

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Background of the Study

Reading is an essential part to success in school and lifelong learning. It is crucial because students need to read to improve their vocabulary and communication skills. It clearly shows that reading understanding is needed by students to get success in academic. It is an important skill for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> global century.

The ability to comprehend ideas and information effectively expressed by others in writing depends on good reading skills. The level of language used in teaching and in textbooks play a major role in the academic success of learners. Reading is a process of transfer knowledge from text (the author) to the reader. In order to convey the message from the writer to be understood by the reader.

Reading as an important part in getting successful in academic is difficult for students. It can be seen from the *Daftar Kumpulan Nilai* (SMA Negeri 1 Medan: 2015) the students' scores of reading are still low, the average of their score is 60, meanwhile the standard minimum of reading is 75. It is clear that students' reading is low, and the curriculum expectation is not achieved yet. There are many factors which cause students' reading ability is low, such as the textbook which is difficult to be understood, low readability of textbook, inappropriate teaching methods and students' interest, etc.

Since reading is crucial to academic success, textbook is also a crucial teaching and learning material composed of text and/or images that is used in many schools for facilitating sequences of learning activities. Therefore, the role

of textbook is dominant in the teaching and learning process because it is developed on the curriculum, so it can be useful as a guideline either for the teachers or the students. So, textbooks should be readable to learners to make the teachers' intent transmittable to the intended learners.

Textbooks have many texts that should be read and learned by students. Every text has different length of sentences and words. The sentences length, the words length, unfamiliar words and grammatical complexity (intricacy) make the text is difficult to understand. According to Nababan (2003: 72), the average sentence length is 14 belong to the category of quite easy. Grammatical complexity in the text can lead the students have difficulty in understanding the text. Textbook discourse with a high level of legibility will support the achievement of education quality. The texts are difficult to read means it has low readability levels, those that are easy to read have high readability levels. As Sakri (1993: 135) defines that a text which has a high readability level is easy to understood, and on the contrary, text in a low readability level is difficult to be understood.

In addition, Chavkin (1997) identifies that the most strongly associated factors to readability are word difficulty and sentence length. One factor which makes reading material unreadable is the complexity of language. In a way of difficulties in reading, automatically, the students will hard to find the main ideas and answer some questions from the text.

The low readability of the English reading textbook, such as grammatical complexity and the length of sentences or words which cause low text readability can be seen from the example below.

- 1) What do the findings at Durrington Walls have to do with Stonehenge?  
Parker Pearson believes there is a connection between the two places

and he cites his recent studies of the Malagasy cultures in Madagascar. (Taken from Reading Text 4 entitled “*The Secrets of Stonehenge*”, Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2014)

- 2) This is called a park, but unlike any park that you have seen in your city, this is a jungle! It is a real jungle, which is home to the most incredible animals in the world: orang utans and proboscis monkeys! The male proboscis monkeys are interesting because they have enormous snout. (Taken from Reading Text 2 entitled “*Visiting Ecotourism Destination*”, Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2014)

From the example (1), it can be seen that the sentences are too long, it makes the students difficult to understand easily. From the example (2), it can be seen that the sentences are too complex, it causes difficult for many students to understand easily what the intention of the sentence is. Actually the sentences can be separated by cutting clause per clause to make the readers understand.

The other factor is the inappropriate text to students’ level. It cause students cannot read a text because it does not reach students’ grade or level. The text in a textbook is not suitable for their grade and it is complicated for them. As a result, they do not understand what the content of the text is and they will be difficult to answer some questions of the text.

The text must be suitable for the students, as Flesch (1948) stated in his readability score, the suitable level for Senior High School’s students depends on the text. If in the score the text show that it is suitable for students’ grade or level, it means that they can learn and understand it easily. Therefore, the authors of textbook must be concern to the text that they write, to make it suitable for the students’ grade or level.

It is clear that the textbook must have high readability to get success in academic and learning process. The text which has high readability according to Dubay (2004:2) states that the criteria of high readability applied in text must be: use short sentences or words, simple sentences or words, put some familiar words,

avoid jargon, use culture and gender-neutral language, use correct grammar, punctuation and spelling, active voice and present tense, begin instructions in the imperative mode by starting sentences with an action verb, use simple graphic such as bulleted lists and number steps to make information visually accessible.

