

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Reading is an inevitable part of literacy (Sezer & Sert, 2013:67 in Sumerci & Sumerci, 2017) because literacy is an ability to read and write (Graff, 2006 and Grabe & Kaplan, 1992). Reading is an interactive process between the reader and a text (Alyousef, 2006). In this process, the text is interacted by the reader as the readers tried to find the meaning to avoid misunderstanding in receiving information. Through reading a text, students can expand their mind which enables them to be critical in solving problems.

Reading is important in language learning. Through reading a text, the students can develop their mind which makes them smarter in solving problem. Besides, reading also give the students a wide point of view and think as the observer to gain the meaning of a text which at last, the students will also develop their critical thinking. In addition, reading also can make the students gain more vocabulary and knowledge. Moreover, reading also helps the students to get more new information. Brown (2004:185) states that in learning a foreign language, the teacher expects students to be skillful in reading. Reading in a foreign language supports the students to be more comfortable with the words and grammatical rules that foster them to express their own thinking.

In the Junior and Senior High Schools in Indonesia, reading is geared toward the attainment of competency. According to the 2013 Curriculum, competency is broadly defined as a set of attitude, knowledge, and skills in

comprehending the texts structures and contents (Kemdikbud, 2013). Despite of the new scientific-oriented curriculum deployed since 2013, the EFL students' reading competency has not been attained satisfactorily as expected. Nor the refinement of reading strategies were endeavoured since then.

Many EFL students possessed deficiencies in reading. Data have shown clearly, the students' reading scores were declining over the years from 2012 to 2018. When compared to other countries, Indonesia positioned lowest in the rank when they participated the Program for International Students Assessment (PISA) in three consecutive years, they are, 2012, 2015, and 2018.

In 2012, 65 countries including Indonesia participated in PISA (Pratiwi,2019). As reported in PISA, the Indonesian students' reading scores showed deficiencies. The students' reading scores, when compared to other countries, were ranked on 64 out of 65 countries. Moreover, their reading mean score was equal to 397 out of a total score of 1000. The PISA's reading performance proved that the scientific approach was not a better approach than the communicative approach (Indrilla, 2018). It is supported by Muhlison (2011), who stated that the students' reading scores in reading taught by communicative approach are better than taught by non-communicative approach. Simply concluded, the observation-question-exploration -association-and-communication reading approach was not effective as yet for the students' in understanding high-order-thinking items (items beyond cognitive level 1, 2 and 3; affective level 1 and 2; psychomotor level 1 and 2). They were not prepared to cope with high-order-thinking items. In addition, the implementation of scientific approach is not fully implemented because the teachers do not have enough knowledge in

understanding it. Thus, the teacher only implement two stages out of seven stages in scientific approach; communicating and associating (Kartikawati et. al, 2015).

In 2015, there were 72 countries participating in PISA (Schleicher, 2019). As reported in PISA, the Indonesian students' reading scores still showed deficiencies. The students' reading scores, when compared to other countries, were ranked on 60 out of 72 countries. Moreover, their reading mean score remained the same as in 2012, that is, 397 out a total score of 1000. The PISA's result by Indrilla, 2018, proofed that the scientific approach was not a better approach than the communicative approach despite it having been deployed for three years. Simply concluded, the scientific reading approach was not effective as yet for the students' in understanding high-order-thinking items. It is because most of the learning process in Indonesia was conducted by memorizing which is in the level of low order thinking (Novitayanti, 2017). The students are not familiar yet with high order thinking items because the teachers still implemented low order thinking. It makes the students hard in understanding the high order thinking item because the teachers rarely implement it.

In 2018, 79 countries participating in PISA (Schleicher, 2019). As reported in PISA, the Indonesian students' reading scores still showed deficiencies. The students' reading scores, when compared to other countries, were ranked on 72 out of 79 countries. Moreover, their reading mean score dropped to 371 despite the new curriculum has been deployed for five years. The PISA's result proved that the scientific approach was really a failure in developing the students' reading competency, especially in finishing up high-order-thinking items because they are not practicing it continuously. They are

still being practiced in the level of low order thinking, whereas the students should be accustomed to answering problem solving questions with a variety of sources, this activity can make the students are ready to face questions that are in the level of high order thinking (Novitayanti, 2017). If the students are already familiar with the high order thinking items, they will be easy in finishing up high order thinking level.

