

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Language is one of communication instruments especially among human being. Without language, people cannot make any relationship with others, because language is the most effective tool of communication.

Language holds an important role, particularly in communication. Actually, besides the linguist, other experts who work on science and technology broaden their knowledge on the theory or practice of the language. In addition, everybody realizes that interaction in many kinds of activities is going to be lower without language

Language has much usefulness for human. By language, people are able to extend any of expression such as idea, experience, feeling, thought, and any others by written and oral. In this regard, Phinocchio stated that “Language is the means by which results of human thought and action are passed on.” (1974, p.3).It is one reason why language to be important for us.

Allah in His Holy Qur’an, Surah Ar-Ruum: 22 has also granted to our capability in communicating to each other as follows:



There are so many languages in the world and English is the most important one. First, English is an international and universal language, and used in almost all over the world. Second, people use it as a communication tool. Third, like other states in the world, Indonesia has programmed English as one of compulsory subject from elementary school until university, not only in the formal but also informal like in course institutions.

When we learn our native language, we usually learn to listen then to speak, then, to read and finally to write. These are called “the four language skill”. All of those skills have their own way to master them.

Reading is the third skill. It is one important skill when teaching or leaning a foreign language. It enhances acquisition, develops student’s autonomy in the language learning process. It also vitally important for student’s further education since in some higher education establishments the students are required to have a definite score in reading skill.

Allah in His Holy Qur’an, Surah al-Alaq:1 commanded human to read:



This is first verse in Holy Qur’an and commands of Allah to human to read because of reading are one of ways to get information. People can get information from any sources. For example we can get news from newspaper, advertisement,

banner, brochure, etc with read them. So, reading is important skill for people to learn something new.

Reading can be divided into extensive and intensive reading. To develop extensive reading students should be encouraged to read such authentic literature, as books, periodically, advertising leaflets, manual, etc. Intensive reading, both skimming and scanning is usually trained during the lesson and there are a lot of exercises that can be performed while reading.

For reading activities teacher usually give examples or read simple reading of the text in English. There are many kinds of text to develop reading comprehension such as descriptive, report, explanation, exposition, and discussion text. Besides kind of text above, there are short functional texts that can develop reading comprehension.

Many kinds of those texts are taught by teacher for junior or senior high school. For junior high school lesson usually use short functional text. It has some type such as letter, notice, greeting card, short message, inviting card, label, announcement, and advertisement. Whereas for senior high school usually use text longer such as narrative, recount, news item, etc. These texts give some information about something that people don't know previously.

From kind of texts above, letter is one that usually use by many people like businessman or businesswomen, teachers, headmaster, students, children, etc. It has

some kind such as business letter, informative letter, and personal letter. Letter in junior high school lesson is personal letter because the letter does not often follow a specific set of rules, and people can write them formally or informally. By using letter text, students can develop some skill especially reading comprehension. Letter usually can give information and extend idea from the writer to the reader (Crowther, 2007, p. 7). If students can to write letters from an early age, so it will improve their communication, and handwriting skills, and teach them what they need to know about how to write letter well with its structure because letter writing can be fun, help students learn to compose written text, and provide handwriting practice. Personal letter also has some types like thank you letter, letter for teacher, apology letter, congratulation letter, regret letter, invitation letter, condolence or sympathy letter. It consists of address and the date, body of the letter, ending letter, and signature. This text can give students much information about how to write a message to friend or family.

Based on the writer's prior observation and consultation with English teacher at MTs. Al-Ikhwan Banjarmasin, she said that letter text is difficult for the student. Because, based on KTSP curriculum the stress of teaching English are four skill, they are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Besides, letter especially personal letters has some rules in grammar and writing. While, if students want to write letter well, they must to know structure and parts of a letter. In fact, the students sometimes confuse or don't know who the sender of the letter is or who the receiver of the letter

is. So, the teacher does not have much time to teach it maximally. The writer takes this school as the location for the research because the writer has done a pre-observation. The writer has practiced teaching English in eighth classes. So, the writer has some knowledge about their ability in understanding letters especially personal letters.

The writer focuses on usage personal letters; they are letters for friend, thank you letters, letters for teacher, and invitation letters. The reason for choose personal letters because it is type of letter that most simple and often used by people.

For this reason the writer is interested to express more deeply a research entitle **“The Ability of Eighth Grade Students at MTs. Al-Ikhwan Banjarmasin Academic Year 2012/ 2013 in Understanding Personal Letters.”**

There are certain factors that have influenced the writer’s decision to conduct this research, including:

1. English is one of the most popular languages in the world that has become the main communication device in the field of science and technology.
2. An understanding that English has many rules in reading. It is important been taught to students.
3. Letter is the material that can help students to comprehend reading.

4. Personal letter is the material that often use in junior high school or Islamic junior high school.

So, from those factors, the writer feels important to conduct the research. The writer hopes that this research can give benefit for various parties.

B Statement of Problems

Based on the background above, the writer will investigate and focus the following questions:

1. How is the ability of eighth grade students at MTs. Al-Ikhwan Banjarmasin academic year 2012/2013 in understanding personal letters?
2. What are difficulties of eighth grade students at MTs. Al-Ikhwan Banjarmasin academic year 2012/2013 in understanding personal letters?

C. Objective of Study

The objectives of study are:

- 1 To know the ability of eighth grade students at MTs. Al-Ikhwan Banjarmasin academic year 2012/2013 in understanding personal letters.
- 2 To know difficulties of eighth grade students at MTs. Al-Ikhwan Banjarmasin academic year 2012/2013 in understanding personal letters.

D. Significance of Research

The result of this research is expected to give contribution as follow:

- a. For the students, it can improve their ability in understanding personal letters.

- b. For the teacher, it can be appropriate strategies to improve the successfulness of teaching and learning process.
- c. Enrich the writer's knowledge and experience in the scientific research especially about the personal letters.
- d. This research can give information and as comparison for the next research in this subject.
- e. As information the literary source of the IAIN Antasari Library.

E. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misinterpretation about the title, which is adopted in this study, the writer hereby feels necessary to explain some term concerning the title as follows:

- 1 Ability is natural or acquired skill or talent (Oxford, 2011, p.1).
- 2 Students here mean student of eighth grades at MTs. Al-Ikhwan Banjarmasin academic year 2012/2013. There are five classes. Those are VIII A, VIII B, VIII C, VIII D, VIII E class.
- 3 Understanding is knowledge (Oxford, 2011, p. 483).
- 4 Letter is a written message to somebody. (Oxford, 2008:p.253). Letter here means personal letter. It is a type of letter which provides communication between a small numbers of people, usually two.

Based on the meaning above, this research is intended to know the ability of eighth grade students at MTs. Al-Ikhwan Banjarmasin academic year 2012/2013 in

understanding personal letters and difficulties of eighth grade students at MTs. Al-Ikhwan Banjarmasin academic year 2012/2013 in understanding personal letters.