tasks themselves. So, it is extremely important to build students’ motivation to build a dynamic class atmosphere. Chan (1994: 351) mentioned that most students are activated by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. So in this case teachers have the opportunity to build an external student motivation. As soon as the extrinsic motivation is built, the intrinsic one hopefully will be awakened.

Viewing the issues described above, I purpose to use grammar translation method. Grammar translation method is a method that emphasized on grammar rules and translation in the teaching-learning process. Besides, the teacher is using mother tongue in learning process, it makes students feel easy to understand what the teacher’s aim. English is second language in Indonesia, it is impossible that English can be understood by students without knowing the basic structure and meaning word first. So the teacher should use the grammar translation method to teach English, because it has basic principles about teaching like mention above. Using grammar translation method, the students can solve the problems of reading ability because by using this method, students do not feel confused in understanding the text. The students’ problems such as difficult to find out main idea, detail information, vocabulary, reference and make inference, it can be
solved by understanding the grammar roles and words related the context. Having the students understand them, the students do not feel difficult again to solve their problems in reading. Although this method is very old and is considered the old-fashioned teaching method, it does not mean that it is not applicable to schools with certain conditions. According to Kolln (1982: 2) grammar has great contribution to the understanding of a concept.

Also, although not an important fact, I want to expose the different condition of the school and students. This school’s infrastructure is not as complete and modern as say, public schools. This private school is small with not too many students. This school has only two classes at each grade with 22 students, approximately in each class. Competition between students’ learning was not awaken so the learning results of the students are not too prominent. Those problems make students failed in English subject, especially to understand the content of text. This is the reason why the Grammar Translation Method is implemented. By applying this method, it is expected that students’ interest in reading will grow until finally they will be able to understand the content of the reading text, find main ideas and supporting ideas, and make inferences.

To solve or find solutions to the problems mentioned before, the researcher is interested in conducting the class action research that aims to raise student’s ability or interest in reading material and increase their achievement. Results from the preliminary observations confirmed that the grammar is one of the biggest factors that make students loose interest in reading because they cannot always grasp the contents of the reading or text. Therefore, the researcher
will conduct class action research with the title: IMPROVING STUDENTS’ READING ABILITY USING GRAMMAR TRANSLATION METHOD (A Classroom Action Research at Class XA students of MA Salafiyah Cirebon in the 2011/2012 Academic Year).

B. Problem Statements

This research concerns with the following problems:
1. Can grammar translation method improve the reading ability of Class XA students of MA Salafiyah Cirebon?
2. What are the strengths and the weaknesses of grammar translation method when it is used to teach reading?

C. Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem stated above the objectives of the study are:
1. To identify out whether grammar translation method can improve the reading ability of Class XA students of MA Salafiyah Cirebon. If yes, to what extent is its improvement.
2. To identify out the strengths and the weaknesses of grammar translation method when it is used to teach reading.

D. Benefits of the Study

The result of the research is able to provide some benefits for the students, the teacher, the other researchers, and the institution.

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1. For students

They can have high motivation to learn and to improve their reading ability because using grammar translation method is enjoyable and interesting. They become more active, creative, and courageous in the reading class.

2. For teachers

They can get description about using grammar translation method as a method in teaching English Reading to improve students’ reading ability. They also get experience to improve their teaching ability in the class.

3. For other researcher

This research can be used as a consideration to enrich their references in improving reading ability.

4. For institution

The result of study can make the institution progress because this research has improved both the students’ ability in reading and teachers’ ability in teaching.