Novitayanti (2017) stated that memorizing is seen as a style of teaching learning process in Indonesia. Based on Bloom's Taxonomy, memorizing is in the level of C1 or it is categorized as low order thinking. Most of the teachers implement it as usual. This is one of the reason why Indonesia always in below average based of PISA. The students must be familiarized with the questions beyond low order thinking which could make them ready for the next PISA. Moreover, the purpose of PISA is to grow up the ability to think creatively, solve a problem critically, mastering technology, and adaptive thinking in a new era (Novitayanti, 2011). She also stated that the students who have good literacy are expected to have the competencies of affective, cognitive, and psychomotor by thinking creatively to face the 21st century challenges.

Previous related research entitled "Reading Competency of First-Year Undergraduate Students at the University of Botswana: A Case Study" in 2017 has the similar topic to this present research. This study which conducted by Beauty 15 Boikanyo Ntereke also discusses about students' reading competency. In this previous study, the students' reading competency at the beginning of the lecture was tested, it is the same as the present research but it is conducted for junior high school students who were in grade 7. In the previous research it was

shown that many students were having lack understanding of reading competency at first, but then, after getting the course a lot of changes that occur. Students were found to be able to understand reading competency after receiving treatment in the form of courses at the beginning of lecture. In contrast to this research which focuses more on students' reading competency in understanding questions based on High Order Thinking Items. Even though the curriculum has changed, in reality there are still many students in Indonesia are weak in literacy.

The observation has done in SMPN 1 Ubud, it found that the teacher of SMPN 1 Ubud used the reading competency test in low order thinking items to assess students' reading competency. There are four indicators in reading; main idea, specific ideas, textual reference, and word meaning that should be assessed to measure reading competency of the students. However, the test only focused on finding main idea and specific ideas in every test is given. The test also have some weaknesses which made the students answered the test easily because the operational word which are used C1, C2, and C3. So, the test is inappropriate to measure the students' reading competency in order to prepare them in the next PISA.

In this present study, the researcher was assessed the students' reading competency through high order thinking items. In assessing reading competency through high order thinking items, the researcher was more focus on the test items which beyond C1, C2, and C3. In answering the test, the students have to read the passage to get the information and they answer the questions by their own conclusion according to the information that they get from the passage. This kind of test make the students unable to guess the answer because they need to analyse

the text to get the answer. Hence, they must comprehend the passage and it also increase their critical thinking ability.

As it was explained above, the present study was to investigate the students reading competency on high order items in the junior high school. Specifically, the present research was endeavoured to describe and compare the students' reading competency, especially on high-order-thinking items in the *Sekolah Menengah Pertama 1 Negeri (SMPN) Ubud*. The reading competency was measured using high-order-thinking items beyond the cognitive domain levels of C1, C2, and C3; the affective domain levels of A1 and A2; psychomotor domain levels of P1 and P2. Affective domain of levels A3 and A4; psychomotor domain of levels P3, P4, and P5. The text genres studied were of two types, namely: descriptive texts about a person, an animal, a place, and recount texts about a personal experience and an accident. The text indicators measured consisted of four aspects, namely the main idea, the specific ideas, the textual references, and the word meanings.

1.2 Problem Identification

The students' reading deficiency on high-order-thinking items as reported in PISA 2012, 2015, and 2018 was identified due to the following facts.

Firstly, the students were not really trained to deal with high-order-thinking items like cognitive domain of levels C4 (analyzing), C5 (evaluating), and C6 (creating); affective domain of levels A3 (valuing) and A4 (organizing); psychomotor domain of levels P3 (mechanizing), P4 (complex overt responding), and P5 (adapting). In schools, they were expected to comprehend lower-order-

thinking items, like cognitive domain of levels C1 (memorizing), C2 (comprehending), and C3 (applying); affective domain of levels A1 (accepting) and A2 (responding); psychomotor domain of levels P1 (perceiving), P2 (setting) ,and P3 (guided responding);

