CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

At the present, Indonesia is being on an era of ASEAN Federation Trade Area (AFTA) as well as ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) which give significant impacts and effects on Indonesia’s development especially its human resources and economy. In fact, the purpose of both organizations is to make ASEAN countries unite so that a better advance will come up naturally for all countries becoming the members of the organizations themselves. The unity itself enables each of them to develop more and more in the world’s competition. Through this development, of course, Indonesia needs to make a better preparation to face all challenges going to come, especially to educate the human resources in order to be able to stand confidently even when the other countries seem to be better than Indonesia.

To be successful in achieving a better development and advance, there is nothing but education which plays a very important role in doing so. In Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, the 6th edition: International Student’s Edition, a definition of education is depicted clearly. It is stated that education is a process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools or colleges, to improve knowledge and develop skills. For this reason, it becomes so indispensable to know what is going on with Indonesia’s education.

Since 2013, Indonesia’s education has been committed to have K13 which stands for Curriculum 13. It is a kind of curriculum which is designed to create more creative and innovative students in Elementary School, Junior High School, and
Senior High School. It means that the students are expected to be an independent individual in the classroom. The process of learning will be based on student-centered. In this way, the teacher will only monitor and direct the students to do this or that kind of thing but not explain even with one word only if it is not necessary enough.

As a matter of fact, K13 is a good curriculum for education in Indonesia because Indonesian people are completely scared to raise their hands up in a process of learning. They prefer remaining in a silence as if they have understood all materials taught to them. This is actually what people know as Indonesian culture. It is really different from the students in other countries, for example, western areas. The writer got an idea from one of lecturers in English Department, Faculty of Cultural Studies, University of Sumatera Utara, when learning in the classroom. The lecturer said, “In European countries, almost all students are so enthusiastic to ask questions to the teacher. As a result, they can be more broad-minded and open-minded in case of thinking and learning.” In accordance with this weakness, Indonesia should have done an action so that its people can grow and develop as more active ones.

Unfortunately, K13 which has become one of good actions to change Indonesia into a better country has been postponed up to this present time. Some corrections and preparations are still needed to apply the curriculum itself. What makes it seem to get worse is that a decision made which indicates that K13 is postponed to apply for education in Indonesia. Why? The writer thinks, the curriculum itself is totally effective to create creative and innovative students especially in Indonesia because Indonesia has a culture which reflects that students usually become so shy in the classroom. The class becomes so passive because nobody wants to raise their hands
up to ask about the materials taught. For this reason, an attitude analysis is certainly needed to gain more information related to the students’ attitudes towards learning and acquiring English as their target language.

As more people know, the world’s technology has developed more rapidly, especially in case of communication. Language is absolutely the only way to make a connection go well. Nowadays, we can find, more people join the communication networks such as google (g+), yahoo, facebook, twitter, instagram, path, line, and even blog. Based on what the writer has observed, the writer found that more people use English to convey what they are feeling to the others. For instance, some people and even most of people, especially the young generations, take a use of facebook and its followings. In this way, more young generations update their status or write some stories in English. For this reason, it can not be denied and ignored that almost those networks use English as the language of all. Towards this development, of course, it can be said that more people need English.

Since English has developed more and more among countries, we can see that more people take a use of the language. As an international language, English is called as a means of communication to connect individuals throughout the world. It is more and even more indispensable to know and master at this present time. Harmer (2001 : 1) in his book, ‘The Practice of English Language Teaching’ states that English is a lingua franca. He says,

“Although English is not the language with the largest number of native or ‘first’ language speakers, it has become a lingua franca. A lingua franca can be defined as a language widely adopted for communication between two speakers whose native languages are different from each other’s and where one or both speakers are using it as a ‘second’ language.”
Besides, Harmer (2001 : 2) also says,

“As we shall observe, it is not necessarily the case that English will remain dominant among world languages. However, there is no doubt that it is and will remain a vital linguistic tool for many business people, academics, tourists and citizens of the world who wish to communicate easily across nationalities for many years to come.”

For this reason, an English Language Teaching (ELT) is completely necessary for human beings. Jo McDonough and Christopher Shaw say, “As teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL/ESL), we are members of an established worldwide profession.”

Learning a foreign language such as English is occasionally considered so difficult. In this way, who to blame? Jana Echevarria, et.al. (2000 : 4) say, “Students have difficulty in school for a number of reasons; one may be the mismatch between students needs and teacher preparation.” In accordance with the previous quotation, the writer believes that an attitude analysis can play a very important role in overcoming the problem itself so that a better achievement in teaching and learning English as a foreign language will come up.

Attitudes are complex constructs; e.g. there may be both positive and negative feelings attached to, e.g. a language situation (Baker 1988:112- 115 in Annika Hohenthal’s writing). Hohenthal also said, “Attitude is something an individual has which defines or promotes certain behaviours. Although an attitude is a hypothetical psychological construct, it touches the reality of language life.” In this way, it can be said that an attitude analysis is definitely important to have. It can give such an evaluation to English teachers since it is quite often to find out that there is a mismatch between students needs and teacher preparation.
As a matter of fact, many sources are available to indicate the students’ attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language and some factors influencing their attitudes to study. There are many schools, institutions, and courses that become so interesting to visit in which we can gain much information. Nevertheless, what makes the writer so interested in deciding to do such a research of attitude analysis at SMA 4 Binjai, Sumatera Utara, is because the writer has something to reveal and expose there. Choosing the second-grade students of Natural Science Program as the object of study makes the writer so enthusiastic to write this thesis, as one of the requirements for undergraduate university students before obtaining a bachelor degree in the University of Sumatera Utara. SMA 4 Binjai is a place where the writer used to study and acquire a knowledge officially. In the high school, the writer studied many things related to English. For this reason, the writer is so interested in discussing the things which could improve the quality of teaching and learning English in the school in particular, and Indonesia in general.

1.2 Problems of the Study

Based on the background given above, here are some problems of the study in this thesis:

a) What are the attitudes of second-grade students of Natural Science Program at SMA 4 Binjai towards learning English?

b) What are some of the factors that influence the second-grade students’ attitudes towards learning English?

c) What should the second-grade students’ English teachers do regarded to the students’ attitudes towards learning English?
1.3 Objectives of the Study

In accordance with the problems written above, I myself, as the writer of this thesis, provide some objectives as follow:

a) To find out the attitudes of second-grade students of Natural Science Program towards learning English
b) To find out some of the factors that influence the second-grade students’ attitudes towards learning English
c) To find out what the second-grade students’ English teachers should do regarded to the students’ attitudes towards learning English

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study merely focuses on what the second-grade students of Natural Science Program going to SMA 4 Binjai, Sumatera Utara think of learning English as a foreign language. There are three classes for Natural Science Program at SMA 4 Binjai but the one which becomes the sample is only the students in class XI IPA 1. In the classroom, there are 43 students listed in the attendance list.

1.5 Significances of the Study

Hopefully, the findings of this study will be useful for both, the English teachers and second-grade students at my former high school, that is SMA 4 Binjai, Sumatera Utara. For English teachers, it is expected that this study will create a new perspective since the world’s technology has developed more rapidly indicating that a modern and sophisticated era has come up to support people’s lives. For the second-grade students, it could become a trigger for them to be more enthusiastic and active in learning in order to make a more advanced Indonesia.