

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Reading skills are one aspect of language that must be mastered by humans. Whether consciously or not, everyone is inseparable from reading skills. Reading is a skill closely related to the basic human skill of language. Through language, humans can communicate with each other. Reading is an activity that is widely practiced by anyone, anywhere, and at any time.

Adequate word identification skills also require mastery of complex phonological skills, comparable to automaticity in word scanning. Thus, reading fluency and spelling accuracy are influenced by other cognitive and linguistic correlates, including rapid automatized naming (RAN), orthographic coding, and memory span and working memory (Mather & Wending, 2012).

Reading is a very complex process that involves various levels of organization of language components, including phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics (Jasinska & Petito, 2018). Reading is a complex process, to understand it, Selikowitz (2012) describes it with the following situation. First, a person must be motivated to read the text; otherwise, it is considered unimportant. Second, a person must be able to focus on the text, without being distracted by other activities around him or the thoughts in his head. Next, he must be able to clearly see the shape of each letter he reads, so that it can be transmitted to the brain. The eye must be able to scan the text from left to right, and at the same time, arrange each letter into words, words into phrases, and phrases into sentences. The shape of the letters must be able to be transmitted to the brain sequentially, so that their position remains unchanged and does not change the meaning. The brain must also be able to recognize words printed in unusual fonts, capital letters, or italics.

Reading is a fundamental skill necessary for language learners. According to Grabe (1991, cited in Zare 2011, p. 98), reading is the most important skill for foreign language learners to master academic contexts. Reading is knowledge that requires students to be taught strategies for reading more efficiently to acquire new knowledge. In Indonesia, through the implementation of a student-centered approach in the 2013 curriculum, according to Wangid (2014, p. 162), students are required to participate actively, are constantly challenged to develop high-level critical thinking, and are able to analyze and solve their own problems. Therefore, through reading, students can

expose themselves to new things, information, and ways to solve problems, all of which can help them meet the demands of the ongoing curriculum.

It seems that good reading skills are essential for every student. However, not all students possess good reading skills. Students' reading skills are not only applied in school to complete assignments but can also be used to gain new knowledge from other sources such as the internet, journals, and newspapers outside of school. Furthermore, students today live in an era of information abundance. Therefore, good reading skills are essential for utilizing this information.

However, the current state of English language learning in schools does not lead students toward achieving this language proficiency. According to Sumardi (in Sumardi, 1992: 206), teachers dominate the learning process. They provide more theory and language knowledge than prioritizing both spoken and written language skills.

According to Resmini (2007: 73), reading is an activity we often engage in, but sometimes we don't understand what it actually is. Reading comes from the word "baca," which means understanding written text. Reading is an integrated activity encompassing several activities, such as recognizing letters and words, connecting sounds and meanings, and drawing conclusions about the meaning of the reading.

However, according to the Jakarta Post (2016, para. 1), despite the crucial role of reading skills, Indonesian students' literacy rate is unfortunately listed among the worst in the world, at 60 out of 61 countries. Furthermore, Iftanti (2012, p. 160) conducted a survey to investigate the reading habits of English language learners. The results showed that students lacked good reading habits, even though they believed reading skills supported their academic life and future careers. This was because students often encountered unfamiliar words while reading and did not understand the text.

Reading strategies are important to assist students in reading activities. According to Garner (1987, cited in Hatami, M. & Asl, H. D. 2017, p. 1224), reading strategies indicate the methods or actions used to derive meaning from reading texts. Essentially, reading strategies are how readers understand what they read and what they do when they don't understand. This helps students read and improves their comprehension. Using reading strategies will help students not only

comprehend general information quickly but also remember new lexical items from the text. Furthermore, it also helps students overcome reading difficulties.

Several reading problems commonly encountered by students include not understanding the meaning of the text, forgetting what has been read, losing focus, and so on. According to Richards and Renandya (2002, cited in Chen 2015, p. 157), reading strategies can also provide English language learners with effective models for writing, provide opportunities to introduce new topics, and facilitate learning of linguistic components such as grammar and vocabulary.

Based on observations in grade 7 of UPT SMP Negeri 18 Medan, problems were encountered in English learning; students were found to be struggling with reading fluency. Therefore, the researchers were interested in conducting a study entitled "Teaching Strategies For Improving Reading Fluents at Grade 7 UPT SMP Negeri 18 Medan."

Specifically, the research problem formulation is as follows : 1. What are the strategies for teaching reading fluency to 7th grade students? 2. How can reading fluency improve skills?