

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### A. The Background of the Study

English becomes an important subject at schools in Indonesia. Learning English in Indonesia is different from the other country since English is a foreign language in Indonesia. This condition affects the students' ability to learn and comprehend the language itself. English as a subject taught at school and college deal with the students' understanding and use of language (Guth 1973).

Teaching materials are essential things which influence a teaching process in a classroom. O'Neill (2003) emphasizes that teaching materials help a teaching and learning process; the teaching materials must be suitable for students' needs, even if they are not designed specifically for them, the teaching materials should make it possible for students to preview and prepare their lessons, and the teaching materials should allow for adaptation and improvisation.

Every school provides the teaching materials based on the curriculum. All materials should be related to the curriculum. The curriculum used in vocational school, especially in SMK Dharma Analitika Medan is School-Based Curriculum or "Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan" (KTSP). The curriculum have main concern on the improvement of the students' competency. This curriculum is based on the communicative competence at all situations and conditions.

The development of the curriculum is centered on the content standard "Standar Isi" and Graduates' Competence Standard "Standar Kompetensi

Lulusan” (SKL), and based on the curriculum development procedure which is provided by National Standard Educational Board (BNSP).

Based on BSNP (2006), English subject in vocational high schools has two purposes, they are: (1) mastering the basic knowledge and skill of English to support the expertise program; and (2) applying the mastery of the ability and skill in English to communicate both in spoken and written on intermediate level. Both of these purposes under the nature of vocational school that prepare the students to be ready to work with qualified expertise.

The goal of English subject in the vocational high school is to communicate by using intermediate level English. To reach the goal, students in vocational high school must pass the standard competencies provided in the curriculum. It aims to develop students abilities in communicating with English both spoken and written based on level novice, elementary and intermediate in real life communication. The students in vocational school can use English in communicating and comprehend the language, especially in reading skill that can also affects the others skill of learning English.

There are four skills in learning English. They are writing, reading, listening, and speaking. Its skill has different meaning but has the same purpose, which is increasing the creativity of language. They are needed by the students as the good skill in improving their knowledge in English, especially reading.

Reading is the construction of meaning. Readers interact with the text. Reading text may provide opportunities for students to study the target language better (Harmer 2003). Moreover if the students have existing or prior knowledge

about the reading text. Readers understand what they read only as it relates to what they already know. A reader's background knowledge can influence reading comprehension. It means that the appropriate topics or materials of reading will help students to comprehend the reading.

Reading is one of the important skills to be learned in learning English. But, most of the students do not like to learn reading text. Because they thought English is difficult, uninteresting and unnecessary in their daily life because the vocabularies of the texts are not relevant with their major. The English reading materials are too general for some students and not related to their life so they don't want to learn it. They thought that it is not beneficial for them.

The English textbook that used at every vocational school was totally similar with all major in vocational school. So, even the major was different the students still use the same English textbook. Most of reading materials at Vocational schools were not relevant to their major and did not support the expertise program. In line with the phenomena, Suprabawati (2009) and Widyantari (2009) in their studies found that students' course book which were used at school where the research was conducted, in terms of content validity, those course books and LKS presented less contextual and authentic activities and material or beyond the curriculum. The contents were not closely related to their major.

Meliawati (2014) and Nitiasih (2014) also found the same cases about reading materials in their studies. It was found that the English materials used to teach those students with different programs was exactly the same and those

materials dealt with general topics in English. The students did not learn English based on their needs and the materials did not support their English based on their expertise program.

It happened on the vocational school, especially for Health Analyst students at SMK Dharma Analitika Medan. They had different materials from the general school since their learning was related to the health. In fact, even they used the different textbook with the general school, vocational textbook but the materials of the textbook was quite same with general schools. It consisted of general materials specially for reading materials and different topics with their own major. The health analyst students learned reading materials about describing people, criminal, furniture, goods, jewelry, etc. There was gap between the materials with their major and prior knowledge.

Based on the researcher's observation at SMK Dharma Analitika Medan, the materials delivered and used in this school did not improve the students reading skill effectively and did not help the students much in the future work. In fact, students who took health analyst major were taught by using teaching materials that unrelated to the health analyst. Moreover, learners' difficulties in comprehending the English Reading Materials affected their achievement in English subject.

Teachers have to consider and provide the appropriate English reading materials based on the materials and the student's needs because every school and every major has different need in learning and provide material since the SMK Dharma Analitika Medan' students learn English for an academic purposes and

specific purposes which have different learning topics. They have to learn English which is related to their major, they have to use the materials which consist of the health topics as reading material. The materials should be related to the health since their major is health analyst not in general. So, they can learn effectively.

Based on the problems faced by the teachers and students in teaching and learning especially reading, the researcher would like to conduct a research by using Research and Development (R&D) to find the students' need and their problem in learning English, especially reading and develop new reading materials based on the students' needs to help them in comprehending the reading materials and improve their reading skill that benefit for them in the future work.

#### **B. The Problem of the Study**

Based on the background of the study, the problem was formulated as: "How to develop English Reading Materials which is suitable to the students' needs and major of SMK Dharma Analitika Medan?"

#### **C. The Objective of the Study**

The objective of the study was: "To develop appropriate English reading materials based on students' needs and major of SMK Dharma Analitika Medan".

#### **D. The Scope of the Study**

The scope of the study was developing English reading materials based on the students' needs and major of SMK Dharma Analitika Medan. It was applied in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade students of Health Analyst Major. And the skill concerned on the reading comprehension, especially in descriptive text.

### **E. The Significances of the Study**

Findings of this study were expected to provide beneficial information theoretically and practically for the students and English teachers.

Theoretically, the findings of the study became the source of reference for English teachers especially in vocational high school to develop the materials.

Meanwhile, practically, the findings of the study, which was the developed material, would be used by the English teachers to teach the students to enlarge the students' English competency and reading skill by using the appropriate materials which was suitable with their student's major and their prior knowledge.

