CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of (a) research background, (b) problems identification, (c) research questions, (d) research objectives, (e) research significances, (f) research scopes, (g) definition of key concepts

1.1 Research Background

Reading is one of the important language skills and a critical component of success in learning (Fitriana, 2011; Ntereke & Ramoroka, 2017). Through reading, the readers gain the knowledge from the written text that may help them to learn many things or even solve the problem (Al Nazhari et al., 2016; Pokharel, 2018). Naturally, reading is a complex activity where the readers should have interaction with the text by using background knowledge, the implicit or explicit information, and the context in order to construct the meaning (Fahriany, 2015; Ulmer et al., 2015). Reading is also integrated with the other skills in language learning such as writing. The good reader in language learning may improve good writing style because the reader enriches their vocabulary and grammatical structure of the written language (Delfi & Yamat, 2017). However, reading skill is rather difficult to master because reading involves activities such as determining main idea, identifying spesific information, reference, inference, and vocabulary (Hadi, 2015; Silalahi, 2017).

Reading had been considered to be important since there were many types of research and investigations in reading competency for decades (Kaya, 2015;

Ntereke & Ramoroka, 2017; Zabihi & Pordel, 2011). The ability to read affects the students' academic success (Hirsch, 2003). National examination for junior high school is mostly in reading, require the students to be able to answer the reading test. Reading in a foreign language is strongly linked with thinking in that language (Kaya, 2015). Thus, reading competency is not separated with the cognitive process which is not a kind of visual only, but also the prior knowledge of reading text (Kalayci & Humiston in Kaya, 2015).

In EFL, critical reading is indicated by the ability to answer high order items contained in the text. Through reading activity students are able to draw the meaning of words and get information from the text (Hirsch, 2003). For this, the students need to think critically in order to understand what the writer implies in the text. Shor as cited in Taglieber (2000), critical literacy is described as the ability of analytical thinking, reading, writing, speaking or discussing that go under the surface of impressions and understanding the social contexts and consequences of any subject matter, and also finding out the deep meaning of any events, texts, objects or situation and then applying those meaning to context. In line with Flynn, 1989 as cited in Taglieber (2000) stated that critical reading is an interactive process using several levels of thought simultaneously, for example; analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Thus, critical reading is necessary for EFL-s students because they would be able to evaluate, clarify, seek possibilities and alternatives, and solve the problem logically.

In Indonesia, reading is one of the EFL-s skills that is taught beside writing, speaking, and listening. Especially in the Junior and Senior High Schools, reading is geared toward the attainment of competency. Reading is the skill that

is developed in curriculum 2013. 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, 2019). Despite the new scientific-oriented curriculum deployed since 2013, the EFL students' reading competency has not been attained satisfactorily as expected (Aditomo et al., 2018). Nor the refinement of reading strategies were endeavoured since then. The curriculum is developed in 2013 after PISA test in 2012. The test report showed that the young Indonesian students (15 – 17 years) failed to answer high order items in reading. In fact, the reading competency of Indonesian students are categorized low where the PISA report in 2012, Indonesia was ranked 64. This program tested students' reading competency in 65 countries (PISA *2012 Results in Focus*, 2012). The mean score of Indonesia in reading was 396. It was meant that Indonesian students failed to reach the baseline level of performance (Level 2) in reading, they can only handle the simplest and most obvious tasks like knowledge (C1), comprehension (C2), and application (C3).

In 2015, PISA test was conducted in 72 countries and the achievement of the Indonesian students in the Program of International Student Assessment (PISA) ranked 64 (Pisa *2015*, 2015). The mean score of Indonesian students was 397. It was meant that Indonesian score was increased 22.1 point. Indonesia had been moderate improvements in reading. Equally important, those students in Indonesia who had reached Grade 10 by the age of 15 were significantly ahead in reading competency.

Unfortunately, the result of PISA in 2018 had been announced that Indonesian students tested in reading where Indonesia was in 72 out of 79 member countries, and the mean score was 371 (OECD, 2018). It was meant that average reading score of Indonesian students decreased from the last three year. This problem of literacy is one of the problems that must be given special attention by Indonesian government. This is because in the last few decades, the competitiveness of Indonesian among other countries tend to be less competitive in reading literacy. Thus, the reading competency of the Indonesian students are categorized in low level where the students are not able to solve the reading test item on analytical, evaluative, and creative in answering higher order items.

Studies have shown that numerous factors that can affect language learning (Renandya, 2013:24). The factors that may impact the students' reading competency are motivation, attitude, read-strategies, and teachers' instruction in learning (Renandya, 2013:24). The factor from the teacher is like teacher's content is not suitable to train the students' competency to answer high order items in reading, so the students are used to answer the low order items in reading. The other reason is the reading strategy. There is significant effect of the reading strategies are mostly influenced by the attitude to English in EFL (Habók et al., 2019; Pourhosein Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). In addition, Koda (2007) in (Pourhosein Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016) said that there are various variables that impact learners' reading comprehension. Some of these variables involve vocabulary knowledge, prior knowledge, metacognitive information, and reading strategies. Trehearne and Doctorow (2005) in Pourhosein

Gilakjani & Sabouri, (2016) expressed that there are other factors that affect learners' reading comprehension skill. These factors are learners' reading attitudes, useful teaching on comprehension methods, versatility, text form, and learners' aware of various reading comprehension strategies . Thus, from the factors of reading competency above most of the students are not able to answer high order items in reading which is comprehended in analysing, evaluating, and creating.

