

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Background of study

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in English language learning, especially for junior high school students who are expected to understand a variety of texts to support their academic progress. However, reading comprehension remains a major challenge for many EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners due to limited vocabulary, lack of reading strategies, and low motivation (Sari & Ningsih, 2020). Therefore, teachers play a pivotal role in designing and applying appropriate strategies to improve students' understanding of texts.

Reading comprehension is an essential component of language learning, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. For junior high school students, reading is not only a skill required to pass exams but also a gateway to accessing knowledge across disciplines. In Indonesian classrooms, reading is one of the primary focuses in the English curriculum, as stated in the Kurikulum Merdeka, where students are expected to understand various types of texts—narrative, descriptive, recount, and factual. However, despite its importance, many students still struggle with comprehending texts due to insufficient vocabulary, lack of motivation, and inappropriate instructional strategies (Fitriani & Yuliana, 2021).

In this context, the role of the teacher becomes crucial. Teachers are not just knowledge transmitters but also facilitators who guide students through meaningful reading experiences. The choice of strategies employed by teachers significantly influences students' engagement and understanding of reading materials. For instance, a teacher who uses questioning strategies, scaffolding, or think-aloud methods can help students develop metacognitive awareness and critical thinking while reading (Susanti et al., 2021). Effective strategies help students move from literal to inferential comprehension and ultimately foster their ability to read independently.

Strategies are the steps a teacher takes to accomplish the learning objectives, which are established for the teaching process and all of its elements to accomplish the lesson's objectives. Students should be given the skills that will help them understand the text in order for them to do so. When teaching reading, the instructor should employ a variety of techniques, including games, media, and different teaching philosophies to pique students' attention. It is consistent with H. Douglas Brown's (2007) assertion that the main goal of instructional strategies is to facilitate the application of a variety of instructional approaches and techniques.

Students' difficulties with reading comprehension during the teaching and learning process. Since individuals come from various social circles and have varying social levels, the scenario in the classroom is varied. Additionally, their surroundings—their birthplace—have an impact. There are several issues with teaching understanding. Generally speaking, students struggle to

understand the text; they frequently struggle to grasp the meaning of the language, and they constantly struggle to understand the challenging words.

The instructor now offers them a chance to consider the issues they are facing. whether they have additional issues that are bothering them, such not grasping the meaning of vocabulary and other things, or whether they are completely not understanding at all. This is due to the vocabulary' ability to understand both the actual meaning and its meaning in sentences with context. Whether the tense is in the past, present, or future, it also affects grammar and tenses. Students occasionally even struggle to understand the text's context because they are still struggling to grasp the tense used in it.

Reading is a cognitive activity that involves the reader and the author having a dialogue via the text. Reading exercises give readers the knowledge and concepts they need to comprehend while also enhancing their language skills. Making connections between concepts and understanding the meaning of the text is the goal of reading. Reading increases a reader's comprehension of what they read. Through reading exercises, readers may increase their vocabulary in English, acquire the required information, and discover a wealth of new information.

However, many teachers in junior high schools still rely heavily on traditional reading instruction methods—such as translating texts word by word or asking students to answer comprehension questions without prior strategy training. These methods often do not align with students' diverse learning styles and needs. According to Rahmawati and Hidayati (2022), a gap remains between curriculum expectations and classroom practices, which may contribute to students' low achievement in reading comprehension. Furthermore, the latest PISA data (2018) shows that Indonesian students' reading scores remain below the international average, highlighting the need to improve instructional approaches at the classroom level.

Given these challenges, it is essential to explore the strategies used by English teachers in real classroom settings. Understanding how teachers design and implement reading strategies—along with the challenges they face—can provide insight into what works and what needs improvement. A case study approach will allow the researcher to examine authentic teaching practices in depth and document teacher decision-making processes in teaching reading comprehension. This study is expected to contribute to both practical teaching insights and the academic literature on effective reading instruction in EFL junior high school classrooms.

## **1.2 The Problems of the Study**

1. What strategies do English teachers use in teaching reading comprehension at a junior high school?
2. How do these strategies help students in understanding reading texts?
3. What challenges do teachers face in applying these strategies in the classroom?

### **1.3 The Objectives of the Study**

1. To identify the strategies used by English teachers in teaching reading comprehension.
2. To explore how the strategies support students' comprehension of English texts
3. To investigate the challenges faced by teachers in implementing reading strategies in a junior high school context.