Fulcher (1997) asserted that readability is one of important considerations for all those who need to provide the suitability of a given text for a pedagogic purpose, which is more practically oriented. Sometimes, the reading materials presented in the English textbooks are too easy, so that the students get bored. On the other hand, some textbooks include the reading materials that are too difficult for students. It will make the students frustrated, so that they cannot understand the material faster and easier. It is because the readers (students) are very concerned with text readability. As Neil (1992:212) stated that the students' success in understanding a passage depends more on what they already know about topic. Each age level (grade) needs different readability in understanding the text. Hence, the readability of text need to understand in each level. Readability of text is very different from primary until Senior High School's students.

Readability studies aim to analyze texts to find the right fit between students and texts. In previous research about Readability Level of Science Book for Junior High School Year VIII in English Department Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Surakarta (2014), it is found that the lexis used contain of many unfamiliar and new words for the students. In terms of grammatical complexity of the sentence it is found that the complexities are quite high with an average sentence length of 14 words per sentence. The complexity of lexis and

grammar in the book Science affects the students understanding, although the students have a good enough background of English mastery.

In conclusion based on the results of the research is the Science book: Students book for Junior High School Year VIII levels is less appropriate for Junior High School's students. The level of complexity of the sentence in the book is suitable with the level of students, but the lexis used, foreign and new words, causes the students difficult in understanding the existing discourse in the book.

It is clear that readability is an important issue and finding the right fit between students' reading ability and text difficulty is an important and challenging task for teachers (Armbruster : 1984). So, textbook plays an important role in academic success. As mentioned before that the textbook must be readable to make students can be successful in learning process. It means that text readability is crucial in students' academic success. Based on the reasons above, the researcher wants to investigate text readability of Senior High Schools' textbooks. The researcher will research about the readability and the Grammatical Intricacy (GI) in a reading text.

## **1.2 The Problems of the Study**

Based on the background of the study, the following questions are forwarded as the research problem:

1. What are the levels of text readability of Senior High School's textbooks?
2. What kind of text are the highest and the lowest level of text readability and Grammatical Intricacy (GI) in the textbooks?

3. How is text readability represented in the selected texts in Senior High School's textbooks?

### **1.3 The Objectives of the Study**

In relation to the problems, the objectives of the study are:

- 1) to investigate the levels of text readability of Senior High School's textbooks.
- 2) to select the highest and the lowest level of text readability and Grammatical Intricacy (GI) in the textbooks.
- 3) to describe how the selected texts are represented in Senior High School's textbooks.

### **1.4 The Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study is limited on the textbooks. There are many textbooks that can be used in Senior High School, such as Erlangga, Yrama Widya, Yudhistira, Tiga Serangkai, Grafindo, Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia 2014, etc. However, the researcher only choose two of them, they are Erlangga and Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia 2014, because those textbooks are used by the students and teachers in teaching and learning process and it is based on the curriculum 2013.

Besides, there are some problems that faced by the students, such as sentences length, words length, the complexities of grammar and unfamiliar words.

### **1.5 The Significance of the Study**

A study which is designed to cover some intended result should have the significances. The findings of this study deals with two main significances, theoretical and practical significances.

Theoretically, the readability of a text can be applied in Senior High Schools' textbooks. Text readability refers to how easily a written text can be read and understood. Sometimes, a textbook contains of sentences length, words length and unfamiliar words, it makes the students difficult to understand.

Practically, the findings are expected to be useful for :

1. the teachers, who wants to match the textbooks with the grade level of students by counting the formula of text readability.
2. the students, to know what kind of text that appropriate for them by using readability formulas and Eggins' formula.
3. the writers/publishers, in order to design the appropriate textbooks for students' grade, particularly for 10<sup>th</sup> grade. And also to design the appropriate text as their knowledge about Grammatical Intricacy based on the Eggins' Formula.
4. the researchers, as their reference to investigate text readability in a textbooks, especially in Senior High School's textbooks.