

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 1 of this study discusses some topics. They are the background of the study, the problem statement, the objective of the study, the significance of the study, the scope and limitation of the study, definition of key terms, and the organization of the study.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Language is important for everyone and gives many impacts for people's life. It is used in any interaction and activity in daily life. When someone wants to inform something, ask some questions, and give confirmation to other people, she/he expresses it through language. By using language, people can make a sense and express their understanding of what they have learnt. Without language, people will find difficulties to communicate to each other.

There are four language skills that people have to master. The four language skills: speaking, writing, reading and listening are related to one another. Listening and reading are receptive skills while speaking and writing are productive skills. If the students are able to learn the receptive skill successfully, they will also master the productive skills well.

In Indonesia, English is taught as the first foreign language. Unfortunately, according to the 2013 curriculum, the time allocation for English is reduced. In the 2013 curriculum, English is given two hours per week. Hence, the English teacher should be smart to

manage the time so that all the English materials and skills could be taught to the students well.

One of the English skills that should be taught is reading. In teaching reading, the teacher should provide the students with many kinds of reading materials. There are many course books available in the market. The researcher thinks that the teacher should be able to choose a course book that is relevant for the curriculum. When the teacher chooses the relevant course book for the students, she/he has to consider many aspects such as language and content of the reading passage in the course book.

Language and content aspects of the course book should be well considered for whom choosing it for teaching. Language and content of the reading passages in the course book affect the readability level. Readability assesses the level difficulty of the text. Listianingsih and Harjanto (2013:154) state that reading passages should have language readability levels suiting to students' grade levels. Therefore, reading passages as the reading materials in the course book should suit to the students' level.

There are some factors that influence the readability level of a text. The first factor is linguistic factor that consists of some components such as sentence structure, vocabulary, and relationship of the sentences or the words. Many kinds of readability formulas can be used to measure the linguistic factor. One of the readability formulas is The Fry Graph formula that uses only sentence length (in words) and word length (in syllables) to measure reading difficulty (Dupuis and Askov 1982:237). Another formula to measure linguistic factor is Raygor Readability Estimate that concerns on

word difficulty by counting long words (Vacca 1981:267). Besides linguistic factor, reader's factor such as reader's background, information and interest also affects the readability of a text.

Assessing readability level of a text is needed to be done to know whether the book matches the learner's level or not. Furthermore, many course books used by the teacher consist of reading passages that are not relevant and suitable for the students' level. The language and the content of the reading passage in the course book sometimes are very difficult to be understood by the students. It is because the lack of information that the teacher gets about the criterions of appropriate course book for the students based on their levels. Indeed, it is very important for the teacher to know the content quality of the book used in her/his teaching. Therefore, the researcher wants to analyze the readability level of "Bahasa Inggris" course book to know it is suitable for tenth graders' level or not.

Some previous studies about readability levels have been done by Sutianah (2014) and Freahat (2014). They have studied the aspects of linguistic factor and its formulas to measure language readability level.

Sutianah (2014) investigated the readability level of the reading texts on *Advanced Learning English 2* at SMAN 4 Tangerang Selatan. Seventeen (17) texts taken from reading sections in *Advanced Learning English 2* were analyzed using Flesch Reading Ease Formula. Based on the analysis, the researcher found that from 17 texts analyzed, 1 text is in the very easy level, 4 texts are in the easy level, 4 texts are in the fairly easy level, 4 texts are in the

standard level, 3 texts are in the fairly difficult level, and 1 text is in the difficult level. It can be concluded that, the texts in *Advanced Learning English 2* are in the appropriate level for 11<sup>th</sup> grade students at SMAN 4 Tangerang Selatan.

Another study, “A Comparison of Reading Levels of High School and Freshmen University Students in Jordan” has been done by Freahat in 2014. This study used Flesch Grade Level and Flesch Kincaid Reading Ease formulas to identify the readability level of each textbook. The result of the study was the secondary school textbooks are on average about three grade levels higher in reading difficulty than the textbook of university level.

There are differences between this study and the previous studies. In the previous researches, the researchers analyzed Senior high school’s course books, while in this current research, the researcher analyzes vocational school’s course book. In this study, the researcher assesses readability level of the reading passages in “Bahasa Inggris” course book published by Ministry of Education and Culture (KEMENDIKBUD) for Vocational School. This book is used by some vocational schools in Sidoarjo and Mojokerto. Although “Bahasa Inggris” course book provides materials for Vocational Schools, it is not an ESP book. The passages contain general topics and the vocabularies are also general.

