

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

In English language teaching, it is crucial to ensure that the reading materials used in the learning process match students' comprehension levels. One aspect to consider is the readability level of the learning materials. Readability plays a vital role in ensuring that students can understand the material well without excessive difficulty. Readability, as an important aspect of communication, has been a primary focus in various contexts, ranging from academic writing to web design. This term, often interpreted as one's ability to easily understand and interpret written texts, describes the complex relationship between language structure and communication effectiveness.

Stone (2019) says one key factor affecting readability is clarity and simplicity in message delivery. Clarity means the message has clear purpose (ensuring that the audience understands the main point or idea being conveyed), concise and direct (Focus on the key information that needs to be communicated), and structured format (Organizing the message in a logical and structured format, such as using headings, bullet points, or numbered lists to make it easier for the audience to follow). While simplicity means the message has plain language (Using simple and straightforward language that is easy for the audience to comprehend), Visual Aids (Incorporate visual aids like charts, graphs, or diagrams to help simplify complex information and make it more understandable),

and the last is engage emotionally (Connect with the audience on an emotional level, using relatable examples or stories that resonate with them and make the message more memorable).

However, it is important to remember that readability is not just about using simple words. Sentence structure, paragraph length, and overall organization also play crucial roles in ensuring the text is easily understood. The use of subtitles, bullet points, and graphics can help guide readers through complex information more efficiently. According to Flesch (1975), words with fewer syllables are easier to read and comprehend than longer, more complex words. Additionally, national textbooks play a crucial role in the formal education systems of many countries. By being the primary source of knowledge and learning in schools, the readability of national textbooks plays a crucial role in facilitating student understanding and development. Adindra (2016) states that considering linguistic aspects to match students' abilities is essential for quality textbooks. However, challenges arise when these books do not adhere to good readability principles. Some books may be too dense with text, use language that is difficult to understand, or lack engaging illustrations. This can make the learning process more difficult and less engaging for students. It's important to be aware that the audience for national textbooks includes students with varying levels of reading and comprehension abilities. Therefore, book design should take this diversity into account by using clear and easily understandable language and providing visual aids to aid concept comprehension. Additionally, the readability of national textbooks is also related to inclusive education sustainability. Well-designed

books can help students with learning difficulties, including those with disabilities, to remain engaged in the learning process.

Based on the preliminary observation at SMAN 1 MEDAN from October to December 2023 in grade 10, researcher found that some students encountered difficulties in understanding the text content in the textbooks through the conversation with the teacher:

Researcher :*Saya ingin mendiskusikan tentang siswa kelas 10 yang kesulitan memahami teks bacaan bahasa Inggris. Apa yang Ibu perhatikan tentang mereka?*

(I want to discuss about 10th grade students who have difficulty understanding English reading texts. What do you notice about them?)

Teacher :*Ya, saya perhatikan bahwa secara umum siswa kelas 10 memang kesulitan untuk memahami teks bacaan bahasa Inggris. Tingkat kesulitan yang mereka hadapi sekarang jauh lebih tinggi dibandingkan saat mereka masih di SMP. Di SMP, teks bacaan yang digunakan cenderung lebih sederhana, baik dari segi kosakata maupun struktur kalimat. Topiknya juga lebih umum dan familiar bagi siswa. Namun, di SMA, terutama kelas 10, teks bacaan mulai lebih kompleks, dengan kosakata yang lebih sulit dan topik yang lebih abstrak atau akademis.*

(Yes, I noticed that in general class 10 students do have difficulty understanding English reading texts. The level of difficulty they face now is much higher than when they were in middle school. In junior high school, the reading texts used tend to be simpler, both in terms of understanding and sentence structure. The topics are also more general and familiar to students. However, in high school, especially grade 10, reading texts start to become more complex, with more difficult comprehension and more abstract or academic topics.

Researcher :*Bagaimana dengan peran buku teks? membantu atau mungkin malah menambah kesulitan siswa?*

(How is the role of textbooks? Is it helping or perhaps even increasing students' difficulties?)

