

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the research background, research questions, research purposes, research significance, research scope and limitation, rationale, and previous studies.

#### **A. Background of the Study**

When students learn English, they need to be able to read in the English language and comprehend English text, whether from books, documents, magazines, the internet, signs, mobile device, etc. Reading is a way in which people can extract meaning from the discourse they see. Reading helps students to learn and acquire English. Through reading, students can develop their knowledge, improve creative thoughts, increase their vocabulary and insights, and get all information from what they have read, such as written sources.

Students' ability to comprehend reading materials is very important because it is the process to understand what is described in the text rather than obtaining meaning from isolated words or sentences (Woolley, 2011). Suppose the students cannot understand the content of the text. In that case, it will affect their reading interest, whereas reading interest is important in encouraging the students to read (Khairuddin, 2013 cited in Mara and Mohamad, 2021).

Recently, some students have shown their problems in reading English text. The same problems were also found in SMA Darul Fatwa, Jatinangor, Sumedang, Indonesia. Based on my preliminary observation in the school during online learning in Pandemic COVID-19, the following problems are found: (a) difficulty understanding the ideas in reading, (b) difficulty recognizing the text structure they have read, (c) difficulty comprehending reading materials. This problem also happens to the difficulty faced by Saudi EFL Learners in Elementary School, which is they have some problems in recognizing the basic words of the English language, and they are unable to identify the basic notions of the reading skills. (Khan et al., 2020)

For those reasons, The English teacher should consider appropriate reading materials to solve the mentioned problems. The text types can influence the students' reading interests and reading skills. Authentic can be used as supplementary material in teaching reading and make teaching activities more varied (Kusumawardani et al., 2018). Besides, the result of the use of authentic materials will be a reading class that is active, engaging, and effective (Gavell, 2021). Authentic reading materials are appropriate, effective, and helpful to be used by the teacher in teaching reading comprehension (Mustika, 2020). Berardo (2006) cited in Gavell (2021: 2) stated that authentic texts provide a necessary challenge, as a "main reason for using authentic materials in the classroom is one outside the 'safe', controlled language learning environment, the learner will not encounter the artificial language of the classroom the real world and language how it is used". On the contrary, if the teachers select the wrong type of authentic text, the vocabulary may not be relevant to the student's needs, and it can de-motivate students. Authentic materials also often contain difficult language, unneeded vocabulary items, and complex language structures (Berardo, 2006).

In five recent years, two previous studies related to the student's challenges and reading strategies in reading are found. Dewi (2022) investigated students' difficulties in reading comprehension in the second semester of FKIP and found that most students had difficulty and trouble in reading comprehension. Al-Jarrah and Ismail (2018) investigated the EFL learners reading comprehension difficulties and found that the major difficulty is the inability to recognize the types of text. Apart from the mentioned previous studies, this study focuses on EFL students' challenges in comprehending authentic reading materials and the reading strategies used in comprehending authentic reading materials. By doing this study, the researcher can find the reasons for these challenges, evaluate the feasibility of authentic materials as reading materials, and measure the extent to which students' ability to comprehend reading authentic materials.

This study describes the EFL students' challenges and reading strategies in comprehending authentic reading materials. Based on the explanation above, the

research is entitled “EFL Students’ Challenges and Reading Strategies in Comprehending Authentic Reading Materials in Indonesian Secondary School Context”.

## **B. Research Questions**

Based on the background above, there are two research questions as follows:

1. What are the EFL students’ challenges in comprehending authentic reading materials?
2. What EFL students’ reading strategies are used to comprehend authentic reading materials?

## **C. Research Purposes**

From the research questions above, this research is intended to gain the following purposes:

1. To identify the EFL students’ challenges in comprehending authentic reading materials.
2. To describe the EFL students’ reading strategies in comprehending authentic reading materials.

## **D. Research Significances**

This research has two major significances. The research findings are expected to be useful in practice and theory.

### **1. Practical Significances**

#### **a. EFL Teachers**

These research findings are expected to encourage the teachers to provide various reading activities, strategies, and materials to cope with students’ challenges in comprehending authentic reading materials.

#### **b. School Manager**

These study findings are expected to be a source of information to evaluate students and teachers in the English learning process that could minimize the students’ challenges in reading authentic materials in the future and increase their reading English comprehension skills.

c. **Material Developers**

The results of this study are required as a source of information to develop reading materials that are appropriate to the student's learning needs and to measure the feasibility of authentic materials as reading materials.

2. **Theoretical Significances**

The results of this research can be an information source for teachers about the secondary school students' challenges in comprehending authentic reading materials. This research also can evaluate the authentic materials that should be used for students, so that the teacher can use appropriate authentic materials in reading comprehension. This study provides additional information on the EFL students' reading strategies in comprehending reading materials.

