CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Nowadays, most parents assume their children who suffer from reading, speaking and writing impairments are mentally retarded or lazy. And not least of them is scolding their children because she/he cannot get a good grade or pass the exam in school. Some parents force their children to participate in various extra lessons, but it is even become in vain. The child loses his/her playing time and still not be able to follow the lessons properly. Most of them do not realize whether their child is normal or has learning disabilities, especially in reading and writing that is commonly referred to dyslexia.

Dyslexia refers to learning disability which affects reading, writing, and speaking abilities and difficulty to interpret words, letters, numbers, even sounds. This language disorder can affect both spoken and written language. Primarily, rudimentary dyslexic appertains to the low average of identifying single words, incorrect and delayed decoding of words (as cited in Nijakowska, 2010). Lying upon this definition, dyslexic children have problems in recognizing phonemes in reading and as a result they are unable to understand what they read or write. This ailment is a type of learning disability with a neurological base which is genetic. Actually, the way dyslexic children see the letters same as other people. But they have a trouble to activate some parts of their brain which have a function to mention the sound that spoken and unify the letters with the words.

Commonly, dyslexia is divided into three types with its own characteristic. Those are dyslexia-visual, dyslexia-auditory, and dyslexia-dysgraphia. Dyslexia-visual is a disorder that can see a word which consists of some letters, but cannot differentiate and make interpretation what she/he sees, for example there is a sentence “The cat jump into the moon” then becomes “Ted took that man”. Dyslexia-auditory is a disorder that cannot differentiate the similarity and difference between sounds they heard, for example, dyslexics cannot hear similar sounds in the beginning and end such as boy and big, cat and math, and differentiate some words with the same vocal, such as pin, pan, and pen. Furthermore, dyslexia-dysgraphia is a
disorder in writing letters and words, grasping word-meanings, integrating the sounds of letters, and in pronouncing unfamiliar, and sometimes, even familiar words (Letchumy, 2008). From definition and explanation about dyslexia division based on the problem above, there is another theory that is appropriate for this study. It is Dyslexia Syndrome Theory by Levinson (1994). According to Levinson, dyslexia is divided into three types based on the difficulties; reading dyslexia, writing dyslexia (dysgraphia) and arithmetic dyslexia (dyscalculia)(as cited in Letchumy, 2008).

This thesis is about psycholinguistics focusing on dyslexia because in fact many people still cannot diagnose and understand what dyslexia is, especially parents as the closest people for them. This case is found from some students in Kidz Smile Therapy Centre for Kids in Medan, Sumatra Utara which is the source of the data. Most of them cannot read or spell any word appropriately, they have difficulties in reading, spelling and writing and also understanding their teachers’ instructions. Their handwriting is still not proper, and most of them confuse in spelling words in similar ways like “gram and garam”; or “tadi” and “tapi”; mixes up mirror letters like /b/ and /d/; flips over letters such as ƧЯ instead of ‘RS’; writes the same word with different spellings, such as the word for “raksasa” becomes “rasaksa,” “rakasa” or “raksaka;” reduction in spelling such as “permursyarawatan”; and always missed some words in a sentence. They also like daydream during the class, always feel dizy when look at so many sentences in a book, and hard to distinguish between right and left. They cannot recognize letters, and has a weak memory for the correct spelling of words. Judging from the fact of the data above, their teachers discover they suffer dyslexia.

Dyslexia is not a disease so there is no cure. It’s a learning disability that includes difficulty in the processing and using linguistic and symbolic codes, alphabetic letters representing speech sounds or number and quantities (Dyslexia Center of Utah, 2012). Besides, a dyslexia child or dyslexic has low corpus callosum function whereas it is useful for transmitting received information. Because of it, some of elementary students cannot listen, speak and spell, write, and read correctly. It is worrying case because those basic skills should lead them into the future. That is why there are many researchers and experts conducted research about dyslexia. It is important to note that dyslexic children do not have a lower mental capacity or IQ compared to normal children.
Fawcett, Nicolson and Maclagan (2001) mentioned “research indicating that poor readers suffering from dyslexia can have an IQ over 90, on the other hand, normal children suffering from common reading problems have IQ 85 and below” (as cited in Reid & Fawcett, 2001:32).

1.2 Problem of the Study

The problems that will be discussed in this thesis are only on language learning difficulties. Based on the background of the study above, the problems discussed in this thesis are:

1. What types of dyslexia suffered by children in Kidz Smile Therapy Center for Kids?
2. What methods are applied to overcome the language learning difficulties?

1.3 Objective of the Study

In doing the analysis, there is an objective found in this analysis, that is:

1. To describe the types of dyslexia suffered by children in Kidz Smile Therapy Center for Kids.
2. To describe the methods those are applied to overcome the language learning difficulties.

1.4 Scope of the Study

In doing this analysis, the field which is going to be analyzed must be limited in order to minimize the problem and to make the analysis can be focused on. The study of the child itself is limited by only analyzing five dyslexic children in Kidz Smile Therapy Center for Kids based on questionnaire and finding out the types and characteristics of dyslexic child on language learning difficulties, also the method of language learning used by dyslexic children by using Gillingham and Stillman (1997), Levinson (1994) and Lerner’s theories (1988). In addition, this does not involve a discussion about a treatment for sufferer.
1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study are expected as:

1. This study will add the knowledge of the reader about what is dyslexia, to give contributions both theoretically and practically in psycholinguistics especially dyslexia. Theoretically, the findings of the research are expected to be one of references and alternative information in the next dyslexia research.

2. Practically, this researchis expected to give deeper description about dyslexia for linguistic students who get interested in psycholinguistic. Besides, it can stimulate psycholinguistic lecturers to explain and give examples about dyslexia broadly in class. This research also useful for teachers who are teaching dyslexic child, they can understand well what dyslexia is then can make a better decision on teaching method for dyslexic.

3. The last expectation is to reveal parents, teachers, and therapist who have dyslexic children then they know how to guide studying and treat their children at home. And give the information about the relation between psycholinguistics and dyslexia by analyzing and explaining the learning disabilities of dyslexic child. Besides, it also can could remind every parents that it is important to diagnose dyslexia from an early age, so every dyslexic children can evolve according to their development stage should be.