Teacher :*Buku teks di SMA memang lebih menantang. Buku teks untuk kelas 10 dirancang untuk memperluas pengetahuan dan keterampilan bahasa Inggris siswa, sehingga mencakup kosakata yang lebih kaya dan berbagai jenis teks yang lebih kompleks. Ini sering kali membuat siswa merasa kewalahan jika mereka tidak memiliki dasar yang kuat dari SMP. Siswa juga sering mengeluhkan jika*

kata dalam satu kalimat yang ada sangat banyak, terlalu berbelit sehingga siswa hanya membaca begitu saja tanpa mengerti maksud dari teks yang disampaikan, ini juga membuat motivasi belajar mereka menurun karena tingkat kesulitan yang bagi mereka sudah semakin tinggi sehingga mereka dengan mudah menyerah dan malas belajar.

(Textbooks in high school are more challenging. Textbooks for grade 10 are designed to expand students' English knowledge and skills, covering richer understanding and a more complex range of text types. This often makes students feel tense if they do not have a solid foundation from middle school. Students also often complain if there are too many words in one sentence, too complicated so students just read without understanding the meaning of the text being conveyed, this also makes their learning motivation decrease because the level of difficulty for them is getting higher so they easily give up and lazy to learn.)

Researcher : *Jadi dapat disimpulkan jika masih banyak siswa kelas 10 yang sukar dalam memahami teks bacaan yang ada pada buku teks ya bu?*

(So it can be concluded that there are still many grade 10 students who have difficulty understanding the reading texts in textbooks, ma'am?)

Teacher : *Ya begitulah, ibu juga jadi kewalahan dalam mengatur waktu pembelajaran karena hal ini jelas menjadi kendala serius dalam proses pembelajaran.*

(Yes, that is it, i also overwhelmed to organize learning time because this is clearly a serious obstacle in the learning process.)

According to the transcript interview above it can be concluded that some students encountered difficulties in comprehending the reading material from textbooks leading to both students and teachers having a hard time in the learning process. Most of the students said they encountered many difficult words that were never encountered in everyday life, and the sentences used were very long so that it took them a lot of time to understand the meaning conveyed. Students who should have had an easier time understanding and summarizing the material instead became confused, gave up easily, and became passive in learning activities, while teachers who should have been aided in the material delivery

process instead continued to be information providers and more frequently repeated information from related materials, disrupting the effectiveness of learning time. This issue should receive significant attention because according to Detikedu data (2023), SMAN 1 MEDAN ranks 10th among the Best High Schools in North Sumatra Based on UTBK Scores. If the 10th best high school in the province still has issues with readability in textbooks, it can be assumed that other high schools below this ranking have similar problems.

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia's Regulation Number 24 of 2016 on Core Competencies and Basic Competencies for the 2013 Curriculum in Elementary and High School Education, appendices 37 (Junior High School) and 47 (Senior High School), English is taught through reading texts. Consequently, reading texts are fundamental to learning English. Given the significant emphasis on reading, it is essential to provide reading materials that are appropriate for students' reading levels. This means that the difficulty of the texts should align with the students' reading abilities. In 2022, the Indonesian government issued Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 2 of 2022, which sets the Standard of Readability for English Language Books in Indonesia. This regulation has several main points, namely: (1) Alignment with Learning: English language books must be aligned with the curriculum and learning practices applicable in Indonesia; (2) Suitability for Readers: The books must be suitable for the English language proficiency level of the intended readers, ranging from basic to advanced levels; (3) Relevant Content: The books should include content that is relevant to the readers' needs

and interests and align with the Indonesian cultural context; (4) Additionally, the books must take into account readability and the development of English language skills, encompassing listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities; (5) Diversity : The books must reflect the cultural diversity and experiences of readers in Indonesia.

This regulation aims to ensure that English language books used in education in Indonesia not only meet international quality standards but also align with local needs and contexts. However, the fact remains that students still struggle to understand the text. Pearson (2012) state not understanding the text can have various negative impacts on students, including: (1) Low Academic Understanding: Inability to understand the text can hinder students' ability to grasp academic concepts presented in the text, which can affect their academic performance; (2) Lack of Participation: Students who do not understand the text may feel less confident to participate in classroom discussions or activities involving text comprehension.; (3) Frustration and Anxiety: Inability to understand the text can lead to feelings of frustration and anxiety among students (4) Lack of Academic Progress: Inconsistent understanding of the text can impede students' academic progress, as text comprehension often forms the basis for learning in various subjects; (5) Low Learning Motivation: Students who frequently experience difficulty in understanding the text may experience a decrease in learning motivation and interest in reading-related subjects; (6) Risk of Negative Behavior: Consistent inability to understand the text can increase the risk of negative behavior.

