

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This Chapter presents the background of the research, research problem, objective of the research, significance of the research and definition of the key terms.

#### **A. Background of the Study**

Reading comprehension is one of the most important skill in English that student must mastered. reading can increase student knowledge. In English language learning reading can help student to expand their vocabulary. By reading, student will acquire new words in various contexts. This help student to enrich their vocabulary, which can have an impact on their writing and speaking skills. students who have a wide vocabulary will find it easier to convey ideas effectively. reading skills can also improve students' writing skills. by reading students learn how sentences are structured, how paragraphs are developed, and how ideas are presented logically. this gives them good examples to apply when writing, both in terms of text structure, grammar usage, and language style.

But, reading skills are also a significant challenge faced by students in learning English. Many students struggle to understand reading texts due to various factors, including limited vocabulary, difficulty in processing information, and the complexity of the text itself. Based on initial observations made by the researcher of 31 students in class 9 of Mts Al Amin Rejomulyo Kediri, 29 students scored below 75 or below the average score, 13 students scored above 50, 12 students scored above 40, and 3 students scored below 40 in the reading comprehension test

using texts from the textbook 'English for Nusantara'. This raises questions about the factors that might influence students' difficulties in understanding the reading material. One of the possible factors in students' difficulty in reading comprehension is the Lexical Density of the text, which can affect comprehension and the complexity of the material for junior high school students.

The difficulties faced by students in understanding reading texts show how important reading comprehension is in the learning process. According to setianingsih (2017) One of the literacy activities which helps someone to communicate is reading. Ayudhia (2023) also said that by reading students can learn at the same time can get more latest information, therefore reading comprehension must be mastered by students. With the increase in reading skills possessed by students, it can make it easier for them to improve and enrich their vocabulary, make it easier for them to understand and digest the information they receive.

One of the media that can help teachers and students in the learning process to improve their reading skills is the textbook. According to Heinle (2000), 'the textbook is stimulus or instrument for teaching and learning process'. Therefore, teachers and students can use textbooks as a medium for the teaching and learning process, so that the teaching and learning process can run well. in our country, a widely used textbook is 'English for Nusantara for grade 9 junior high school' which is a product of the ministry of education and culture designed in accordance with the applicable curriculum in Indonesia. This book contains various genres of reading texts formulated to help improve students' reading skills.

In fact, many students still have poor reading and text comprehension skills. In this context we can analyze how complex a text is with the theory of Lexical Density. According to Halliday (1985) Lexical Density is a measure that shows how dense a text is in terms of lexical words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) compared to the total number of words in the text. Lexical Density is considered an important indicator of the complexity and readability of a text, which can directly affect students' understanding and engagement with the material. Lexical Density can help us to analyze textbooks used in learning. texts with too high Lexical Density tend to have a denser and more complex structure, making it more difficult for readers to understand, especially for students who are still in the learning stage. while texts with balanced Lexical Density are easier to understand, making it easier for students to understand the reading text in their textbooks and can support learning outcomes.

In the English Language Learning Process, reading texts that have high Lexical Density can be a challenge for some students, because if there are many texts with high Lexical Density in their textbooks, it will cause students to experience difficulties in learning and understanding the content of reading, which ultimately has an impact on students' low reading skills.

Therefore, to find out the extent to which Lexical Density affects students' comprehension in reading, it is necessary to analyze the level of Lexical Density in the English for Nusantara book for Grade 9. In this case, the researcher aims to analyze the level of Lexical Density in the reading texts in the book according to the ability level of junior high school students, as well as how variations in Lexical

Density between text types can influence students' reading comprehension. The importance of this analysis is supported by a study conducted by Yuni Lailatul Maufiroh (2021) entitled "Lexical Density of reading Material in English Textbook 'Passport to the World' for Grade 8 Junior High School Based on Curriculum 2013." Her study revealed that while most texts in the textbook had medium Lexical Density, the overall distribution of text difficulty levels did not follow the ideal ratio of 1:2:1 for easy, medium, and difficult texts. This imbalance indicates that some reading Materials may not be suitable for students' reading levels, which could hinder their comprehension and learning outcomes. Yuni's findings highlight the importance of evaluating both Lexical Density and genre distribution in English textbooks. Therefore, her research becomes a valuable reference for the current study in assessing whether the English for Nusantara textbook under the Merdeka Curriculum aligns with students' abilities and curriculum goals. In addition, it is important to identify the genres of reading Materials offered by Merdeka Curriculum in the English for Nusantara grade 9 book, in order to understand how diverse text types can contribute to students' reading skills.