### **1.4 Literature Review**

#### **1.1.1 The Importance of Reading Comprehension in EFL Contexts**

Reading comprehension is a critical skill for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) because it enables them to access information, develop academic literacy, and improve overall language proficiency. According to Nation (2022), reading contributes significantly to vocabulary growth, grammar acquisition, and language fluency when students engage with texts at the right level of difficulty. In the Indonesian context, reading is often emphasized in national curricula and standardized tests such as the Asesmen Kompetensi Minimum (AKM), which further underlines its educational importance.

Reading comprehension, however, is not simply about decoding words or translating sentences—it involves complex cognitive processes such as identifying main ideas, making inferences, summarizing information, and interpreting meaning in context. Al-Qatawneh and Al-Adwan (2023) state that successful comprehension requires interaction between the reader and the text, mediated by strategies that help construct meaning. Without guidance and strategic instruction from teachers, students may approach texts passively and fail to extract or process key information.

#### **1.1.2 Models and Strategies of Teaching Reading Comprehension**

Numerous teaching models and strategies have been developed to facilitate reading comprehension, especially in EFL settings. The three-phase model—pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading—is widely adopted and supported by research (Brown, 2018). In the pre-reading stage, teachers activate background knowledge, set reading purposes, and introduce key vocabulary. During while-reading, students engage with the text through strategies such as note-taking, highlighting, and answering guiding questions. Post-reading activities involve summarizing, retelling, or discussing the content to deepen understanding.

A range of specific strategies has proven effective for improving comprehension. These include:

- a. Reciprocal Teaching: Students take turns leading discussions using strategies like predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing (Palincsar & Brown, 2020). This strategy encourages metacognition and collaborative learning.

- b. Think-Aloud Protocols: Teachers verbalize their thought processes while reading, modeling how proficient readers make meaning (Astuti & Salmiah, 2022). This helps students internalize strategic thinking.
- c. Graphic Organizers: Tools like concept maps, Venn diagrams, and story maps support comprehension by helping students visualize relationships within the text (Fitriani & Yuliana, 2021).
- d. Questioning Techniques: Teachers use literal, inferential, and evaluative questions to guide students through deeper textual engagement (Rahmawati & Hidayati, 2022).

These strategies are aligned with Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of the teacher as a “more knowledgeable other” who scaffolds student learning within the zone of proximal development (Wang & Chen, 2020).

### **1.1.3 Teacher’s Role in Strategy Implementation**

Teachers play a central role not only in selecting appropriate strategies but also in adapting them to suit students' needs, text difficulty, and classroom dynamics. As suggested by Richards and Farrell (2019), effective reading instruction requires reflective teaching—where teachers assess student responses and modify instruction accordingly. In junior high schools, students are at a developmental stage where motivation, engagement, and confidence strongly affect learning. Teachers must therefore combine strategy instruction with encouragement and supportive classroom environments.

Recent studies emphasize the importance of teacher agency—the capacity of teachers to make pedagogical decisions based on professional judgment and classroom realities. Susanti et al. (2021) found that teachers who had autonomy and training in strategy use were more effective in promoting comprehension than those who relied on textbook-based routines. Furthermore, teachers who integrated interactive reading practices, such as group discussion and peer questioning, reported better student engagement and learning outcomes.

### **1.1.4 Challenges in Teaching Reading Comprehension**

Despite the availability of research-backed strategies, many teachers face practical constraints that limit their ability to implement them effectively. These challenges include:

- a. Large class sizes, making it difficult to manage group activities or provide individual feedback.
- b. Time constraints, especially when the curriculum prioritizes coverage of content over mastery.
- c. Limited access to resources, such as authentic reading materials or digital tools for visual aids.
- d. Students’ low language proficiency, which hinders comprehension of even basic texts.

According to Kurniawati et al. (2023), many English teachers in Indonesian junior high schools still use grammar-translation methods due to lack of training or institutional support. This approach may help with vocabulary translation but fails to develop interpretive or critical reading skills. The study urges education stakeholders to provide more professional development opportunities focused on reading instruction strategies.

Moreover, the emotional and psychological readiness of students also plays a role. Students with reading anxiety or low self-efficacy may avoid engaging with challenging texts, limiting their exposure and learning. Teachers must thus balance cognitive demands with affective support—by fostering a positive reading culture in the classroom (Sari & Ningsih, 2020).

### **1.1.5 Gaps in Current Research**

While many studies have explored reading comprehension strategies in higher education or private language courses, there is limited qualitative research documenting how teachers in public junior high schools implement these strategies in real-life settings. Most existing studies use quantitative methods to test the effectiveness of specific strategies, but fewer delve into the lived experiences, beliefs, and constraints of the teachers themselves. This study seeks to address this gap by providing rich, contextualized data through classroom observations and teacher interviews.