Secondly, the EFL teachers were not really competent to exercise with high-order-thinking items like cognitive domain of levels C4 (analyzing), C5 (evaluating), and C6 (creating); affective domain of levels A3 (valuing) and A4 (organizing); psychomotor domain of levels P3 (mechanizing), P4 (complex overt responding), and P5 (adapting). In schools, they were expected to comprehend lower-order-thinking items like cognitive domain of levels C1 (memorizing), C2 (comprehending), and C3 (applying); affective domain of levels A1 (accepting) and A2 (responding); psychomotor domain of levels P1 (perceiving), P2 (setting), and P3 (guided responding). They all stick to the curricular learning objectives as set forth in the 2013 Curriculum;

Thirdly, higher-order-thinking items in reading may not only require a scientific approach, nor a communicative approach. Both the teachers and students need to be trained in millennial learning styles by involving 4Cs, namely: creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

Fourthly, both the teachers and students were not acquitted with descriptive texts dealing with a person, an animal, a place, a procedure, and recount texts about a personal experience and an accident. The text indicators were not fully discussed thoroughly during the reading classes, so that the students had less exposures to the indicators and descriptors as well.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the afore-mentioned background, the problems could be stated as follows:

1. What are the students' reading competencies on high-order-thinking items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators in *SMPN 1 Ubud*?
2. Are there any significant differences in the students' reading competencies on high-order-thinking items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators in *SMPN 1 Ubud*?

1.4 Research Objectives

Based on the research questions stated previously, the research objectives could be formulated as follows.

1) General Objective

The general research objective is to describe and compare the students' reading competencies on high-order-thinking items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators in *SMPN 1 Ubud*.

2) Specific Objectives

The specific research objectives are as follows.

- (1) Describing the students' reading competencies on high-order-thinking items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators in *SMPN 1 Ubud*;
- (2) Comparing simultaneously the students' reading competencies on high-order-thinking items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators in *SMPN 1 Ubud*;

- (3) Finding a trend of the students' reading competencies on high-order-thinking items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators in *SMPN 1 Ubud*.

1.5 Research Significance

Every research is worth to be carried out because it always has significant contribution on the domain of the research. The general and specific research objectives would benefit the following parties.

1) **Theoretical Significance**

Theoretically, the research findings could be used to improve the reading strategies especially on working out high-order-thinking items in *SMPN 1 Ubud*.

2) **Practical Significance**

Practically, the results are beneficial for the following individuals.

- (1) Firstly, the learners could find an efficient and effective reading strategy to solve high-order-thinking items contained in the English texts.
- (2) Secondly, the teachers could also be benefitted since their students' have experience and skill in working out high-order-thinking items contained in the English texts.
- (3) Thirdly, future researchers may explore other strategies as the students' reading competency is needed

1.6 Research Scope

The present research was restricted on the descriptive texts about a person, an animal, a place, a procedure; and recount texts about a personal experience and an accident in the second semester of the seventh grade students in *SMPN 1 Ubud* in the academic year 2019/2020.

1.7 Definition of Key Concepts

In order not to arouse misunderstanding, conceptual and operational definitions are deemed very important. Theoretically, critical reading is the skill that will enable the readers to interpret and evaluate what they read (McWhorter, 1992: 377). The readers who read critically will have deep understanding of the material so that they can analyse and evaluate what they are reading. In critical reading the level of the questions is categorized as high order thinking items. Anderson and Krathwhol (2001) defined high-order-thinking items as those items that go beyond the cognitive domain of levels 1, 2, and 3; affective domain of level 1 and 2; psychomotor domain of levels 1 and 2. It is because reading competency is a set of attitude, knowledge and skill (*Buku Panduan Guru Kurikulum 2013, 2013*). Thus, if the students have those competencies they would be ready to face the challenges of 21st century and they categorized as a good literation (Novitayanti, 2011).

Operationally, high-order-thinking items were those items specified to the four indicators of reading competency, namely: 1) the main idea that is a complete simple sentence which illustrates the general idea of a text, 2) specific ideas are detailed pieces of information containing in the paragraphs, 3) textual

references are pronouns in reference to specific nouns in the descriptive and recount texts, and 4) word meanings are the implicational/psychological words/phrases' meanings.

