

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of the Study

Reading is one of the important skills that students need to be mastered in English. By carrying out reading, students will discover new things which are very important in life because book is one of the great tools to improve their knowledge. Reading will also help students to enrich their vocabularies and help them to be familiar with English spelling. Reading can be seen as an “interactive” process between a reader and a text which leads to automaticity or (reading fluency). In this process, the reader interacts dynamically with the text as he/she tries to elicit the meaning (Alyousef, 2006: 63). Reading is a process very much determined by what the reader’s brain and emotions and beliefs bring to the reading: the knowledge/information (or misinformation, absence of information), strategies for processing text, moods, fears and joys—all of it (Weaver, 2009).

One of the key components in teaching English is the learning material. Learning material should be appropriate with the need and level of the students. Diniah (2013: 75) states that materials on textbooks should be authentic that the students can see that the textbooks are relevant to their real lives. Hutchinson and Waters (1986: 107) explain the good material as follows:

“Materials should (1) provide a stimulus to learning; (2) help to organize the teaching learning process; (3) embody a view of the nature of language and learning; (4) reflect the nature of learning task; (5) have a very useful function in broadening the basis of teacher training; and (6) provide models of correct and appropriate language use.”

Therefore, to help students to improve their reading ability, the textbook that is used in school should be appropriate with the background and the needs of the students. According to Kiato and Kitao (1997), students learn what is presented in the textbook, and the way the textbook presents material is the way students learn it. The educational philosophy of the textbook will influence the class and the learning process.

The textbook has an important role to the students' understanding. When reading, the students do not just read the text but they also have to understand the meaning of the text. So, the content of the textbook should be appropriate with the background and the needs of the students. Mohammad and Kumari (2007:2) state that textbook is a helpful learning recourse; it can be used as a limitation of the learning material. The limitation of the learning material will then help the teachers to find an appropriate material for the students.

Students work with textbook most of their time in learning process. Teachers also use the textbook most of the time as a guide in teaching learning process. Mohammad and Kumari (2007) also note that textbooks are the main source of knowledge in many subjects. These also explain more about the importance of textbook.

Having highlighted the importance of textbook, it is needed to emphasize that the textbook has to be readable. But, most of the textbook that is used in

school still do not match with the level of the students. The text in the textbook tends to be too difficult, not clear or too easy for the students. It makes them lost their motivation in learning and mastering reading because they think that English reading is not match with their ability. For example, most of the students find difficulty in reading the text in page 98 in Talk Active 2 English textbook. The title of the text is Emperor Penguin which consists of 7 paragraphs. The hardest paragraph in the text is the fourth paragraph, as follows:

“Emperor penguins spend the long winter on the open ice—and even breed during this harsh season. Females lay a single egg and then promptly leave it behind. They undertake an extended hunting trip that lasts some two months! Depending on the extent of the ice pack, females may need to travel some 50 miles (80 kilometers) just to reach the open ocean, where they will feed on fish, squid, and krill. At sea, emperor penguins can dive to 1,850 feet (565 meters)—deeper than any other bird—and stay under for more than 20 minutes.”

From the data above, the students find some difficult words such as *harsh* 'keras', *promptly* 'segera', *extended* 'luas' and *krill* 'udang krill'. They do not know the meaning of those words because they think those words are unfamiliar. DuBay (2004:2) states that educators discovered a way to use vocabulary difficulty and sentence length to predict the difficulty level of a text. Based on it, the difficulty in finding the meaning of some words in the text will affect the understanding of the text, and the difficulty in understanding a text will affect the reading ability of the students. So, the teacher needs to find a textbook which is suitable with the ability of the students.

Then, to find a match of the textbook and the need of the students, the writer use readability analysis. The readability studies are concerned with ensuring that a given piece of writing reaches and affects its audience in the way that the author intends (Zavanian & Heydari, 2012). The readability of a text relates to how easily human readers can process and understand a text as the writer of the text intended (Islam, Mehler & Rahman, 2012). Readability measures how match the textbook with the level of the students. Readability refers to the general difficulty level of written material which can affect readers' comprehension (Peng, 2015:37). Based on it, it is concluded that readability means matching the text with the readers which in this case, matching the textbook and the students. By using its formula, the stage of difficulties of the textbook will be known.

After knowing that selecting a textbook is important. The researcher tries to conduct a research about it. The writer does the research to the plus class of the eleventh grade students of SMA Swasta Al-Azhar (SMA Swasta Plus Al-Azhar) Medan. Then, the researcher chooses the eleventh grade because she thinks that this grade is the essential grade. The tenth grade students still need to learn more and the twelfth grade students will focus on their national examination.

B. The Problem of the Study

Based on the background of the study above, the problem is:

- How is the readability of English textbook that is used by the eleventh grade students of SMA Swasta Plus Al-Azhar Medan?

C. The Objective of the Study

In line with what has been stated in problem of the study, this study tries to analyze the readability level of reading texts in Talk Active 2 for Senior High School (Compulsory Program) that is written by Lanny Kurniawan and published in 2014 by Yudhistira.

D. The Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is analyzing the readability level of five reading texts that are taken from the English Textbook Talk Active 2 for Senior High School (Compulsory Program) using Dale-Chall readability formula and Cloze Test in the plus class of SMA Swasta Al-Azhar (SMA Swasta Plus Al-Azhar) Medan.

E. The Significance of the Study

After doing this research, hopefully, this research will give some significances theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the finding of this research can add new horizon in language learning especially reading and readability.

Practically, it will be useful for other researchers who want to investigate the English textbook, especially dealing with the readability. In addition, it

will help teachers to choose a proper textbook that is match with the level and the ability of the students especially in reading material. It will also help the students to be motivated in learning English especially reading because they can understand the meaning of the text in the textbook and it match with their ability.



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