

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

Reading is one part of literacy, which is defined as a process of using reading, writing, and spoken language to extract, build, integrate, and criticize meaning through interaction and is combined with multimodal texts in negotiations relating to social activities (Frankel, et al 2016). They further state that in order to avoid misunderstanding in receiving information, then the students need to improve their skill in reading. The students can develop their mind which makes them smarter in solving problems through reading a text.

Reading is very important in increasing human knowledge since it is a part of humans' daily life. This statement is supported by Harrison (2004) who states that reading skills are important for the individuals since they foster comprehension in reading.

In line with Lai (2011) who states about the importance of critical thinking in reading which is considered as the ability of students to analyze arguments, draw conclusions using reasoning, assess or evaluate, and make decisions or problem solving. Cognitive value of students is proven to increase with the empowerment of critical thinking skills, especially in daily learning (Cano & Maryinez, 1991).

Literacy and critical thinking do have a close relationship, therefore critical thinking based on HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) is very important. HOTS

have a very important role in building a literacy culture because it is in line with what has been mandated in the development of the 2013 curriculum. Reporting from one of the most prestigious programs employed to measure worldwide educational achievement that is Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) offered by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which Indonesia has the lower grade in reading level.

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 endeavored since then.

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

In 2012, there were 65 countries including Indonesia participated in PISA (Fernanlampir, et al.,2019; 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 a total score of 1000. The PISA's reading performance proofed that the scientific approach was not a better approach than the

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 2015, there were 72 countries participated 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 proofed that the scientific approach was not a better approach than the communicative approach despite it has 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.

In 2018, there were 79 countries participated 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 proofed that the scientific approach was really a failure in developing the students' reading competency, especially in finishing up high-order-thinking items.

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

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 present research is endeavored to describe and compare the students' reading competency, especially on high-order-thinking items in the *Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri (SMPN) 10 Denpasar*. 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, a procedure, 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 in both descriptive and recount text.

## 1.2 Problem Identification

The students' reading deficiency on high-order-thinking 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 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 involving 4 Cs, namely: creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.



*Fourthly*, both the teachers and students were not acquainted 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.

### **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 *SMP N 10 Denpasar*?
2. Are there any significant differences in the students' reading competencies on high-order-thinking items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators in *SMP N 10 Denpasar*?

### **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 10 Denpasar*.

#### **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 10 Denpasar*;
- (2) Comparing simultaneously the students' reading competencies on high-order-thinking items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators in *SMPN 10 Denpasar*;
- (3) Finding a trend of the students' reading competencies on high-order-thinking items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators in *SMPN 10 Denpasar*.

### **1.5 Research Significance**

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 for students

#### **2) Practical Significance**

Practically, the results are useful for the following individuals:

- (1) Firstly, the students of *SMP N 10 Denpasar* could find an efficient and effective reading strategy to solve high-order-thinking items contained in the English texts. Then the students could be trained to read and recognize high order items in the text.
- (2) Secondly, the teachers of *SMP N 10 Denpasar* 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 to enhance the students' reading literacy.

## 1.6 Research Scope

The present research was delimited 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 10 Denpasar* 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*, 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. *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.