

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

Language is system of communication in speech and writing used by people. It is also way of expressing ideas or feeling using.¹ People can express their ideas and feeling using language. They can tell what they want to say and what is on their mind. Language can be used to communicate and express ideas or feeling, that language is said to be 'arbitrary', which means it is based on social agreement. Based on an American linguist, John B. Carrol, in his book entitled 'The Study of Language' (1953):

Language is an arbitrary system of speech sounds of sequences of speech sound which is used or can be used in interpersonal communication by an aggregation of human beings, and which rather exhaustively catalogs things, processes and events in the human environment.²

Based on definition above, language is constructed by social agreement and it can be used to communicate if

¹ Bull, Victoria, *Oxford Learner's Pocket Dictionary Fourth Edition*, (United Kingdom: Oxford University, 2011) p. 247

² Ramelan, *Introduction to Linguistic Analysis*, (Semarang: IKIP Semarang Press, 1992) p. 10

people use it. Then, language can be used to communicate and express ideas, feeling and opinion to others. Because, there are many countries in this world, there are also many languages in this world and the number depends on a partly arbitrary distinction between languages and dialects. However, estimates vary between around 6,000 and 7,000 languages in number³. Because there are many languages in the world, many people get difficult or cannot communicate with other people in other countries. So, Allah SWT asks people to learn language. That is in Quran surah al Hujuraat verse 13:

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقَنُّكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

O mankind! We have created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and Tribes, that ye may know Each other (Not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the Most honored of you In the sight of Allah is (He who is) the Most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).⁴

³ wikipedia.org/wiki/Language accessed on November 15th 2010.

⁴ Khan, Muhammad Zafrulla, *The Quran*, (London: Curzon Press, 1981) p. 518

From the Quran above, Allah SWT created people from male and female to be able to make people into nations and tribes so that people can know each other. The way that uses to know each other is using language. People can communicate with other, if they know the language that they used. To know that, people must learn that language. In order they can communicate with other in the world and know each other.

One of the languages in the world is English. English is the language that is spoken in the United Kingdom, the United State and in many countries: *American/British English*.⁵ Definition from Random House Webster's College Dictionary (Barbara Ann Kipfer, 2001: 408), English is the official language of the United Kingdom and an official, standard or auxiliary language in the United State and regions formerly under British or United State dominion, as Ireland, Canada, Australia and part of the Caribbean, Africa, South Asia and Oceania. English is one of languages that are used to communicate. Many countries use English as daily conversation. It can be called that English is an

⁵Anonymous, *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, (Singapore: Cambridge University Press, 2010) p. 465

International Language, because almost many countries use English to communicate with other.

English as an International language is spoken in the most international event and it is used as the medium of the flow of information on science, technology, and culture. Realizing the importance of language, Indonesian government considers English as the first foreign language and it is one of the compulsory subjects taught starting from the Elementary school until Senior High School level in Indonesia.

There are four skills in English. They are reading, writing, speaking and listening. These are often divided into two types, receptive skill and productive skill. Receptive skill is a term used for reading and listening, skills where meaning is extracted from the discourse. Productive skill is students actually have to produce language themselves. This skill is the term for speaking and writing, skills where students actually have to produce language themselves.⁶

Allah states in the glorious Al-Qur'an:

⁶ Harmer, Jeremy, *The Practice of English Language Teaching fourth Edition*, (England: Pearson Longman) p. 265

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ

وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ﴿٢٤﴾

Do you not see how Allah sets forth a probable? -
A goodly word like a goodly tree, whose roots are
firmly fixed and its branches (reach) to the
heavens. (Ibrahim :24)

In supporting the four skills, mastering language
needs to learn grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary,
because those skills help students to learn the four skills
easily.

Grammar is defined as the whole system and
structure in language or of languages in general, usually
taken as consisting of syntax and morphology. It is also
considered as a set of perspective notions about correct use
of a language (Concise Oxford Dictionary: 7th Edition).
Grammar has very complex material so teaching grammar is
generally felt boring and even confusing for learners because
it needs more analytical ability. Another opinion stating
about grammar is that grammar is notorious for its collection
system of boring and meaningless form. It may be said, the
way grammar is learnt will determine whether grammar is
something boring, complicated or meaningless.

