

CHAPTER I

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1.1 Background of the Study

English is considered as an important language in the world. It is spoken at most parts of the world for many purposes. Besides spoken either as a first or a second language, English is also taught or learned as the first foreign language. In countries where English is spoken either as the first or second language, it is used mostly for some necessities in communication or in helping in gaining knowledge and education.

In the resolution No. 096/1967 of Ministry of Education and culture on December 12, 1967, English was determined as the first foreign language in Indonesia. That is the language which is used in foreign country in addition to the official and local languages of the country. (Kartono; 124, 126) The resolution also started the objective of teaching English in Indonesia. It is the "Working knowledge of English" which consists of :

- (a) Effective reading ability.
- (b) Ability to understand spoken English.

(c) Writing ability.

(d) Speaking ability.

From the resolution, it can be concluded that English has an important position in educational system. It is so because English is a very important element in gaining scientific and technological knowledge which is needed for the economic and political development of our country. That could be the most possible answer why government has chosen it as a compulsory foreign language subject in Indonesian high schools. (SMP's and SMA's)

Looking at the order of listing of the abilities mentioned before, we can see that the primary emphasis is on reading ability. This can be understood for reading is one of the ways to obtain knowledge. Various kinds of knowledge can be obtained through reading. Reading can also be a great help in language learning. Many books are written in English nowadays so, by reading readers especially English Department student can improve their English.

Sutaria (1980:99) states that "The more readable the book is, the more useful it will be as an aid in teaching pupils." It means that it is important to provide the right book for the reader so that his

ability to read will increase. To be able to facilitate successful reading comprehension, it is important for teachers to select suitable reading materials for their students. A suitable text is whether or not a text is interesting for the students and whether or not it is at the appropriate level of difficulty. Eskey (1983:3) points out that basically students learn to read by reading. It is only when the students are consistently successful in comprehending the language, they will achieve something from the text. If it goes that way, it is easy to see that if the text itself does not fit the students' level, need, and interest, how will they learn from their reading ?

One way to find the texts that fit the students' level is by doing diagnosis testing. It is important to do so because it will help the teachers determine suitable materials for the students' level.

In Widya Mandala University English Department, the lecturers have determined the "100 Passages" as the compulsory reading book for the students of Reading V students. However, the writer finds that "100 Passages" seems to be quite difficult for the students. From the direct interviews conducted by the writer, she found that most of the students

interviewed said that the difficulties are on the vocabulary which is mostly new for them, the structures which are quite complicated and also the writing style of the passages which sometimes seem to be too scientific or philosophical. Not having the background knowledge and the lack of aids to help understand the passages are also important factors that can make students find difficulties in comprehending the passages.

Although most of the passages are considered difficult, there are also passages that are not very difficult and quite easy included in the "100 Passages". So considering the result of the interviews conducted by the writer, she would like to find out whether the "100 Passages" suits the students' level or not.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

This thesis is mainly concerned with the "100 Passages", whether or not the book suits the readability level of the students of Reading V during the school year of 1998 - 1999.

The major question that guides this study is : To what extent the readability of the reading

materials in the "100 Passages" is for the students of Reading V of English Department of Widya Mandala University ? This question is specified into minor ones :

- (1) Are there many new or difficult words in the reading passages ?
- (2) Are there many complicated structures in the reading passages ?
- (3) Are the contents of the reading passages familiar to the students ?
- (4) Are the contents of the reading passages interesting to the students ?
- (5) Are there any illustrations to simplify vocabulary, structures, and background knowledge unfamiliar to the students ?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

Derived directly from the above formulated problems, the major objective of the study is to investigate to what extent the readability of the reading materials in the "100 Passages" is for the Reading V students of English Department of Widya Mandala University during the school year of 1998 -

1999, and the minor objectives are to determine whether :

- (1) There are many new or difficult words in the reading passages,
- (2) There are many complicated structures in the reading passages,
- (3) The contents of the reading passages are familiar to the students,
- (4) The contents of the reading passages are interesting to the students,
- (5) There are some illustrations to simplify vocabulary, structures, and background knowledge unfamiliar to the students.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Reading is a very important skill in language learning. It is also one way to obtain proficiency in language learning. To be able to help the students succeed in their reading so that they will actually achieve something, it is important for the teacher to know whether the reading materials found in the textbook used are readable for the students or not. The data and information obtained from this study are expected to give the reading lecturers of English

Department of Widya Mandala University insights on the readability of the reading materials in the "100 Passages".

1.5 Limitations of the Study

There are still many factors that may influence the achievement of reading comprehension, such as attitude, motivation, intelligence, scheduling, class-size, reading materials, etc. To look for the depth of the analysis, this study is necessary to be limited because of limitations of time.

The writer will deal only with the problem of reading materials that is the readability of "100 Passages". The book consists of one hundred passages.

Although there are so many factors determining the readability of reading materials, the writer will only deal with the problems of vocabulary, structures, background knowledge, personal interest, and illustrations encountered during the reading process that may lead the lecturer uses translation in the reading class. The other factors that may hinder the students' achievement in the reading comprehension will not be discussed.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the following theories :

1. Theory of Reading

Sutaria (1980 : 99) defines that reading is the process of getting meaning of something written or printed by interpreting its character or symbols.

2. Theory of Schemata

Bartlett says that a schema was an abstract textual structure that a reader makes uses of to understand a given text (Dieter Wolf, 1987 : 309). So what is important in reading is the prior knowledge of the reader that can help him comprehend the new information.

3. Theory of Readability

Dupuis and Askov (1982) states that there are four major components in readability. They are : linguistic factors in the text, the 'readers' background information on the subject, the readers' interest in the subject and the reading aids found in the text.

1.7 Assumptions

This study is based on the following assumptions :

- (1) The students have the average competency in learning English.
- (2) The students have good competency of English since they are 'Non Integrated Course" students which means that they have mastered good basic of English.
- (3) The "100 Passages" is a compulsory English textbook for Reading V students of English Department Of Widya Mandala University.
- (4) The students are motivated to achieve proficiency in reading class.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding, some key terms used in this study are defined below before the writer proceeds the core of her study.

- Readability is the sum total of vocabulary, structures, background knowledge, personal interest, and illustrations within a given piece of printed materials that affects the success which a group of readers have with it. The success is the extent to

which they understand it, read it at optimum speed and find it interesting (Dupuis and Askov 1982 : 234).

- Reading materials refer to those found in the "100 Passages".
- New vocabulary refers to those words which the learner have never met in either oral or written language.
- Difficult vocabulary refers to those words whose meanings is not familiar for the learners.
- Complicated structures refer to those with a great number of long sentences and numerous occurrences of infrequent or rare patterns.

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter I deals with the introduction including the background of the study, statement of problem, objectives of the study, significance, theoretical framework, assumptions, scope and limitation and definition of key term. Chapter II deals with the review of related literature. Chapter III deals with the methodology of the study. Chapter IV deals with the discussion of

findings. Chapter V deals with the conclusion and suggestion.