

I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with an introduction to this research. It consists of background of the research, identification of the problems, limitation of the problems, formulation of the research questions, objectives of the research, uses, scope and definition of terms that are used in this research.

1.1. Background of the Research

Morphology is one of the often-overlooked building blocks for reading fluency, reading comprehension, and spelling. Research is now demonstrating the importance of strong morphological teaching as early as first and second grade (Apel & Lauraence, 2011), where traditionally it has been the focus in middle and high school years. In addition, there is evidence that students learn orthography (phonics), phonology, and morphology in concert rather than in stages, when learning how to read and write. Students with strong morphological skills possess a distinct advantage over students who use a "whole word approach" to decode words (Kirby, 2011).

Morphological awareness refers to the learners' knowledge of morphemes and morphemic structure, allowing them to reflect and manipulate morphological structure of words (Carlisle, 1995; Carlisle & Stone, 2003). Morphological awareness is defined as the ability to use the knowledge of word formation rules and the pairings between sounds and meanings (Kuo & Anderson, 2006). This

statement strengthens the argument that morphological awareness is important for students. With morphological awareness, learners are able to learn morphemes and morphemic boundaries by disassembling complex words into meaningful parts (e.g. *childhoods* = *child* + *-hood* + *-s*), learning the meanings of roots, affixes (*child*= baby, *-hood*= the state of being, *-s*= to indicate plural nouns), and reassembling the meaningful parts into new meanings (*motherhood*, *fatherhood*, *brotherhood*).

There is increasing interest in morphological awareness as a crucial dimension of vocabulary knowledge, especially in reading. In the first place, morphemes have semantic, phonological and syntactic properties (e.g. *-s* in the verb *rides* indicates that the action does is only one person who does the action in the present time) (Singson, Mahony and Mann, 2000) that express the role of a given word in the reading context. For another thing, words are organized in the mental lexicon according to their phonological properties with morphological knowledge as a framework for storing words (Sandra, 1994).

In line with morphological awareness, another variable discusses in this research is reading. Reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning (reading comprehension). It is a means of language acquisition, of communication, and of sharing information and ideas. Like all language, it is a complex interaction between the text and the reader which is shaped by the reader's prior knowledge, experiences, attitude, and language community which is culturally and socially situated.

The reading process requires continuous practice, development, and refinement. In addition, reading requires creativity and critical analysis.

Consumers of literature make ventures with each piece, innately deviating from literal words to create images that make sense to them in the unfamiliar places the texts describe. There are no concrete laws in reading, but rather allows readers an escape to produce their own products introspectively. This promotes deep exploration of texts during interpretation (De Certeau, 1984).

Reading materials differ in content, style and purpose, and students adjust their reading style accordingly (reading sub-skills). The content areas typically included in this definition are science, social studies/history and math, but any area outside of English literature instruction constitutes a content area. On the other hands, the style of reading is the way that readers choose to be more understand the passage they are going to read or include also the strategies of it. The purpose of reading is to connect the ideas on the page to what you already know.

The relationship between morphological awareness and reading may be reciprocal or directional (Kuo and Anderson, 2006). In the case the relationship being reciprocal, both reading and morphological awareness can contribute to the development of one another. In directional term, morphological awareness leads to reading proficiency, but not the other way around. Previously, there were researcher conducted to find out wether morphological awareness and vocabulary is related, Badriya Al Farsi from The University of Queensland has found a correlation between both of them. In the same way with that previous research, this research is going to fine wether morphological awareness and reading comprehension in senior high school students is related or not. Another previous reseach comes from Lisa Kay Maag's dissertation from University of Florida. In

that dissertation mentioned the test for measuring morphology skill contained three sections, which were called; Subtest 1: Checklist, Subtest 2: Morphology Skill, and Subtest 3: Definitions. The items on the list ranged from fairly common words (*apparently, dependable, and expensive*) to words of low frequency (*impiety, indefatigable, and redacting*).

