CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers the background of the study, research problem(s), objective(s), scope and limitations, significance, and definition of key terms.

1.1 Research Background

Besides listening, writing, and speaking, reading is one of the four language skills taught in the English language learning process (Rudini et al., 2022). Yet, reading is regarded as the most crucial ability out of all the others. Reading is crucial to achieve in our society. Reading comprehension is widely valued and essential for both academic advancement and social development (Anaktototy & Lesnussa, 2022). Additionally, reading fosters the enhancement of overall skills and grants access to essential knowledge in both workplace and educational settings (Yanti & Helmi, 2023). Reading holds advantages not just within educational settings but also in social and professional spheres. Therefore, it can be asserted that daily life and reading activities are closely intertwined.

Our ability to communicate through language depends on reading because it is beneficial for language acquisition (Aziza, 2020). The more the student can read and understand, the better they become at it. Hence, when students read, they must comprehend what they are reading. Their reading is pointless if they cannot understand what they are reading. Reading requires students to comprehend the text in order to gain information (Erlidawati, 2023). Comprehending the content we read holds considerably greater significance for us than merely mastering the technical aspects of reading. Reading activity would be pointless without comprehension (Tampubolon & Rajagukguk, 2023). In other words, the goal of reading proficiency for students at each stage of the language learning process should be to understand words.

Due to the fact that English is a foreign language in Indonesia, there is a potential that English language learners will have difficulties in understanding

reading texts (Azral & Kher, 2023). This could be due to poor word identification and recognition, a lack of particular comprehension skills, or bad oral reading (Chamba & Ramirez, 2021). There are five issues that students frequently encounter when reading texts that are not in their native tongue, particularly when they attempt to absorb the material. According to Trisnadewi (2019), some issues such as the code or alphabet system, vocabulary and sentence structure, cohesive devices and discourse markers, challenges extending beyond literal meaning, and conceptual understanding are among the aspects requiring attention. The issues mentioned are likely attributed to differences between the native language of Indonesian learners and English, encompassing variations in form, sound, vocabulary, and structure.

Difficulty comprehending English reading texts affects students' performance and achievement because reading comprehension is an important skill (Ibrahim et al., 2024). Recognizing the paramount importance of students mastering reading comprehension, teachers and students should collaborate to tackle any challenges that arise, as these difficulties can adversely impact students' ability and motivation to achieve their reading objectives (Le et al., 2018). Reading requirements increase and expand, it may have a detrimental impact on students' academic performance and tertiary education (Balan et al., 2019).

After reviewing the literature, researchers found several studies that investigated the difficulties encountered by students in reading comprehension. The first study was conducted by Idayanti (2021) regarding analysis of the difficulties of ninth-grade students in reading comprehension of English texts at SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Amin, Sorong City. The study revealed that there were four main difficulties experienced by students, namely: identifying the main idea in the text, comprehending vocabulary, understanding the content and meaning in the text, and recognizing important information or details.

The second study was conducted by Septia et al. (2022) regarding the analysis of students' difficulties in reading comprehension in eighth-grade public schools in Bangka Belitung province. The study revealed that students had difficulty answering questions related to the main idea in the text, answering questions related to vocabulary and questions related to making inference. The study also revealed

four main factors that resulted in the difficulties experienced by students, namely: lack of student interest in reading English texts, difficulty reading the texts and translating vocabulary, lack of facilities at school that support reading materials for students, and environmental factors, namely the role of parents at home.

SMPN 1 Lawang was chosen as the research location for several reasons. First, SMPN 1 Lawang is a favorite school in the Lawang district, Malang Regency, East Java Province, Indonesia. Therefore, it certainly has demands for improving student quality and the learning process. Second, SMPN 1 Lawang covers a wide area, thus having a diverse range of students with various abilities and backgrounds, allowing researchers to obtain more representative and comprehensive data. The Merdeka Curriculum has already been implemented in SMPN 1 Lawang's teaching. In the Merdeka Curriculum, the focus of English learning, especially in grade 8, is on four basic skills: reading, listening, writing, and speaking. In reading lessons for eighth-grade students, one of the methods used by teachers is to give the students exercises to respond to familiar and unfamiliar texts by finding the main idea and identifying specific information, determining the purpose of the text, and inferring implicit information by providing reading materials in both print and digital formats. In reading lessons, the average learning outcomes of eighth-grade students are below the minimum completeness criteria (KKM) set by the school, which is 80. This result is because students still experience difficulties in reading comprehension. Based on these circumstances, the researcher believes it is important to conduct a study to identify the difficulties faced by eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Lawang and the factors causing these difficulties in reading comprehension.

One of the methods for assisting students to improve their own reading comprehension skills is to understand the difficulties they face when trying to understand what they are reading. Through this research, it is intended that future teachers would be able to comprehend the difficulties that students encounter with their reading comprehension abilities. As a result, it can be used as a resource when creating the best learning techniques or approaches to help students with their reading comprehension.

1.2 Research Problems

Based on the background of the study above, the researcher tries to answer the following questions:

1) What are the difficulties faced by eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Lawang in comprehending English reading text?
2) What are the factors causing the difficulties faced by eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Lawang in comprehending English reading text?

1.3 Research Objectives

According to the formulation provided, the research objectives are as follows:

1) To know the difficulties faced by eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Lawang in comprehending English reading text.
2) To know the factor that causes difficulties faced by eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Lawang in comprehending English reading text.

1.4 Scope and Limitation

The focus of this study is to analyze students' difficulties in reading comprehension based on a lack of understanding of vocabulary or unfamiliarity with words, difficulty interpreting words or sentences, a lack of understanding related to sentence structure, difficulty understanding grammar or grammatical confusion, difficulty determining topics or main information, and difficulty explaining things (inference) and also answer the questions related to the reading text. Besides focusing on linguistic elements, the researcher also focuses on obstacles in terms of reading motivation, strategies, and also students' reading processes. The limitations of this study are for eighth-grade students of SMPN 1 Lawang for the 2023/2024 academic year.

1.5 Research Significance

The researcher expects that the findings of the study will be significant for several subjects, especially for students, teachers, and the researcher. For the students, it's expected can be used as a resource for information to address their difficulties and enhance their reading proficiency. Then for the teacher, it's expected

can be used as a resource or reference to choose the most effective teaching strategy based on his students' problems and uses it as a reference to improve the reading, teaching, and learning process. Also, for the researcher, this study is expected can be used to provide future English teachers with more knowledge and expertise in education, particularly in teaching reading.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

There are some terms used in this research which are presented as follow:

1) Reading Comprehension

According to Hasibuan et al. (2021), reading is about comprehending written texts. Both perception and thinking are involved. Comprehending the text also results from an interactive process between the reader and the text. The letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs in the text all have meanings that are encoded. In order to interpret the meaning, the reader employs knowledge, abilities, and techniques. Reading is therefore one of the abilities that must be learned because only through reading will students be able to comprehend what the writer is trying to convey to the reader.

2) Reading Difficulty

Difficulty is defined as the state or trait of being hard to do or understand (Septia et al., 2022). While reading difficulties relate to issues with reading that were leading students to lag behind in terms of classroom reading needs. In this case, difficulty refers to the condition that it is difficult for the students to understand English reading content.

3) Text

Text can be defined as a linguistic unit with specific organizational arrangements that is provided verbally or in writing to offer context (Sianipar et al., 2020). Text is a group of words that are used to convey meaning and offer context.