

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Problem

English is one of the chief languages of the world and it is widely used all over the world for various purposes. In Indonesia, English is regarded as a foreign language (FL) - the language which is used in a foreign country in addition to the official and local languages of the country¹ - and it is considered to be the most important foreign language of all the others, such as German, French, Japanese, etc. because of its status as an international language - the language used in international sociopolitical, scientific contacts, and commerce. Therefore, based on the Resolution No. 096/1967 of the Ministry of Education and Culture on December 12, 1967, English is the first foreign language in Indonesia.²

As the first foreign language in Indonesia, English occupies a special position in the educational system. It was chosen by the Government as the only compulsory

¹Giri Kartono, "Kedudukan dan Fungsi Bahasa Asing di Indonesia", in Amran Halim eds., Politik Bahasa Nasional 2, Jakarta, 1977, 124.

²Ibid., 126.

foreign language subject in schools beginning from the Junior High School.³ Some Elementary schools even give their students English lessons beginning from the fourth year.

When we consider the objectives of English teaching in the Senior High School, we find the following points:

- (a) in the field of Knowledge
"To have a basic competence in ... English, and to have a more advanced knowledge in one or several of these subjects."
- (b) in the field of Skills
"To have competency in reading/ comprehending the content of ... practical simple reading materials in English."⁴

Over the years, a team of linguists and experienced teachers of the English language that has been appointed by the Department of Education and Culture (Depdikbud) has tried to rearrange the curriculum design of teaching English as a foreign language used in the SMA, and finally the new curriculum is established. It is called "The English Curriculum of SMA 1984"; it was firstly put into practice for the first year students of SMA during the school year of 1984-1985.

The English Curriculum of SMA 1984 claims that the teaching of English as a foreign language should be

³P.W.J. Nababan, "Indonesia: The Language Situation", Language Teaching Issues in Multilingual Environments in Southeast Asia, 1982, 9.

⁴Ibid., 21.

meaningful and functional. The approach used to achieve this goal is called "The Communicative Approach" in which the aspects of language learnt will enable the students to communicate receptively (reading and listening) and productively (speaking and writing). Therefore, the teaching of English in the SMA is divided into five components: structure, reading, vocabulary, dialogue, and writing. However, these five components are not treated equally.

The Resolution No. 096/ 1967 of the Ministry of Education and Culture states that the objective of English teaching in Indonesia is "working knowledge of English" which consists of:

- (1) effective reading ability
- (2) ability to understand spoken English
- (3) writing ability
- (4) speaking ability⁵

It places the teaching of reading as the first language skill to be achieved in order that the students will have the competence to comprehend English textbooks and references when they study in the university later since 90 % of reference books are written in English.⁶ Based on

⁵Soemantri Hardjoprakoso, "Surat Keputusan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan", in Amran Halim eds., Politik Bahasa Nasional 2, Jakarta, 1977, 144.

⁶Ibid., 145.

this condition, the English Curriculum of SMA 1984 emphasizes the teaching of reading as a major achievement in the students' language development.

In the English Curriculum of SMA 1984, there are some new concepts that should be included in the reading materials, namely the concepts of environment, demography, "Wawasan Nusantara", "Kamtibnas", and employment. In keeping with this change, new students' books should have been designed by the Department of Education and Culture to replace the old ones (which is based on the English Curriculum of SMA 1975). Yet, until the new curriculum has been put into practice for about 4 years, the Department of Education and Culture has not established any students' books. Consequently, the SMA teachers of English have to use the textbooks that are made available by private publishers, without any assurance whether the texts are readable for the intended students or not.

What is the importance of readability ? Sutaria states that "the more readable a book is, the more useful it will be as an aid in teaching pupils".⁷ It means that it is important to provide the right book for the reader so that his ability to read will increase.

As it has been stated formerly, some new textbooks

⁷Minda Cascolan Sutaria, Basic Readers for English Teaching, Quezon City, Phoenix Publishing House, 99.

which are adapted to the new concepts of the English Curriculum of SMA 1984 have been established by private publishers, namely "Penuntun Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris Berdasarkan Kurikulum 1984", Active English for SMA, Syllabus English, "Bahasa Inggris", etc. Among these books, it seems that "Penuntun Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris Berdasarkan Kurikulum 1984" has risen in favour - the English teachers of SMA YPPI, SMA Petra, SMA Dapena, SMA Santa Maria, SMA Stella Maris, etc. use this book nowadays.

The writer happens to teach at SMA YPPI-I Surabaya. The English teachers there also use "Penuntun Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris Berdasarkan Kurikulum 1984". The writer finds that the first year students often have no interest or feel bored when they come to the reading class. They get difficulties in reading, especially in understanding or comprehending the reading passages taken from the books. Therefore, the teacher has to translate almost every sentence of the reading passages into Indonesian so that the students can get the idea of what the passages are about. This is, of course, time-consuming, and as a result, the students find reading boring and troublesome.

