CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Students at Junior high school are expected to learn daily expressions related to their lives when they are in class, interaction with others. In the standard of reading for SMP on the eighth grades, the students are expected to understand the meaning of functional text and short essay in descriptive, narrative, recount and should read aloud with acceptable pronunciation and intonation, response rhetorical ways accurately and fluently in the form of descriptive, narrative, report and recount text. Besides, the students must comprehend the text deeply.

Reading always becomes an important skill. This is the reason why reading must be mastered by the students in Junior High school. In National Standard for Examination, it is mentioned that the students must have some comprehension skills; (1) finding the information explicitly and implicitly; (2) finding main ideas; (3) finding meaning. However, in reading, the learners must organize the material into meaningful phrases and thought units (Harris, 1975). Reading has been the major medium not only for transmitting thought but also for building concepts, developing vocabulary, providing knowledge, giving pleasure, giving personal enrichment, growing in intellectual, aiding in understanding personal problems, improving one's self-concept and conveying the problems and ways of other people and culture.
(Petty, 1980). In other words, reader can communicate with the writer by using printed or written text in order to get information, ideas, pleasure, and develop vocabulary to understand the writer's message.

According to Harris, (1975) reading is difficult when the readers do not have sufficient vocabulary to understand the passage and short or long sentences in reading passage. He also stated that the difficulty in comprehending reading passage is the use of pronoun. It becomes more difficult when there were many words between pronoun and antecedent. Besides, the sentences printed materials tend to use much more formal style of English than students used in conversation practices (Harris, 1975). Nuttal (1985) also supported that, it is possible to have a pretty good idea of a writer's message without understanding the meaning of every sentence.

Based on the pre-observation in SMP N 2 Ajibarang, there were several problems found. Those were: (1) the students had inadequate vocabulary. (2) Problems in reading comprehension. The indications can be seen from the results of students' preliminary test. The average of students' score was 53.9. There were only 16.6% students who got score above 70 and the others or 83.3% failed in comprehending reading passage. The scores of students showed that the worst element of comprehending reading passage is lateral comprehension. It means that the students able to find information and ideas that are explicitly stated in the text Students still faced difficulties in finding information and ideas that were explicitly stated in the passage.
From the preliminary observation mentioned previously, there were two causes found, which were from the teacher and the students. First, the teacher still used traditional technique in which the students only had less time to read whereas reading passage is the complex activity. The teachers just read the passage and discussed with whole class until the students did not have time to share about the passage freely. The teacher seldom used varied technique to make the students become a better reader. Whereas, reading was a complex activity because it required more time to comprehend the passage deeply.

Second, the students did not comprehend the text well. They had insufficient vocabulary that made them difficult to comprehend the passage in lateral comprehension. It made them have low motivation in reading activity because the students had low capability in comprehending reading passage and the results of reading were not good. Besides, the students still had less confident if they read a text in front of their friends. They felt shy if they made mistake in reading the text. Sometimes their friends laughed at the mispronunciation of one of their classmates. This situation caused the lesson noisy because the students did not concentrate during a reading activity.

Based on the situation described previously, the use of group work was proposed as the solution to overcome those problems. Group work is a guidance that comes not only from the teachers but also from fellow-students to understand the text and discuss together on the chance of getting the best interpretation (Nuttal, 1982) Group work also tends to learn more what is
taught and retains it longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional formats. Students who work in collaborative groups also appear more satisfied with their classes (Davis, 1993). It means that group work makes the students possible to help each other because it is a technique where the students can work together to solve the problem. It could make the students motivated to exchange knowledge and information each other during reading activity. It gives much time to get the point of the passage and the students can express their analysis freely.

The group work was chosen because it is appropriate for students in Junior High School. Because its benefits for teaching learning atmosphere, firstly, group work will make the teacher interact with the students, and pose follow-up questions or ask questions that probe more deeply. Second, the teacher could get information from non-verbal responses, such as facial expressions or body language. Third a group work made students as the central in the classroom and minimal teacher’s involvement. It let students to expand their creativity freely. Besides, the limitation might be an attention to reduce teacher mistakes. Group discussions could be difficult to steer and control, which causes students talk for nothing or they talk about irrelevant topic. Sometimes students less confident and felt that they are being ignored or demeaned by their team, the students should get helps an attention from teacher to overcome their problems (Temkin, 1998).

The main objective of group works’ activities was the outcome. The entire group wanted the outcome to be good. However, the whole point of
Group work is for everyone in the group to work as a team to accomplish the outcome of the project. It was important for everyone to work together. From those facts explained in detailed group works will be used to overcome students’ problem, in which the researcher will focus on improving students’ ability in reading comprehension.

The last aim this study can be useful to the English teachers. This research provides the other technique that was proposed to teaching reading and the results of the research can be useful input in English teaching learning process especially for improving reading comprehension. Then, this research finding would enrich the students reading comprehension because they can think and collaborate with others using group work in understanding reading passage. Therefore, they could improve their capability in comprehending reading passage.

After the research is done, the writer hopes that the group work technique used in this research can improve student’s reading comprehension and support the student’s competence. The results of this study could inform the effectiveness of group work for teaching reading comprehension and become recommended technique in education curriculum of Indonesia.

1.2 Reason For Choosing The Topic

There were several reasons to choose the research entitled “Improving Students’ Reading Comprehension through Group work in Second Grade of SMP N 2 Ajibarang in Academic Year 2011/2012”, those were:
1. It could make the students motivated to exchange knowledge and information each other during reading activity. It gave much time to get the point of the passage and the students can express their analysis freely.

2. Group work could improve the students' capability in comprehending reading passage.

1.3 Problem Of Research

The problem of the research is:
“Will the use of Group work improve student’s reading comprehension at the second grade of SMP N 2 Ajibarang in Academic Year 2011/2012?”

1.4 Aim of Research

The aim of the research is:
To know whether or not group work can improve the student reading comprehension and to know what happened when group work is implemented at second grade of SMP N 2 Ajibarang in Academic year 2011/2012.