Based on the interview with the English teacher of SMAN 15 Bandar Lampung in pre observation activity, the teacher mentioned that generally students' reading comprehension is the one that takes big part of measuring students' language achievements in school, it is proven by a lot of reading tests used in each English examination both nationally or just daily exam. However, students who have a good reading skill, sometimes did not consciously learn about morphology. Sometimes they did not have a specific knowledge of morphemes and morphemic structure but still they might understand the text.

Students' morphological awareness may differ from other depending on their process of understanding it in language acquisition. It might be by the formal or informal learning. In the second grade of SMAN 15 Bandar Lampung, some students had high score in reading test but on the other hand another had low score. The teacher said that the low ones also have difficulties in determining root of words. Some words with prefixes and suffixes seem become list of difficult words for them. In addition, in every test which contain of reading passage, it takes time for them to read it. They find it hard to gain the details needed from the passages in their test.

Based on the statements above, the researcher is interested in investigating and observing the correlation between students' morphological awareness and

their reading comprehension. Beside of that it was a new thing to observe, this research also could be useful for teacher to find better way in making students easily understand the passages in their reading tests. In this study, the writer decides to design a problem to be researched with the title: The Relationship between Students' Morphological Awareness and Their Reading Comprehension.

1.2. Identification of the Problems

Based on the background above, the researcher would like to identify the problems as follow:

1. Students had low morphological awareness.
2. Students were hard to find root of words.
3. Students argued that words with prefixes and suffixes are difficult words.
4. Students found it was hard to pass their reading test.
5. Students did not understand the ideas conveyed in texts.

1.3. Limitation of the Problems

In line with identification of problems, the researcher limited the problems into, students':

1. Morphological awareness.
2. Reading comprehension.

1.4. Formulation of the Research Question

Based on the background, identification, and limitation of the problems above, the problem arise was:

Is there any relationship between students' morphological awareness and their reading comprehension?

1.5. Objectives of The Research

Formulated from the research question above, the objective of this reasearch was:

To find out the relationship between students' morphological awareness and their reading comprehension.

1.6. Uses of the Research

This finding of research is intended to, theoretically, support the previous theories and researchers related to morphological awareness. Furthermore, for the practical use, many ESL/EFL teachers and students get benefitted from what has been provided in this research. For the other researchers, this research can be used as a reference for similar matter.

1.7. Scope of the Research

The scope is focused on result of sample from 11th grade SMAN 15 Bandar Lampung (one sample class) students' score of reading and their score in three sections of morphological awareness test. The topic of reading will always based on students' interest in order to make a conducive process of reading it.

1.8. Definition of Terms

Morphology:

Morphology refers to the study of forms. Linguistics morphology refers to the study of words, their internal structure and the mental process that are involved in word formation (Arnoff and Fudgeman, 2005).

Morphological Awareness :

Morphological awareness is the recognition, understanding, and use of word parts that carry significance. For example, root words, prefixes, suffixes, and grammatical inflections (e.g., -s or -es for plurals) are all morphemes which can be added or taken away from a word to alter its meaning. Morphological awareness is defined as the ability to use the knowledge of word formation rules and the pairings between sounds and meanings (Kuo & Anderson, 2006).

Reading:

Nuttall (1989) defines reading as the meaningful interpretation of printed or written verbal symbols. It means that reading is a result of the interaction between the perception of graphic symbols that represent language and the reader's language skills, cognitive skills and the knowledge of the world. In this process the reader tries to recreate the meanings intended by the writer.

Reading Comprehension:

Reading comprehension refers to an active process to gain the meaning of current information by relating readers' background knowledge to the information provided on printed text.

That was the introduction of this research. It consisted of background of the research, identification of the problems, limitation of the problems, formulation of the research questions, objectives of the research, uses, scope and definition of terms that are used in this research. The next chapter will deal with literature review of this research.