

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of the Study

English is a commonly used language among foreign language speakers. Many countries use English as their national language. People usually speak English when they want to interact with other people with different nationalities. English is used as a means of communication and it plays an important role in people's life, either in written or oral forms. Written forms include: textbooks, newspapers, articles (in newspapers, journalism, magazines), letters, notices, signs, etc., while, oral forms include: dialogue, news in the television or radio, conversation, speech, etc.

In Indonesia, English is the first foreign language that must be learnt as a compulsory subject from junior and senior high school, as an optional subject for university, and a local-content subject for elementary school. The students have to understand the language covering the four language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, different learners will have different priority in which one should be mastered the most. It also depends on the needs of the language learners.

Reading has become a very important skill for people in this modern era. It has been known that many books, articles, journals, and manuals are published in English. If someone wants to read books and articles without waiting for translated versions in their native language for a long time, they

have to be able to read them in English. It takes times to translate them and when they are translated, the knowledge will not be so new anymore.

In the teaching and learning process, both the teacher and the students need some mediums of instruction to facilitate them. One of the mediums of instruction which is used prominently in every level of students in the schools is a textbook. A textbook has an important role in facilitating students studying the language, especially in senior high school.

Michael W. Apple et al (1998) state that 75 percent of time in classroom is used with the text materials. Therefore, the materials that are mostly used in the classroom are textbooks. This becomes an important task for schools that they have to provide good textbooks as one of the English material sources.

A good English textbook is readable, understandable and comprehensible for students. The text is easy to be read and understood by the students so that it will encourage them to learn English. If they have difficulties in understanding the textbook, they usually get bored and it will make them frustrated in learning English.

Roger Bowers and Christopher Brumfit (1991) define that selecting textbooks carefully is important because textbooks have a dominant role in the success of foreign language teaching and learning. Textbooks are used as a guideline by teachers to meet students' need, especially in reading comprehension. Therefore, the effect of choosing unsuitable textbook can cause students' low achievement in reading comprehension because there is no unsuitability between the textbook and the students' reading level.

To support the selection of suitable textbook, teachers need to see if the texts in the textbook are readable and suitable with the students' reading level. Nutall (1982) states that there are three points of view in selecting text for reading material. They are readability, suitability of content, and exploitability. Thus, readability becomes one of the points that make the selection of reading materials is important. This also deals with the statement that in English language teaching and learning, teachers have a role as the ones who provide materials, not the ones who create them. Therefore, teachers have an important role in textbook selection.

Schulz (1982) states that there are three ways in measuring the readability level of the reading texts those are, by using the instructor's judgment, comprehension testing by cloze procedure, and the last by using statistical readability formulas based on some types of tally of linguistic elements. From this statement, it means that to evaluate readability of the material will be given to the students is let them to read the material, and question them about the author's message. The second technique is cloze readability procedure, which the teacher prepares a cloze passage taken from the material slated, then pupils fill in the deleted words. Another way is by using a readability formula involving use of average sentence length, vocabulary list, and syllable length to estimate reading difficulty level.

English textbook selection aims at choosing the appropriate textbook to be used by students according to their educational levels. One way to know whether an English textbook is appropriate for students is readability analysis. It is used to

analyze the readability level of texts in a textbook. Readability test, as the tool for analyzing, is needed to know whether English texts provided in English textbook is difficult, plain or easy for students. The English textbook which the tenth grade students use is *English Zone* published by Penerbit Erlangga.

This textbook is chosen because the students think that the reading texts in the textbook are difficult to understand, the researcher also asked the teacher about the text in that books whether they are readable for students or not. The teacher said that some of the students still get difficulty to understand the reading texts in the textbook.

In addition, based on the researcher's experience in teaching practice, the researcher found that there were many students who achieved the low score in reading. It was caused by their low understanding of the reading texts. From some classes, the researcher found that there were some students who understood the reading texts while others did not. Thus, students' low score caused by their low understanding of the reading texts.

Some problem about readability of reading text are recognized by the researcher from the reading text titled "Nyai Lara Kidul" in page 101 of the textbook. Students get difficulty to understand the text, because the reading text is difficult to understand, there are also unfamiliar words in the reading text, the length of the sentence is too long, and the use of grammar is quite difficult to understand. From this problem, the researcher would like to know the readability level of the reading texts of that textbook by using Flesch Reading Ease Formula and Cloze Test.