Based on Sutaria's opinion above, the writer feels interested in making a descriptive study to investigate to what extent the readability of the reading materials in the "Penuntun Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris Berdasarkan

Kurikulum 1984" is for the first year students of SMA YPPI-I Surabaya during the school year of 1987-1988.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The main concern of this study is to investigate why the marks of the first year students of SMA YPPI-I Surabaya during the school year of 1987-1988 in the reading comprehension test were far from satisfactory - 40 % of the 300 students got marks below 60.

The major question that guides this study is: To what extent is the readability of the reading materials in the "Penuntun Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris Berdasarkan Kurikulum 1984" for the first students of SMA YPPI-I Surabaya during the school year of 1987-1988? 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 "Penuntun Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris Berdasarkan Kurikulum 1984" is for the first year students of SMA YPPI-I Surabaya during the school year of 1987-1988, 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

Since reading is the first language skill to be achieved in the teaching of English and since it is

important to provide the right book for the reader, it is essential for the teacher to know whether the reading materials found in the textbooks are readable for the students. The data and information obtained from this study are expected to give the English teachers of SMA YPPI-I insights on the readability of the reading materials in the "Penuntun Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris Berdasarkan Kurikulum 1984". The data and information will also help the teacher find proper materials which are comprehensible so as the students may increase their ability to read.

1.5. Limitations of the Study

There are so 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 reading materials in the "Penuntun Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris Berdasarkan Kurikulum 1984". There are a series of these books for SMA students, beginning from the first until the third year. In this study, the writer wants to discuss

only the readability of the reading materials found in the books of the first year students. It consists of two books - one for the first semester and the other for the second semester. Each book consists of fifteen passages, so there are thirty passages altogether.

There are so many factors determining the readability of reading materials. However, the writer will deal only with the problems of vocabulary, structures, background knowledge, personal interest, and illustrations encountered during the reading process that may lead the teacher 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 Input

The Input Hypothesis states that "acquisition" takes place as a result of the learner having understood input that is a little beyond the current level of his competence (i.e. the $i + 1$ level).⁸

(2) Theory of Affective Filter

The Affective Filter Hypothesis states that the filter

⁸Stephen D. Krashen, Tracy D. Terrell, The Natural Approach: Language Acquisition in the Classroom, England, Pergamon Press Ltd., 1983, 32.

controls how much input is converted into intake. It is "affective" because the factors which determine its strength have to do with the learner's motivation, self-confidence, or anxiety state. Learners with high motivation, self-confidence, and with low anxiety have low filters and so obtain and let in plenty of input. Learners with low motivation, little self-confidence, and high anxiety have high filters and so receive little input and allow even less in.⁹

(3) Theory of Reading

According to Goodman, in the reading process a proficient reader draws on three kinds of information: graphophonic information, syntactic information, and semantic information.¹⁰

(4) Theory of Readability

Dupuis and Askov indicate that the four major components of readability are: linguistic factors in the text, the reader's background information on the subject, the reader's interest in the subject, and the

⁹Ibid., 37 - 38.

¹⁰Christina Bratt Paulston, Mary Newton Bruder, Teaching English as a Second Language: Techniques and Procedures, Massachusetts, Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1976, 158.

aids to reading found in the text.¹¹

1.7. Assumptions

This study is based on the following assumptions:

- (1) Reading comprehension is the first language skill to be achieved in the SMA.
- (2) The students have the average competency in learning English - they have learned English in the Junior High School.
- (3) The students are motivated to achieve proficiency in the reading class.
- (4) The "Penuntun Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris Berdasarkan Kurikulum 1984" is widely used in the SMA, especially in Surabaya.

1.8. Definition of Key Terms

This final task is entitled "The Readability of Reading Materials in the Penuntun Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris Berdasarkan Kurikulum 1984". To avoid misunderstanding, some key terms used in this study are defined below before the writer proceeds the core of her study.

¹¹Mary M. Dupuis, Eunice N. Askov, Content Area Reading: An Individualized Approach, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1982, 234.

- 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.¹²
- Reading materials refer to those found in the "Penuntun Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris Berdasarkan Kurikulum 1984" for the first year of SMA.
- 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 the learner is not familiar with.
- 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 thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter I deals with the background of the problem, statement of the problem, the objectives, assumptions, and the limitations of the study, theoretical framework, assumptions,

¹²Ibid., 233.

definition of key terms, and the organization of the thesis. Chapter II presents review of the related literature. Chapter III deals with the research design, the subject of the study, instruments, the procedures of data collection, and the techniques for data analysis. The findings and the interpretation of the findings are presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V will be the conclusion and suggestion of the study.