

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of the Study

Reading is one of four language skills. It belongs to the receptive skills because when a person is reading he only receive all the informations from the text and processing them in his brain so that he can express his idea from the text he reads.

There are so many definitions of reading stated by the experts. Alyousef (2006) states that reading is an 'interactive' process between a reader and a text. It is not actually interactive as he marks the word 'interactive' because the process of reading cannot be seen by eyes. This process runs in the reader's brain.

Scharer (2010) defines reading as message-getting. She states that reading is an activity of getting message from a text. The reader is responsible to make a meaning after reading a text. If the reader does not get the meaning, it is not really reading. Furthermore, Heilman, Timothy and William (2005) add some definition of reading. They are:

1. Reading is interacting with language that has been coded into print.
2. Reading is the product of interacting with printed language should be comprehension.
3. Reading is an active and ongoing process that is affected directly by an individual's interaction with his environment.

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 the 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 follow:

“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.”¹

In analyzing the readability level of a text, there must be many factors involved. Dubay (2004:14) explains that to check the readability of reading passages must be very complex due to its factors. He, then, added that the most affected factors are the sentence and word length, the students' understanding of texts, the types of material that students want to read, and many others.

Therefore, to measure the readability of reading passages in a text book, there are also some methods used that cover those readability factors. And this research will focus on two methods, namely: (1) Readability Formula which aims to predict the level of texts' difficulty in students' textbook; and (2) Cloze procedure which functions to know students' understanding and comprehension to the reading texts by providing some tests.

Finally, after revealing the issues, the writer conducted an observation and interviewed an English teacher and some tenth grade students of SMK Negeri 1 Binjai. The teacher explained that some students can understand and comprehend the reading texts, yet, there are also some of them who still fail in getting the meaning of the texts due to the vocabularies. She also claimed that even though the texts are easily understood, they will not be enough to achieve a high level of students' reading comprehension.

Based on the preliminary observation of the English teacher of SMK Negeri 1 Binjai the teachers have to prepare themselves well before teaching because there are some new vocabularies in the textbook and it is quite difficult to understand not only to the students but also to the teachers. The students often think that reading text is not interesting and boring, as the result, they don't get the information which is given in the text and they cannot express the ideas because they think that the text is too difficult for them.

From seven reading texts provided in the textbook, the students admitted that a text entitled Cut Nyak Dhien has the most difficult words, especially in the eighth paragraph written as follow:

One of her troops, Pang Laot, told the Dutch the location of her headquarters in Beutong Le Sageu. The Dutch attacked, catching Dhien and her troops by surprise. Despite desperately fighting back, Dhien was captured. Her daughter, Cut Gamblang, escaped and continued the resistance. Dhien was brought to Banda Aceh and her myopia and arthritis slowly healed, but in the end she was exiled to Sumedang, West Java because the Dutch were afraid she would mobilize the resistance of Aceh people. She died on 6 November 1908.

From the paragraph above, the students noticed some difficult words in the paragraph such as *desperately* 'dengan putus asa', *troops* 'pasukan tentara', *escaped* 'melarikan diri', *resistance* 'perlawanan', *exiled* 'dikucilkan'. 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 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.

Based on the researcher's observation, it is found that the students in SMK Negeri 1 Binjai are not able to understand the reading text. The teachers also admitted that the texts in the textbook are quite difficult to understand because the unfamiliar vocabularies used, the newest materials in the textbook, the length of the sentences is too long and the used of grammar is difficult to understand.

B. The Problem of the Study

Based on the background of the study, the problem of this research is formulated as the following:

“How is the readability of the reading texts used by the tenth grade students of Vocational High School?”

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 Vocational High School.

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 Vocational High School by applying Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 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, the result of the study would enrich and strengthen the knowledge of the theories on readability of English reading texts in the teaching of reading comprehension.
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.



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