

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of the Study

The use of textbook has been very dominant in the teaching learning process, especially in teaching and learning a foreign language. In Indonesia, textbook has always been a media used in most schools and most grades.

A textbook is designed under the guidance of National Curriculum Standards, one of the curriculum applied in Indonesia is the *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan* (KTSP). Based on the KTSP, there are four language skills presented in English language textbook. They are speaking, listening, writing and reading. Reading is the one highly associated to the textbook. In regards with reading skill, the standard competency based on the KTSP is the students are able to understand short functional texts and genre based texts. For VIII grade students the genres are descriptive, recount and narrative which means the reading texts in the English textbooks for the VIII grade students consist of those text types.

In Indonesia, there are many textbooks from different publishers which are designed based on the KTSP. It means there are textbooks which contain the same text types, but the topic and the difficulty can be different. Teachers should be able to select a textbook with suitable difficulty of the reading materials. Difficulty of a reading material can be determined by measuring the readability of the material.

Readability of a reading material can be measured by considering various factors, some of them are words difficulty and sentence length which have been

considered as the direct cause of difficulty in comprehension (Anderson & Davison, 1986, p. 3; Dubay, 2004, p. 1).

Appropriate readability of a reading material will motivate the students to enjoy reading the materials. In result it will be easier for the students to comprehend their reading materials and surely, it will help their learning process. In contrary, inappropriate reading materials will make the students bored and frustrated, furthermore if the students are forced to read a reading material which is too difficult for them, the students will not only fall behind in their education but will also have a miserable time (Flesch, 1949, p. 147). This statement is supported by Researcher's observation in SMPN 1 Hinai, where Researcher found the reading materials in the textbook used by IX grade students in SMPN 1 were too hard for the students and it resulted less enthusiasm by the students to read their textbook and difficulty to follow the learning process. From the statements, it can be said that readability plays a critical role in a learning process.

In accordance with that, many researchers from various places studied the readability of reading materials in various schools and found different results. Tobathei and Bagheri (2013, p. 1029) conducted a study to find out the readability of some reading passages in English textbooks taught at Iranian senior high schools and found out that the reading passages are too difficult for the readers. Another study by Browne (1996, p. 1), who conducted a study about Japanese EFL Reading Texts, He found out that the difficulty of the Japanese EFL Reading texts varied from low to high difficulty. Different with the study conducted in Indonesia by Rahmawaty (2012, p. 1) who studied the readability of reading texts in English

Textbooks used by the tenth grade students, it was found out that the reading texts are too easy for the students.

Those three studies indicate that not all reading materials are readable for the students, therefore, it is necessary to measure the readability of a reading material. In measuring the readability of a reading material, there are some readability tests available. The readability tests are readability formulas, cloze test, checklist, scales, and text levelling. The popular one is readability formula which measures the readability of a text by using the vocabulary difficulty and length of text as factors to measure. Readability formulas are objective in giving prediction of a text difficulty, while no other tests provide the same objectivity like the readability formulas do (Dubay, 2004, p. 3). Also, readability formulas are valid for a broad spectrum of English readers that includes non-native as well as native readers. In other words, they work quite well to predict the relative EFL/ESL difficulty of English academic texts (Greenfield, 2004, p. 11).

Therefore, this study focused on the use of readability formula to analyze the readability of the reading texts which are based on the genre of descriptive, recount, and narrative taken from the three English textbooks used by eighth grade students in Medan.

B. The Problem of the Study

Based on the background above, the problem of the study was formulated as follow:

- What are the readability of the English reading texts which consist of descriptive, recount and narrative texts in English textbooks for grade VIII

students in Medan in the academic year of 2015/2016 according to The Dale and Chall Original Formula?

C. The Objective of the Study

In relation with the problem of the study, the objective of this study was to describe out the readability of the English reading texts which consist of descriptive, recount and narrative texts in English textbooks for the grade VIII students in Medan in the academic year of 2015/2016 by using The Dale and Chall Original Formula.

D. The Scope of the Study

This research measured the readability of reading texts which consist of descriptive, recount and narrative texts from three English textbooks, *English for Junior High School VIII* published by Mediatama, *English on Sky 2* published by Erlangga, and *English in Focus* published by Pusat Perbukuan Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, for grade VIII in Medan which were designed under guidance of *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP)*. It is important to analyze the readability of the English reading texts used by the students. Suitable English reading texts for students' level can help them improve their reading comprehension.

E. The Significances of the Study

After conducting this research, the researcher expected that the result of the study will give these following benefits:

1. Theoretically, the result of the study would enrich and strengthen the knowledge of the theories on readability of English reading texts in the teaching of reading comprehension.

2. Practically

a. For Teachers

It could give a new perspective for the English teachers in using, selecting, adapting, or designing reading text materials that are suitable for the students' educational level.

b. For the Researchers of Textbooks

It could give them consideration on how to make good materials for reading that are appropriate for the target students.

c. For Other Researchers

It would inspire other researchers to conduct studies in similar fields.

