

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of The Study

In mastering English, four skills were required to be learned. They were listening, speaking, reading, and writing. As one of the English language skills, reading became the most fundamental skill in the English language because people could obtain much information written or printed such as magazines, news, textbooks, etc. According to Smith (1994b), cited in (Abame et al., 2017), reading was a process of transferring mind to mind where the reader understood or got meaning through reading. In the process of reading, there was a complex interaction between the text, the writer, and the reader's prior knowledge, experiences, and attitudes. It involved the process of dynamic renditions of what was written. In other words, reading could be defined as the ability to comprehend written or printed text. Reading was also a receptive skill that helped students widen their creative input in learning English, including improving their vocabulary, grammar, technical terms, and relevant information in a particular field. Therefore, reading activity in school had a vital role in helping students enhance their reading skills.

The significant role of reading in the education of English, especially for Junior High School students, was evident within the 2013 curriculum revision, further updated in 2017 by the Minister of Education of Indonesia, as outlined in Permendikbud No. 24 in 2016. This curriculum placed a strong emphasis on

students' ability to apply language skills in their daily lives and achieve functional literacy. Moreover, it expected students to proficiently engage in interpersonal, transactional, and functional communication, both verbally and in writing, encompassing topics related to themselves and their immediate environment.

According to the basic competencies for ninth-grade students in competency 4.7, which pertained to Narrative text, students were required to comprehend the contextual meaning associated with a social function, understand the generic structure of the text, and grasp the overall message conveyed by the Narrative text, which often featured fairy tales.

4.7 menangkap makna secara kontekstual terkait fungsi sosial, struktur teks, dan unsur kebahasaan teks naratif, lisan dan tulis, sangat pendek dan sederhana, terkait fairy tales

Besides the media, techniques, and strategies, learning material was also essential for students in the English teaching and learning process. Materials helped the teaching-learning process. According to Harsono (2007;5), the importance of learning materials in the teaching and learning process could not be overstated.

These materials were a vital part of English education, offering students more exposure to the language. Among these materials, reading materials were particularly important for improving students' reading skills. Therefore, it was crucial to pay close attention to English learning materials, especially for Junior High Schools, to meet educational needs effectively.

Appropriate reading materials were significant in acquiring information and enhancing students' mastery of reading (Tomlinson, 2012). One of the criteria for

appropriate material was that the materials should be relevant to the student's life (Howard & Major, 2004; Tomlinson, 2012; Azizah et al., 2021). When students could understand the text, they encountered new words by reading the text.

In summary, reading was a valuable activity that enhanced knowledge and provided new information. Furthermore, teachers needed to be creative in crafting reading materials to address challenges effectively. Thus, creating reading materials customized to students' needs was essential for enhancing their reading comprehension skills.

To obtain preliminary data, the researcher had already conducted interviews with teachers from SMP Nasrani 1 Medan. These interviews aimed to assess the requirement for the development of English teaching-learning materials and to understand the current status of the students. The transcript of this interview is available below:

Researcher : What textbook is used by students of grade IX?

Respondent : English textbook published by the government entitled *Bahasa Inggris "Think globally act locally."*

Researcher : Does the school provide any English textbook specified for students?

Respondent : To support the English activities and material for students

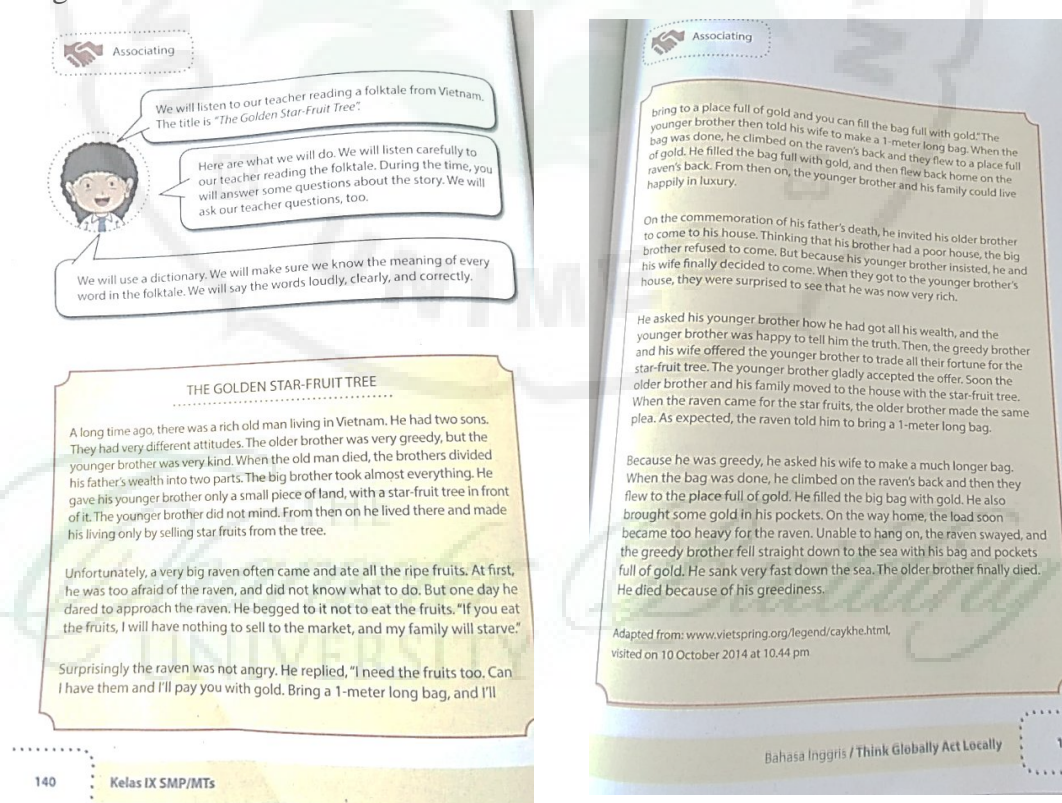
Researcher : What are the students' difficulties in comprehending the English texts?