In relation to the students' understanding of texts, Parekeme and Abgor (2012) state that one of the factors determining students' understanding of a text is text readability. Thus, this becomes the reason that the researcher decides to conduct this study on analyzing the readability level of selected reading texts in the *English Zone* textbook for the tenth grade of senior high school students by Penerbit Erlangga to see their readability level. The researcher also chooses this textbook because this is claimed to allow students to practice the four-skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing in order to help them to develop their discourse competence.

Finally, this study is aimed at knowing the readability level of reading texts in *English Zone* textbook for the tenth grade of Senior High School students published by Penerbit Erlangga.

B. The Problem of the Study

Based on the background of the study, the research problem is formulated as follows: "*How is the readability level of reading texts in English Zone textbook for the tenth grade of Senior High School Students?*"

C. The Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to find out the readability level of the reading texts in *English Zone* textbook for tenth grade of senior high school students published *Penerbit Erlangga*.

D. The Scope of the Study

This study is conducted to describe the readability level of five reading texts that are taken from the English textbook entitled *English Zone*. The three texts are chosen randomly from 29 texts provided in the textbook. The description consists of analysis on words, sentences and syllables of the selected texts. The researcher is using Flesch Reading Ease Formula and Cloze Test to measure the readability of the textbook.

E. The Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to provide information which may have theoretical as well as practical values or significances.

1. Theoretical Significances

The result of the study later will add some new theories and information in selecting the appropriate English textbook.

2. Practical Significances

a. For Teachers

The finding of this study will be useful for English teachers in selecting English textbooks and knowing whether the reading texts in the textbook are readable and suitable for their students.

For the students, reading the readable text will help them in improving their reading skill

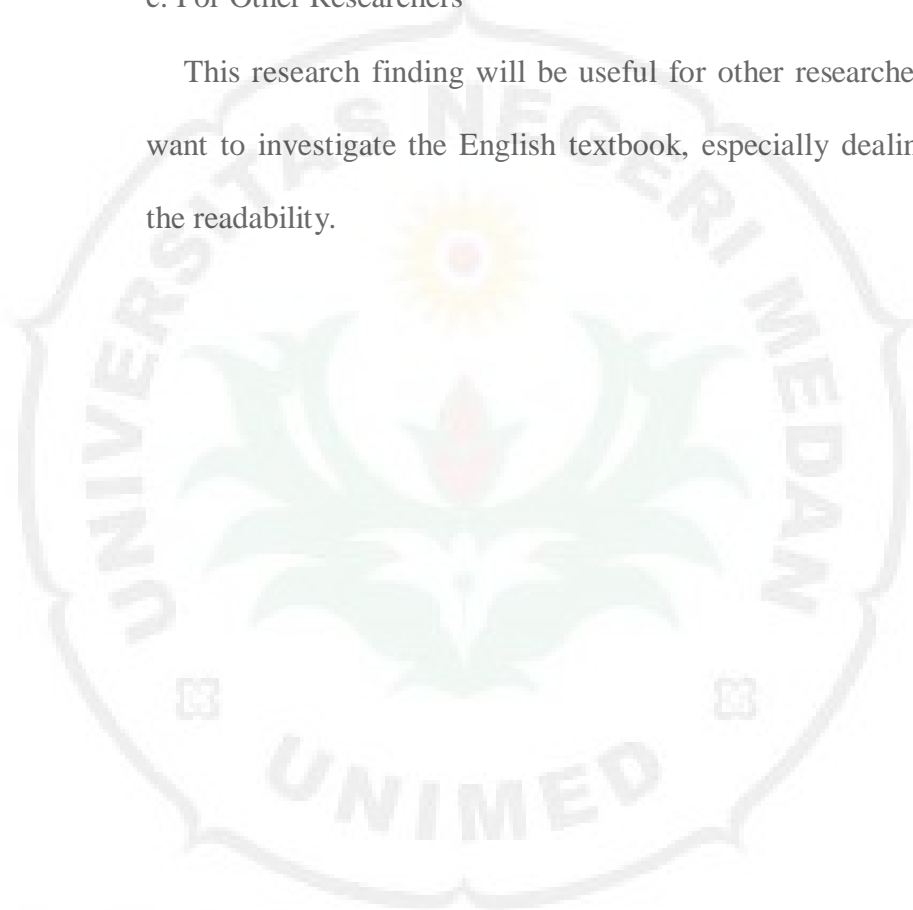
b. For the Researchers of Textbooks

The result of the study can give them consideration on how to

make good materials for reading that are appropriate for the target students.

c. For Other Researchers

This research finding will be useful for other researchers who want to investigate the English textbook, especially dealing with the readability.



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