## **B. Research Questions**

Based on the background explained above, the researcher conducted an analysis of the "Lexical Density of reading Materials in the 'English for Nusantara' English Textbook for 9th Grade of Junior High School Based on the Merdeka Curriculum". Therefore, the researcher formulated the following research questions:

1. How do the genres found in the English for Nusantara textbook reflect the

characteristics of the reading materials?

2. How is the Lexical Density of the reading Materials in the "English for Nusantara" for grade 9 junior high school textbook?

### **C. Research Objectives**

Based on the statement of research questions above, the objectives of this research were:

1. To analyze how the genres found in the English for Nusantara textbook reflect the characteristics of the reading materials..
2. To know the Lexical Density of reading Materials in the "English for Nusantara textbook for 9th grade of junior high school" based on the Merdeka Curriculum

### **D. Research Significant**

The result of the research is fully expected to give some theoretical and practical knowledge for the following parties:

1. Theoretically

This study is expected to contribute to the understanding of Lexical Density as one of the ways to measure text difficulty. It helps explain how the number of content words in a text can affect how easy or difficult the text is for students to understand.

In addition, this study also contributes to the understanding of reading Materials in English learning. By analyzing the types of texts and their characteristics, this study helps show how reading Materials can support students' comprehension.

## 2. Practically

### a. For teachers

This study can help teachers understand the level of difficulty of reading texts based on Lexical Density. It can support teachers in choosing reading Materials that match students' abilities. Besides that, teachers can also use this study as a reference to evaluate reading Materials, not only from the content but also from how easy or difficult the texts are.

### b. For curriculum developers and textbook writers

This study can give useful information about how Lexical Density affects the difficulty of texts in textbooks. This can help in creating materials that are suitable for students' level. It also helps in designing reading materials that have different text types and are in line with the goals of the curriculum.

### c. For Further researchers

This study can be used as a reference for other researchers who want to study Lexical Density or text difficulty in English learning. It can also encourage further research about reading Materials and how they affect students' reading comprehension.

## **E. Definition of the Key Term**

### 1. Lexical Density

According to Halliday (1985), Lexical Density is the ratio between the number of lexical words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) and the total number of words in a text, which is used to measure the complexity of a text. In the research conducted by the author, Lexical Density was analyzed based on the reading texts

in the textbook 'English for Nusantara' to determine the level of text complexity for grade 9 students.

## 2. Reading Materials

Reading Materials are an important part of the English learning process because they provide students with opportunities to develop their reading skills and understand various types of texts. Good reading Materials should be appropriate to students' level so that they can understand the content without feeling overwhelmed. In addition, reading Materials can help students improve their vocabulary, comprehension, and overall language ability. According to Akyol and Kayabaşı (2018), students with reading difficulties need suitable and supportive materials to improve their reading skills effectively. Therefore, selecting appropriate reading Materials plays a significant role in helping students achieve better understanding and learning outcomes.

## 3. Content Word/ Lexical Word

Content words are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs that carry significant lexical meaning. These words function as the main elements that convey ideas and important information in communication, unlike function words that mainly serve grammatical purposes. According to Ure (1971), content words represent the informational core of a text and are essential in measuring Lexical Density. This idea is supported by Fadhil et al. (2023), who state that content words play a crucial role in delivering meaning, as they carry the main information that readers need to understand.

## 4. Grammatical Function Word

Grammatical function words are words that mainly serve grammatical purposes and function to connect ideas within a sentence rather than carry lexical meaning. These words include prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs, and pronouns. According to Halliday (1985), language is composed of both lexical and grammatical elements that work together to create meaning in a text. In line with this, Eggins (2004) states that grammatical function words play a role in forming relationships between concepts and structures in a sentence.