Indeed, informal survey revealed that many students of SMKN 1 MOJOKERTO and SMK TARUNA SIDOARJO had difficulties in understanding the reading passages in “Bahasa Inggris”. Most of the students had difficulties in understanding vocabularies and sentences in the book. They were not familiar with

the words in passages in “Bahasa Inggris” course book. Some sentences in the passages are too long for the student of SMKN 1 MOJOKERTO and SMK TARUNA SIDOARJO.

The structure of 2013 curriculum for Vocational School is different from the one of Senior High School. The total number of the time allocation for English at Vocational school is 48 hours in a week. The time allocation of English subject itself is only 2 hours in a week. Most of the reading materials for 1<sup>st</sup> graders of Vocational school are related to daily life communication such as introducing, giving compliments, giving announcement, talking about the past activities, describing people/place, and telling the story.

Studies analyzing the readability level of reading passages in Vocational course books are rarely found. The fact is the readability level of reading passages is very important to be analyzed to know whether it is suitable for the students’ level or not. If the reading passages found in the course book are not readable, the students can be in difficulties in understanding the passages. In this study, the researcher wants to analyze the readability level of reading passages found in “Bahasa Inggris” course book. It is also hoped that this study will provide some insights for English teachers of Vocational school about readability level of the reading passages found in “Bahasa Inggris” course book so that they can solve the students’ problem in understanding the reading passages.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

This study tries to answer the following question:

What is the readability level of reading passages in “Bahasa Inggris” course book?

## **1.3 The Objective of the Study**

Derived directly from the above formulated problem, the objective of this study is to determine the readability level of reading passages in “Bahasa Inggris” course book.

## **1.4 The Significance of the Study**

The result of this study is expected to be an insight for English teachers of Vocational school who use “Bahasa Inggris” course book published by Ministry of Education and Culture (KEMENDIKBUD) about the readability level of reading passages found in the course book. This study is also expected to give information to the author about the language readability level to be considered in writing readable reading passages.

## **1.5 The Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The researcher analyzed five (5) reading passages in “Bahasa Inggris” course book published by Ministry of Education and Culture (KEMENDIKBUD) for tenth graders of vocational school. There are nine chapters in “Bahasa Inggris” course book which consist of 8, 9, or 10 sections in every chapter. Five (5) reading passages were taken from reading section of chapter 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

The analysis focused on the linguistic factors of the readability level in terms of text difficulty (sentence length and word length) while other linguistic factors such as sentence structure, relationship of sentences and words, or levels of abstraction are not to be analyzed in this study.

## **1.6 The Theoretical Framework**

In order to answer research question, some theories related to the study are needed. The theories underlying this study are reading comprehension and readability level.

Reading comprehension is a process of making sense of written ideas through meaningful interpretation and interaction with language (Heilman, Blair, & Rupley, 1981: 242). Comprehending reading passages requires students to understand the idea and meaning of words in the passages. Therefore, the words and the language of the passage should be readable for the students in order to comprehend the reading passage easier.

According to Nuttal (1996), readability refers to the difficulty level of text materials and the degree to which texts are considered to be “readable” for the student’s level. Choosing readable reading passages for the students are needed to be done by the teacher to make the leaning process goes well. There are two factors in readability level: linguistic factor and reader’s factor. Linguistic factor consists of sentence structure, vocabulary, and relationship of the sentences and words, while the reader’s interest, information, and background are included in readers’ factor.

## **1.7 Definition of Key Terms**

To avoid misunderstanding that might happen when reading this paper, the writer defines the key terms in this study as follow:

- a. Reading passage is a written text for reading comprehension exercises in “Bahasa Inggris” course book published by Ministry of Education and Culture (KEMENDIKBUD) for tenth graders of vocational school.
- b. Readability is a concept of the ease or the difficulty level in which reading passage can be understood by the readers. Readability can be measured by some formulas such as fry’s readability graph, Raygor readability estimate, Flesch-Kincaid, and Cloze test in the form of scores or graphs.
- c. Level of difficulty is the measurement in which the sentences and words of the passages found in “Bahasa Inggris” course book published by Ministry of Education and Culture (KEMENDIKBUD) can be understood by the readers. It can be measured by assessing the readability level of the passage in form of grade level score.
- d. “Bahasa Inggris” is a course book used for tenth graders of Vocational school. The course book was published by Ministry of Education and Culture (KEMENDIKBUD) which consists of nine (9) chapters.

## **1.8 The Organization of the Study**

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter I presents the background of the study, the statement of the problems, the objectives, the significance of the study, the scope and limitation of

the study, definition of key terms, and the organization of the study. Chapter II concerns with the review of related literature. Chapter III deals with research methodology. The findings and discussion are presented in chapter IV. The last chapter, Chapter V, consists of the conclusion and suggestion.