

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. The Background of the Study

In modern education, assessment has evolved from merely a tool for measuring learning outcomes to an integral part of the learning process itself. Assessment is used to obtain information about what students have understood, how they learn, and what strategies teacher can use to improve the effectiveness of learning (Cheng & Fox, 2017). Moreover, amidst the demands of the *Merdeka* Curriculum, which emphasizes differentiated learning, teacher need to have the ability to accurately identify students' learning needs from the outset. Without meaningful assessment, the learning process will tend to be generalized and less responsive to differences in student abilities. In the context of English language learning, assessment is particularly important because learning involves macro skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as micro aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). Therefore, the appropriate use of assessment enables teacher to make data-driven instructional decisions and design learning that is tailored to students' needs.

One form of assessment that is strongly emphasized in the *Merdeka* Curriculum is diagnostic assessment. This assessment is conducted before teaching and learning activities begin to identify students' readiness to learn,

weaknesses, strengths, and individual needs (Stiggins, et al., 2011). In English language learning, diagnostic assessment plays an important role in mapping students' initial abilities, both in receptive skills such as reading and listening, as well as productive skills such as speaking and writing (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). The *Merdeka* Curriculum requires differentiated and student-centered learning, which can only be implemented if teacher has accurate initial data about the conditions of their students. Therefore, diagnostic assessment is not just an administrative formality, but a crucial step in developing inclusive and adaptive learning strategies (Cheng & Fox, 2017).

Initial observations conducted by the researcher in Grade 8 at SMP Swasta Imelda Medan indicate that the assessment practices used by the English teacher are still limited. Based on preliminary interview data.

**Table 1. 1 Preliminary Data**

| No | Teacher's Statement                                                                    | Indication                                                                                      |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | <i>"Diagnostik pre-test kan?"</i>                                                      | Teachers equate diagnostic assessments with pre-tests.                                          |
| 2  | <i>"Biasanya make pre-test yang biasa nya aja... sebelum masuk materi baru"</i>        | Diagnostic assessments are only conducted at the beginning of the lesson without any variation. |
| 3  | <i>"Kalau yang saya tau ya, diagnostic buat diagnosa... sebelum kita masuk materi"</i> | Teachers' understanding is still general and not specific.                                      |
| 4  | <i>"Tes tulis si biasanya"</i>                                                         | Assessment uses only written tests.                                                             |

Based on the preliminary data obtained through an initial interview with the English teacher at SMP Swasta Imelda Medan, it was found that the teacher's understanding of diagnostic assessment is still limited. This is reflected in the teacher's statement, "*Diagnostik pre-test kan?*", which indicates that the teacher tends to equate diagnostic assessment solely with pre-test activities.

Furthermore, the teacher explained that the assessment is usually conducted in the form of a simple pre-test before starting a new lesson, as stated in "*Biasanya make pre-test yang biasa nya aja... sebelum masuk materi baru*". This shows that diagnostic assessment is only used as an initial activity without further variation or deeper purpose.

In addition, the teacher stated that diagnostic assessment is generally understood only to identify students' general ability before learning begins, as reflected in the statement, "*Kalau yang saya tau ya, diagnostic buat diagnosa... sebelum kita masuk materi*". This indicates that the teacher's understanding is still general and has not yet reached a more specific and comprehensive level. The assessment method used is mostly limited to written tests, as stated in "*Tes tulis si biasanya*". This suggests that the implementation of diagnostic assessment is still limited in terms of technique and has not yet covered various aspects of language skills.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that there is a gap between the theoretical concept of diagnostic assessment and its implementation in

the classroom. Therefore, this study is important to investigate the types of diagnostic assessment used by the teacher and how they are implemented in English language teaching.

The findings above indicate a significant gap between the theoretical concept of diagnostic assessment and its actual implementation in the classroom. Therefore, it is important to further investigate how diagnostic assessment is understood and applied by teachers in real classroom settings. This study focuses on identifying the types of diagnostic assessment used and describing how they are implemented in English language teaching. Based on this purpose, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled: “Diagnostic Assessment Used in Teaching English to Grade 8 Students of SMP Swasta Imelda Medan.”

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

Based on the above background, the research problems in this study are as follows.

1. What are the types of diagnostic assessments used in teaching recount text writing to grade 8 students of SMP Swasta Imelda Medan?
2. How is the implementation of diagnostic assessment in teaching recount text writing to grade 8 students by the English teacher at SMP Swasta Imelda Medan?

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

Based on the above background, the objectives of this study are as follows.

1. To identify the types of diagnostic assessments used in teaching recount text writing to grade 8 students of SMP Swasta Imelda Medan.
2. To investigate the implementation of diagnostic assessment in teaching recount text writing to grade 8 students by the English teacher at SMP Swasta Imelda Medan.

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

This study focuses on the use of diagnostic assessment in teaching recount text writing to the grade 8 students at SMP Swasta Imelda Medan. The study specifically investigates the types of diagnostic assessments used by the English teacher and the implementation of diagnostic assessment in the teaching and learning process of recount text writing.

The implementation observed in this study includes how the teacher identifies students' difficulties, assesses students' initial abilities, and uses the assessment results to support the teaching of recount text writing in the classroom.

This study is limited to the teaching of writing skills, particularly recount text material. Therefore, other English language skills such as listening, speaking, and reading are not discussed in this study.

Furthermore, this study is conducted only with one English teacher and one class at SMP Swasta Imelda Medan. Thus, the findings of this study are not intended to be generalized broadly, but are expected to provide a contextual understanding of diagnostic assessment practices in teaching recount text writing.

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

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions.

##### **1. Theoretically**

Theoretically, this study purposes to enrich the literature in the field of English language learning evaluation and assessment, particularly in relation to diagnostic assessment. This study is also expected to increase understanding of the types of diagnostic assessments used in classroom practice, as well as how these assessments are implemented in practice by teacher in the context of English language learning. The findings of this study can be used as a reference in the development of classroom-based assessment theory, which is not only summative or formative in nature, but also oriented towards mapping students' individual learning needs.

This research also contributes to the understanding of how diagnostic assessments can be used as a basis for designing differentiated learning, in line with the principles of the *Merdeka* Curriculum. Thus, the results of this study reinforce the importance of assessment as an initial component that determines the direction and strategy of targeted teaching.

2. Practically

- a. For English teacher, this research provides an understanding of how to design and implement diagnostic assessments effectively in the classroom. Teacher can gain inspiration and guidance in integrating diagnostic assessments into their daily teaching practices, not merely as an administrative formality, but as a reflective tool for improving the quality of teaching.
- b. For future researchers, the results of this study can open further exploration, both in contexts that are similar to such as and at different levels of education, with a focus on strengthening assessment as part of a continuous learning cycle.