Studies in critical reading are abundant recently, for example the study about critical reading of postgraduate students and showed that the students have moderate readiness in critical reading (Anuar & Sidhu, 2017). The other studies about critical reading in junior high school students was conducted by Fadhillah, 2017. He found that critical reading strategies helped students to think critically in reading narrative text (Fadhillah, 2017). An exploration of the students' difficulties in using critical thinking in reading also conducted by Velayati et al., 2017. It indicated that students' lack of practicing let them difficult in using critical reading (Velayati et al., 2017). Although there are some studies on critical reading, a particular study on reading competency in Junior High Schools in Tabanan has not been conducted. This study is important in order to know 'what' and 'how' students' reading competency in Tabanan. Additional, preparing the students to do the reading competency test with high-order items.

Thus, the present study is conducted to describe and compare the students' reading competency, especially for the Junior High School students in SMP Negeri 1 Penebel, Tabanan. This school is one of the referral public schools

that apply curriculum-2013 in Tabanan. As far as the observation the students'
scores in National Examination are categorized low mean score especially in
English eventhough the English teacher has been applying teaching method
that is recommended in curriculum-2013. So, the researcher want to investigate
the students' reading competency in answering higher order items or questions
containing in the descriptive and recount text, and answering higher order items
in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor beyond knowledge (C1),
comprehension (C2), and application (C3), Receiving (A1), Responding (A2),
Imitation (P1), Manipulation (P2), Precision (P3), and also comparing
students' reading competency based on the class, text genre, and reading
indicators, namely the main idea, the specific ideas, the textual references, and the
word meanings, especially the students in SMP N 1 Penebel, Tabanan.

1.2 Problem Identification

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

Firstly, the students were not really trained to deal with higher order
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), (Prihantoro, 2014).

Secondly, the EFL teachers were not really competent to exercise with high-order 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 (Prihantoro, 2014).

Thirdly, higher-order items in reading may neither only require a scientific approach, nor a communicative approach. Both the teachers and students need to be trained in millennial learning style, this style of learning require the students to be active in the teaching process and involving 4 C skills, 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 discussed thoroughly during the reading classes, so that

the students had less exposures to the indicators and descriptors as well (Rusmawan, 2018).

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions of this study are stated as follows.

1. What are the students' reading competencies on higher order items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators in SMP N 1 Penebel?

2. Is there any significant difference in the students' reading competencies on higher order items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators in SMP N 1 Penebel?

1.4 Research Objectives

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

a. The general research objective is to describe and compare the students' reading competencies in answering higher order items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators in SMP N 1 Penebel, in the Academic Year of 2019/2020.

b. The specific research objectives are as follows.

(1) Describing the students' reading competencies on higher order items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators in SMP N 1 Penebel;

(2) Comparing simultaneously the students' reading competencies on higher order items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators in SMP N 1 Penebel

1.5 **Research Significance.**

The research will be useful theoretically and practically.

Theoretically, the research will be useful in finding the alternative teaching reading strategy and designing the proper instruction for answering higher order items in reading.

Practically, the research will be useful for the students, the teachers, and the future researchers.

a. **The Junior High School Students**.

The research will be useful to train the students' reading competency in answering higher order item in the English text studied either in the Junior High School and written texts found in the media.

b. **The Junior High School's English Teachers**.

The Secondary School English teachers will be also benefited from the research as they could plan and design proper instruction for improving the students' reading competency on higher order items contained in higher cognitive, affective, and psychomotor level based on the class, text genre, and reading indicators.

c. **Future Researchers**.

Future researchers will be also benefitted from the research as they could design intensive research which may include discriminant variables that solve the students' reading deficiencies in reading higher order items.

1.6 Research Scope

The present research was delimited on the descriptive texts about a person, an animal, a place and recount texts about a personal experience and an accident in the seventh grade students of SMP N 1 Penebel in the academic year of 2019/2020.

1.7 Definition of Key Concepts

In order not to arouse misunderstanding, conceptual and operational definitions are deemed very important. Theoretically, Anderson and Krathwohl define higher order items as those items that go beyond the cognitive domain of levels C1, C2 and C3; affective domain of levels A1 and A2; psychomotor domain of levels P1 and P2 (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Operationally, higher-order items are those items specify to the four indicators of reading competency, namely: 1) the main idea is a complete simple sentence which illustrates the general idea of a text, 2) specific ideas are detailed pieces of information 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 (Latifa, 2018).

Text genre is defined as the kind of texts that are categorized by its purpose, for example describing, explaining, arguing (Knapp and Watkins cited in Melissourgou & Frantzi, 2017). Two text genres in this study are descriptive text and recount text. Descriptive text is text that describe a

person, a thing, or place where the reader can feel and see a picture through the written text such as descriptive text of person' character, descriptive text of animal's physical, descriptive text of procedure. Whereas, recount text is text that tell the reader about writer's experiences such as recount text of person's experience, recount text of an accident, recount text of incidence. Here, class is defined as a set of place or room that students learn to get the knowledge without any destructions (Khanna, 2007). There are four classes in this study. The class consists of 30 – 34 male and female students, and has 12 subjects in a week for 40 hours (Kemdikbud, 2019).