CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background.

Reading is a key component of learning English since it opens the door to vocabulary acquisition, language comprehension, and improved academic performance in general. Grabe and Stoller (2013) assert that reading is a cognitive process that includes decoding, comprehension, and critical interpretation in addition to being a receptive skill. Reading instruction is even more important in the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), as it frequently serves as the main way that students are exposed to the language.

However, there are particular difficulties when teaching reading in EFL classes, particularly to students who don't speak English well. Even simple texts are difficult for students with poor grammar comprehension, a small vocabulary, and low motivation (Nation, 2022). Due to their incapacity to decipher intricate structures, identify key ideas, or draw conclusions, these students frequently struggle to understand texts (Kispal, 2008). In secondary education settings, like Telkom Schools Medan, where English language proficiency requirements rise while students' foundational skills may not improve, this problem becomes even more pressing.

In order to adapt reading instruction to the various needs of students, teachers are essential. However, many EFL teachers say they have trouble modifying materials, choosing suitable reading techniques, running mixed-ability classrooms, and overcoming students' emotional obstacles, like anxiety or lack of confidence (Rahmani & Sadeghi, 2022). Furthermore, teachers' capacity to carry out successful reading instruction is frequently hampered by a lack of adequate time, instructional materials, and professional development (Garton & Copland, 2019).

Language exposure and proficiency levels are typical in Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language from early childhood through senior high school. As a private school that prioritises innovation and technology, Telkom Schools Medan must simultaneously support English literacy while serving students from a variety of linguistic backgrounds. Teachers might not have the resources or know-how to adequately address the needs of students with low English proficiency, who need more support and differentiated instruction (Zhao & Wang, 2021).

Additionally, a more student-centered approach and the incorporation of higher-order thinking skills are required by the transition to the Kurikulum Merdeka (Indonesian Freedom Curriculum) (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). This makes teaching low-proficiency readers even more difficult because they may have trouble with critical thinking and text interpretation in addition to basic comprehension.

Examining the practical difficulties faced by English teachers when instructing students with low English proficiency in reading is crucial in light of these facts. In schools like Telkom Medan, which are dedicated to educational innovation but must operate within the limitations of student readiness and classroom dynamics, an understanding of these challenges can help with curriculum development, teacher training, and policy-making.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the unique pedagogical, linguistic, and affective difficulties faced by English teachers at Telkom Schools Medan and to pinpoint potential solutions that could improve the efficiency of teaching reading to students with low proficiency.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What challenges do English teachers face in teaching reading to students with low English proficiency at Telkom Schools Medan?
2. What factors contribute to the challenges faced by the teachers in teaching reading?
3. What strategies do the teachers use to overcome those challenges in the classroom**?**

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To identify the challenges encountered by English teachers in teaching reading to students with low English proficiency at Telkom Schools Medan.
2. To explore the contributing factors behind the difficulties in teaching reading to low-proficiency students.
3. To describe the strategies employed by teachers to address these challenges in the EFL classroom.

1.4 Scope of the Research

This research focuses on the experiences and perceptions of English teachers at Telkom Schools Medan in teaching reading to junior and/or senior high school students with low English proficiency. The study is limited to the challenges they encounter during reading instruction, the factors that contribute to these challenges, and the pedagogical strategies used to address them. This research adopts a qualitative approach, emphasizing in-depth understanding rather than generalization, and data will be collected through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving selected teachers at the school.