Students often feel that learning English grammar is boring and difficult because the grammatical structure of Bahasa Indonesia is different from that of English. It is also obvious that when the students are learning grammar, they become passive, afraid of making mistakes and shy. Therefore, teacher need better technique in teaching grammar.

There are many kinds of Grammar; Degrees of Comparison is one of kinds in Grammar. Degrees of Comparison are often easy to introduce and fun for students to practice. Since students already understand the meaning of the vocabulary they are using in these lessons, it is much easier for them to grasp than other structures where new vocabulary is introduced. Including comparative or superlative forms in later activities will help keep them fresh in students' minds.⁷

In the process of learning degrees of comparison, it is the process for comparing thing, person or places through the level of quality, quantity or relation and it is formed from the adjective and adverb. Therefore, it is very important for the students to be able to express and understand the

⁷*ESL Cheat Sheets (GRAMMAR EDITION)*. Published by busyteacher.org. accessed on February 24th 2014

comparison between two people, things, places and more. They are positive, comparative, and superlative degree.

Based on the observation, that was done by the researcher that Circle the Sage technique has not applied yet at eighth grade students of SMP Islam Al-Kautsar Semarang. The technique will affect the students' achievement of English. It can be seen from the result of students' pre-test. There were 6 students who didn't pass the KKM. It is therefore necessary to find another technique to create a fun learning environment. So, writer used circle the sage technique to make students enjoy the learning process and help them to be able to understand the material, in this case, degrees of comparison.

Circle the Sage is one of cooperative learning structures developed by Dr. Spencer Kagan. This structure promotes all principles of cooperative learning which are positive interdependence, individual accountability, equal participation and simultaneous interaction. The technique is expected to help students to comprehend grammar better, specifically Degrees of Comparison. Students can explore their knowledge and get more chance to interact and share with other. Therefore, the learning process is more interesting and enjoyable.

When the students become more interested to the subject, the students could increase their grammar through the circle the sage technique which is used to convey the subject. After this phase has been passed, the teacher can transfer the material to the students easily and acceptably by them. Because English Grammar is very broad, writer focuses on one material i.e. degrees of comparison. Therefore, the researcher took the research about “The Effectiveness of Circle the Sage Technique to Teach Degrees of Comparison (An Experimental Research at Eighth Grade Students of SMP Islam Al-Kautsar Semarang in the Academic Year of 2013/2014)”

B. Reason for Choosing the Topic

I choose one of cooperative learning structures, in this case is Circle the Sage technique because:

1. This structure promotes positive aspects of cooperative learning that are positive interdependence, individual accountability, equal participation and simultaneous interaction which make the students can be more actively learning.
2. With more active learning, the student can get better comprehension in learning grammar.

3. Circle the Sage technique has not applied yet at eighth grade students of SMP Islam Al-Kautsar Semarang.
4. Circle the Sage technique is relatively applicable in any condition of the class.
5. Circle the Sage technique is relatively applicable in any topics of learning so it may give more benefits in teaching English in general.

I choose Degrees of Comparison as the focused point because the students needed to know about adjective and adverb and there were some common errors made by students in making Degrees of Comparison.

C. Question of Research

The study answered the following question: “is the using of Circle the Sage technique to teach Degrees of Comparison effective?”

D. Objectives of the Research

Based on the problem above, the aims of this study was to find whether the use of circle the sage technique to teach degrees of comparison is effective or not.

E. Pedagogical Significances

This study was important for four reasons to know the significance of the study. It can contribute some benefits as follows:

1. For the researcher

By doing this research, the researcher got some experiences and knowledge about her study and it was useful in the future.

2. For the students

This study helped the students made easier in understanding grammar, especially on degrees of comparison.

3. For the teacher

The result of this study could help the teachers to improve their methods in teaching learning process in the classroom.

4. For the school

This study could be a starting point to develop the teaching method which applies in the school.