

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. The Background of the Study

Reading is a vital medium of communication. It plays an important role in developing students' English mastery. In our society, as knowledge rapidly accumulates and is committed to print, greater demands are continually being made on the ability of people to read (Anderson, Berry and Millicent 2006:3). In addition, Alyousef (2006:64) also states that 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 she/he tries to elicit the meaning and where various kinds of knowledge are being used.

Reading is used by the readers to obtain information, the ideas would be conveyed by the author through the written language. Budiantari et al (2013:4) state that reading can be said as a skill that plays a very important role on teaching learning activity. By reading people will be able to get many kinds of information. We can get many information or knowledge from magazine, newspaper, and book. Hermida (2009:23) states that reading an academic text does not simply involve finding information on the text itself. Rather, it is a process of working with the text. When

reading an academic text, the reader recreates the meaning of the text, together with the author.

In teaching English, a textbook takes an important role in facilitating teaching learning activities especially in improving the reading skill. Rahmawati and Lestari (2012:1) state that textbook is a kind of teaching and learning media that most commonly used in every teaching and learning process although many innovated media have been developed to help the educators to teach in new ways. Selecting a textbook with good quality content can help the students to improve their learning outcomes. Textbooks are generally sensitive to the students' needs, it should be well-designed and well-written so it can be used effectively in the teaching learning process. A good English textbook is readable, understandable and comprehensible for students. They are easy to read and understand. It will motivate them to learn English. If they face difficulty in understanding the textbook, they usually get bored and it will make them frustrated in learning English. Furthermore, Davison (1986:5) also states his opinion as follows:

“A text that is too difficult wastes the efforts of the students without giving them any information or arousing their interest. The same is true of a textbook which is too easy, offering no incentive to learn something new and depriving the subject matter of interest. Furthermore, a textbook which is too easy or too difficult can not offer its student readers enough opportunity to learn vocabulary and complex constructions or more about the conventions of written language.”

Most of students complain about the choice of textbook because the texts in the book are difficult to read and to understand. It is because the content and the grammar are difficult and presents the unfamiliar ideas to the students. Peng

(2015:37) states that though many factors can lead students to not read the textbook, one of the endogenous variables that instructors can control is the readability of the textbook. Furthermore, Dubay (2004:3) states that readability is what makes some texts easier to read than others. It is often confused with legibility, which concerns typeface and layout. All the stated reasons give strong argument why the high quality of textbook is really important to the students because it plays very crucial parts in teaching and learning processes.

Based on the preliminary observation of the English teacher of SMK Negeri 1 Binjai the existence of those unfamiliar words and grammar makes students difficult in translating and understanding the words. The failure of students to grasp the meaning of some vocabularies listed in a text will then cause to students' failure to understand and comprehend the real meaning of a text. If that happens, students will find it hard to improve their reading comprehension ability due to the appearance of the low frequency words which they do not understand.

From seven reading texts provided in the textbook, the students admitted that a text entitled B.J. HABIBIE has the most difficult words, especially in the sixth paragraph written as follows:

In 1974, Suharto requested Habibie to return to Indonesia as part of Suharto's drive to develop the country. Habibie initially served as a special assistant to Ibnu Sutowo, the CEO of the state oil company Pertamina. Two years later, in 1976, Habibi was made Chief Executive Officer of the new state-owned enterprise Industri Pesawat Terbang Nusantara (IPTN). In 1978, he was appointed as Minister of Research and Technology. Habibie was elected vice president in March 1998. On 21 May 1998, Suharto publicly announced his resignation and Habibie was immediately sworn in as president. Habibie's government stabilized the economy in the face of the Asian financial crisis and the chaos of the last few months of Suharto's presidency.

From the paragraph above, the students noticed some difficult words in the paragraph such as *initially* 'awalnya', *enterprise* 'perusahaan', *elected* 'dipilih', *resignation* 'pengunduran diri', *sworn* 'bersumpah', *chaos* 'kekacauan'. They explained that they find the words very seldom and even never heard the words in the daily conversation. The unfamiliar words make students difficult in translating and in understanding the words. The students cannot grasp the meaning of some vocabularies and the grammar listed in a text can make the students fail to understand and comprehend the real meaning of a text. That is the reason why it is hard for the students to improve their reading comprehension ability due to the appearance of the low frequency words which they do not understand.

Ren (2010:232) indicates that it is necessary to make an effective investigation of genre in order to get a better understanding of its realization form the text. He, furthermore, points out that the mastery of a particular genre could improve a student's capability to get a thorough comprehension of a text realizing that genre or to compose a good passage.

For that reason, it is basically important to introduce students to the genre of texts in order to ease them to grasp the ideas of a text. There are about 13 genres of text which are generally taught in academic field, specifically in Vocational High School. They are basically differed by the purposes and the rhetorical structure of each genre.

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

Based on the reasons mentioned above the problem of the study is formulated as follow: “How is the readability of the reading texts used by the tenth grade students of SMK Negeri 1 Binjai?”

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

Related to the problem of the study mentioned above, the objective of this study is to analyze the readability of reading texts used by the tenth grade students of SMK Negeri 1 Binjai.

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

In this research, the researcher focuses on the reading texts in the English textbook entitled **Bahasa Inggris** published by Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan in 2014. The textbook consists of seven reading texts which is used by the tenth grade students of SMK Negeri 1 Binjai by applying Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level and Cloze Procedure to measure the readability in the chosen textbook.

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

The result of this research is expected to give benefits theoretically and practically, as follows:

1. Theoretically, this study will extend and enrich the theories of readability as a tool to measure the quality of reading texts in a textbook.
2. Practically, this study will contribute to the English teachers to be more aware in selecting English textbook. This study will be useful as references to the other researchers who want to investigate the English textbook, especially dealing with the readability. This research is also hopefully will contribute to the authors in evaluating their textbook.