

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Reading plays a central role on our educational, working, recreational, and social lives. The ability to read is highly valued and important for social and economic advancement. Reading is the most important skill among the four language skills as it can improve the overall language proficiency (Krashen & Brown, 2007).

Mastering reading skill requires interaction between the reader and the text. The reader has to decode the meaning of the written words to be able to understand the writer's point of view. According to Grabe and Stoller (2002), reading can be taught as a way to draw information from text and to form an interpretation of that information.

Reading ability is truly useful skill. With this skill, the students also able to broaden their knowledge by reading many kinds of English texts. Reading is also crucial for the students. They can develop their knowledge and get many kinds of information which related to their studies through reading academic books, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, and other kinds of written languages from the internet.

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand information in a text and interpret it appropriately what is meant by the text (Grabe and Stoller, 2002). It means that reading comprehension is the ability to read text, process and understand its meaning. An individual's ability to understand text is influenced by their natures and skills, one of which is the ability to make inferences.

In order to understand text, a reader must be able to identify words rapidly, know the meaning of almost all of the words, and be able to combine sequential units of meaning into a

coherent message. Naturally, the majority of students who are very weak at word recognition will have serious difficulties with comprehension. Yet, it is recognized now that some students who develop adequate word-reading ability and fluency still have difficulty understanding what they are reading, particularly when faced with the expository style of writing used within many school textbooks (Cain & Oakhill, 2007).

Reading comprehension can improve vocabulary and writing skill. Lems et al (2010: 4) assume that reading and writing are not inevitable processes even in first language. It stands to reason that considerable energy and effort are needed to learn to do them in a new language. By reading everyone will know everything in the world.

Most researchers agree that reading comprehension is not simply recognizing individual words, or even understanding each individual word as our eyes pass over it. Reading is a very complex skill and for this reason it is not surprising to find that some children confront difficulties in learning to read.

Westwood (2001) states that some teachers believe that the problem is due to a child's poor attitude and motivation, linking this sometimes with lack of educational support from the home. In almost all cases they tend to 'blame the victim' rather than question the quality and quantity of the teaching the child receives in school.

There were many researches conducted about reading comprehension difficulties. The researches conducted in Senior High School and University students, whereas the researches did in Vocational High School is still in a few numbers. Some of them are:

Kasim and Raisha (2017) discussed that the students' comprehension problems were new vocabulary meanings, word complexity, passive voice, word order and tenses which

are in the areas of linguistics. The major factor of their problems in comprehending English texts is unfamiliar vocabulary.

Then, Thao and Tham (2018) found that the two common areas of difficulties in ESP reading comprehension were unknown words and background knowledge or subject matters.

Moreover, Chandran and Shah (2019) discussed that most of the students have agreed that the main difficulty faced by them in ESL reading comprehension is related to the reading process. Finally, the implications of these findings on ESL reading comprehension difficulties were discussed from the aspects of what the teachers could do in their teaching practices to address this issue and provide ways to solve them.

From the previous studies above, it can be concluded that the students which were expected to have high ability in comprehending reading texts could not understand the texts well. The students had reading comprehension difficulties such as determining main idea, finding specific information, making inference, etc.

In Indonesia, curriculum 2013 has been implemented for several years. Based on the syllabus of curriculum 2013 for tenth grade students (both Senior High School and Vocational High School) about reading skill, the students should be able to grasp the contextual meaning of any texts include descriptive texts, announcement, recount texts, narrative texts, and songs. The researcher had some experiences related to reading skill of the students when doing her internship in a classroom of office administration-majored tenth grade students at SMK N 1 Medan which already implemented curriculum 2013 in the academic year of 2018/2019. The researcher delivered some texts to the students to be understood by them so they can answer the questions of the texts. In fact, the students were

difficult to comprehend the text. They translate the text by using word for word translation or even used google translation which caused the difficulties in comprehending the texts. Many students did not understand the text they read, they could not answer the comprehension tests such as finding the main idea, making connections, etc. Those difficulties caused they got lower scores. Some of the reasons are they are not familiar with the subject matter, they have lack of vocabularies, etc. For the students, English is still a difficult subject as it is a foreign language.

Generally, in learning English, there are many texts given in the textbook to be understood by the students so that they can answer the questions related to them. Moreover, in the result of PISA (Programme for International Students Assessment) 2018 which was evaluate the education system by measuring students' knowledge or ability, particularly in three main subjects (mathematics, science, and literacy) showed that Indonesia was at 72nd rank from all countries over the world with total score was 371. PISA took the students from 2 regions only as the samples of the research. Besides, Sunendar (2019), the Head of language and Books Development Agency in Ministry of Education and Culture, reported that the students' literacy has been increased, that was 489 or 61%. Yet, there were several things which should be solved by the government. He said that the text quality and books availability were important to be improved. He assumed that the Indonesian students have infirmity or weaknesses in reading map, graphics, long texts, etc. The disability in comprehending text will give negative impact in answering the questions. Obviously, it will be difficult to answer the questions while they do not understand the content of the text and it can cause failures in their tests in future. Therefore, this research is important to be conducted which can be used as a reference for the teachers to identify the students'

difficulties in reading comprehension and the factors influencing them so that the teachers can use appropriate strategy in teaching reading to their students.

From the explanation above, the researcher did a research in one of Vocational High Schools in Medan, especially in class ten as the result of discussion between the researcher and the English teacher there. The researcher conducted a research entitled **“Reading Comprehension Difficulties among Tenth Grade Students of Vocational High School.”** The purpose of this research is to investigate the difficulties faced by the students in comprehending texts and the factors influence them.

B. The Problems of the Study

In line with the background of the study presented above, the research problems are formulated as follows:

1. What reading comprehension difficulties are faced by tenth grade students in Vocational high School?
2. What are the factors influencing the difficulties in reading comprehension?

C. The Objectives of the Study

In relation to the problems, the objectives of this research are:

1. To describe the reading comprehension difficulties faced by tenth grade students in Vocational High School
2. To find out the factors influencing the students' difficulties in reading comprehension

D. The Scope of the Study

There are four language skills should be mastered by the students, they are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This research focused on reading skill especially reading comprehension.

This study focused on analyzing the difficulties faced by students in comprehending texts and the factors influencing their difficulties. The participants of this research were tenth grade students of a Vocational High School in Medan.

E. The Significances of the Study

This study is expected to give both theoretically and practically significances, they are:

1. Theoretically

- a) The result of the research will be useful to identify the students' difficulties in reading comprehension
- b) The result of the research can be used as a reference for those who want to conduct a research about reading comprehension difficulties.

2. Practically

- a) For teacher

The writer hopes that this research will be useful for English teacher as a positive contribution in order to know the students' difficulties in comprehending texts, so the teacher can choose the appropriate strategies and find innovations in teaching reading so that the students can overcome their difficulties in comprehending texts.

- b) For students

This study is expected to encourage the students to know their difficulties in comprehending text.