Readability indicates how easy or difficult a text is for readers to read and understand. Dubay (2007) suggests that providing reading texts with a readability level that matches students' reading abilities makes it easier for them to comprehend the content. Conversely, giving students texts that are either below or above their reading level can hinder their reading development. Consequently, students who lack adequate reading preparation at one educational level may struggle as readers at the next level. For instance, students inadequately prepared in Elementary School might become poor readers in Junior High School, and those unprepared in Junior High School might struggle in Senior High School. This issue arises from providing texts with inappropriate readability levels. Therefore, the writer is interested in researching the readability of reading texts in English subject textbooks.

According to the 2013 curriculum, texts for Junior High School students are relatively simple, often consisting of only a few sentences. In contrast, texts for Senior High School students are more complex and presented in complete stories rather than in short fragments. As a result, the writer has chosen to analyze the readability of texts in an English textbook for tenth-grade Senior High School students. The selected book, published by the Ministry of Education and Culture, serves as a reference for teachers in English instruction. This choice is driven by the limited number of studies focusing on textbooks published by the Ministry of Education and Culture, as most research involves textbooks from private publishers. This further motivates the writer to analyze the readability of the texts in this particular textbook.

This study intends to analyze the readability level of the 2022 edition of the English language textbook for grade X, titled "Work in Progress," published by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia. The researcher selected this textbook because it is the most recent edition released by the government and is widely used in schools. The investigation was conducted with grade X students at SMA Negeri 1 Medan, employing Flesch's Reading Ease (FRE) formula. Given that students at this level are developing more complex reading skills, it is crucial to evaluate how well their textbooks balance challenge and readability. The hope is that the findings of this research contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of English language learning at the secondary school level.

1.2 The Identifications of The Problem

From the background presented above, the identified problems are as follows:

1. Textbooks serve as the primary learning resource in schools, playing a crucial role in conveying lesson information through reading texts. If these texts are written with sentences that are difficult to understand, overly lengthy, and complicated, it can cause students to spend excessive time trying to comprehend them. Consequently, textbooks could become the main source of problems in the learning process.
2. The reading texts' readability level in the textbook does not align with the majority of students' reading abilities, leading to difficulties in understanding the content for students.

1.3 The Problems of The Study

After reviewing the above description, the problems that the researcher attempts to outline are as follows:

1. What are the readability level of reading texts in “ *Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress* ” English textbook on grade 10 at SMAN 1 Medan?
2. How are the readability level of reading texts in “ *Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress* ” English textbook on grade 10 at SMAN 1 Medan realized as the way they are?

1.4 The Objectives of the Study

From the problems showed above, the objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the readability level of reading texts in “ *Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress* ” English textbook on grade 10 at SMAN 1 Medan.
2. To find out how are the readability level of the reading texts realized in “ *Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress* ” English textbook on grade 10 at SMAN 1 Medan.

1.5 The Scopes of the Study

The scope of the study is to determine the readability level of the reading texts in the 2022 edition of the English language textbook titled "Work in Progress," published by the Ministry of Education and Culture. To achieve this goal, the researcher focus solely on analyzing the readability level of all 15 reading texts in the selected textbook. The Flesch Reading Ease formula employed for this analysis.

1.6 The Significances of the Study

This research aims to be beneficial and make a significant contribution to all aspects of English language education. There are several objectives that this research hopes to achieve:

1. Theoretically

The researcher hopes that the results of this study expected to enhance and reinforce the understanding of theories related to the readability of English reading texts in teaching reading comprehension.

2. Practically

The practically of this study can be described as follows:

- a. For the English teachers

The researcher hopes this study will provide English teachers with a new perspective on using, selecting, adapting, or designing reading text materials that are appropriate for the students' educational level.

- b. For Students

The researcher hopes this study will motivate and encourage students to read more frequently to enhance their reading skills.

- c. For other Researchers

The researcher hopes this study will inspire other researchers to conduct studies in similiar field.