Respondent : Students have difficulties comprehending the English text because of a lack of vocabulary and an inability to structure/grammar.

Researcher : Is it needed to develop reading materials based on their prior knowledge and needed?

Respondent : Yes, it is.

Based on the preliminary data above, an observation was also conducted to support the data in the Bahasa Inggris textbook published by the Minister of Education of Indonesia, revised in 2019, which was used as the primary textbook, and the second book, Mozaik English, in the teaching-learning process. From both of the books, it was found that the materials in the book about the narrative text were primarily from other regions and other countries. Besides that, in the main book (published by the Minister of Education), the existing narrative text had to be more suitable for the syllabus's essential competencies. The Narrative text should have been in a short form, while in the textbook, the Narrative text was extremely long.



(Figure 1.1 Existing material in English Textbook entitled Bahasa Inggris "Think globally act locally" 2018)

After analyzing the content of the narrative text in the textbook, the researcher also distributed questionnaires to the students to find out the student's needs related to the reading material for the narrative text of ninth-grade students at SMP Nasrani 1 Medan. The results showed that despite a lack of vocabulary and grammar/structure, the students were also unfamiliar with some of the story in line with the results of the interviews they had already conducted with the English teacher. From the 32 students in the classroom, the researcher concluded that 47% of the students still lacked the vocabulary and had difficulties in determining the main idea of each paragraph about 12%, had difficulties in understanding the text about 19%, and had difficulties in understanding specific terms, about 22%. In addition to the data above, it also showed that about 81% of the students wanted to improve their understanding of the text by using the kind of text that they were familiar with and relevant to where they lived.

Due to the identified needs and noticeable gap, this study is concerned with developing reading material for a narrative text, which is seen as a reasonable solution to address the lack of English reading material and meet the students' needs through North Sumatra local culture. Using local culture as the basis for reading material is expected to help students understand the text, identify the main idea, and grasp detailed information easily (Argasetra et al., 2022). (Azizah et al., 2021) suggest that integrating students' local culture into developed reading material allows them to connect their prior knowledge with the English text effectively, thereby improving their reading skills. Culture plays a crucial role in communication, as it is inherent in society and familiar to the students in their living

environment, and communication is conveyed through language. This approach ensures that students are interested in and familiar with the stories in the text, making it easier for them to comprehend the entire text. Consequently, using local culture can enhance students' vocabulary and reading comprehension (Argasetra et al., 2022). This underscores the need to develop relevant narrative reading material for students, incorporating their local culture, enabling them to learn by leveraging their prior knowledge and connecting it with new information from the learning activity. It's important to note that previous studies focused on developing reading materials for senior high and vocational high schools outside the North Sumatra province, while this study specifically concentrates on creating English reading materials for Junior High School students in Medan.

Based on the identified problem and taking into account the students' needs for comprehending reading material in the teaching and learning process, the researcher has decided to conduct research under the title "Developing Reading Material in Teaching English for Junior High School Students based on North Sumatera Local Culture." This research is expected to yield effective narrative reading material tailored for Junior High School students.

B. The Problem of the Study

The background of this study was “How were narrative reading materials for the ninth grades students at SMP Nasrani 1 Medan developed based on North Sumatera local culture?”

C. The Objective of the Study

In line with the problem of the study above, the objective was “To develop Narrative reading text material based on North Sumatera Local Culture for 9th-grade students.”

D. The Scope of the Study

Related to the syllabus in the 2013 curriculum for ninth grade, the students had to study some genres of text, such as report text, procedure text, and narrative text. Among those text genres, this study focused on narrative text.

E. The Significances of the Study

The findings of the research were expected to be helpful and to contribute theoretically and practically as follows:

1) Theoretically: This research was expected to serve as a source and provide more information or references related to the use of local culture in teaching English reading of narrative text.

2) Practically: In terms of application, this research was expected to be useful for:

a) The English teacher: This study would have been helpful for teachers to enhance the teaching process by using familiar materials for students and incorporating local culture into teaching narrative text.

b) The students: This study was expected to have enhanced students' understanding of narrative text that is familiar to society, enriching their awareness of local culture and improving their willingness to read text.

c) The future researchers: This study could have served as a reference for additional information for other researchers.