**E. Research Scope and Limitation**

The scopes of this research are: first, EFL students' challenges and reading strategies in comprehending authentic reading materials in Indonesian Secondary Schools. Second, the one class of eleventh grade consists of 45 students at SMA Darul Fatwa is the participants and site of this study. This school is one of the senior high schools in Jatinangor, Sumedang. The research limitation is that the study focuses on EFL students' challenges and reading strategies using The Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) in the Indonesian Secondary School Context.

**F. Rationale**

Reading is one of the four skills of communication to connect the author and the reader. Through reading, the students gain information and ideas. According to Hadley (2001), reading is defined "as communication, as a mental process, as the reader's active participation in the creation of meaning, as a manipulation of strategies, as a receptive skill than as passive skill."

Reading also defined as the process of looking at the series of written symbols and getting meaning from them. When readers read a text, they use the eyes to

receive written symbols - such as letters, punctuation, marks and spaces, and they use brain to convert them into words, sentences, and paragraphs that communicate something to other people.

When students learn English, reading comprehension skill is of the most importance. Reading comprehension is an intentional, active, interactive process that occurs before, during, and after a person read a particular piece of writing. Group (2002) cited in Gilakjani (2016) states that reading comprehension is the process of creating meaning from the text. The outcome of reading comprehension is the mental representation of a text meaning that is combined with the readers' previous knowledge. Reading comprehension is the reader's process of understanding the context and meaning to get information from the text.

In the process of reading comprehension, the EFL students may have several challenges or difficulties in comprehending reading materials. A challenge means "a situation that is perceived as being difficult to handle" (Yariv. 2004). The challenges they faced in reading comprehension such as the lack of vocabulary knowledge (Gunning, 2002), the lack of ability to understand complex sentences, a disorganized environment (Al-Jarrah and Ismail, 2018), poor working memory (Alloway et al., 2009 cited in Al-Jarrah and Ismail, 2018), poor background knowledge, inadequate knowledge of grammar. Some students feel those challenges learning online during Pandemic COVID-19.

If students face several challenges or difficulties in comprehending reading materials, they should be able to overcome their challenges. According to the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) proposed by Mohktari and Sheorey (2002), there are three types of reading strategies:

1. Global Reading Strategies (GLOB) - readers carefully plan their reading using techniques such as having a purpose in mind and previewing the text. For global reading strategies, 13 items focus on setting the purpose of reading.
2. Problem-Solving Strategies (PROB) - readers work directly with text to solve problems while reading, such as adjusting the speed of reading, guessing the

meaning of unknown words, and rereading the text. For problem-solving strategies, eight items are posed examining the problem-solving and repair strategies while reading.

3. Support Reading Strategies (SUP) – readers use basic support mechanisms to aid reading, such as dictionaries, highlighting, and taking notes. For support strategies, nine items are asked.

One type of reading material is authentic materials. Authentic material is a language where no concessions are made to foreign learners (Harmer, 2007). Authentic text is “real-life texts, not written for pedagogic processes” (Wallace, 1998). Students can use authentic material at fairly low levels. However, if the tasks with it are well-designed and help students understand it better, rather than showing them how little they know.

#### **G. Previous Studies**

Some previous studies related the student’s challenges and strategies in reading comprehension. First, the research conducted by Namaziandost et al. (2022) investigated the effect of using authentic materials on Iranian male EFL learners’ reading comprehension, reading motivation, and reading anxiety. The study found that authentic materials enhanced Iranian reading motivation and reading comprehension ability, but it significantly improved EFL learners’ anxiety.

Second, the research carried out by Hasan and Dweik (2021) explored some of the reading comprehension difficulties faced by Jordanian female ninth-grade students. The research used mix method, and they found several reading comprehension difficulties such as grammar, new words, homonyms and homographs, and linguistic, curricular, and resource-related factors.

Third, the research by Khan et al. (2020) explored the reading problems of elementary-level students and the causes of the reading skills inabilities. The research used mix method as the approach and the reading test, checklist, and interview as the research instruments. The study found the main problems in

reading skills are poor vocabulary, incorrect pronunciation, wrong spellings, slow reading pace, and flawed grammar.

Fourth, the research conducted by Al-Jarrah and Ismail (2018) investigated reading comprehension difficulties among Arab EFL learners of the University of Sultan Zainal Abidin and the University of Malaysia Terengganu. A quantitative approach was used in this study using Cross tabulation to analyze the data from the test. The result found that the Arab EFL learners' difficulties are not recognizing the types of text, lack of prior knowledge, and anxiety in writing answers.

This research is different from the previous studies above. First, this research focuses on the EFL students' challenges in comprehending authentic materials. Second, this research tries to determine the EFL students' strategies used according to The Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002). Third, this study focuses on the EFL students in the Indonesian Secondary School context, especially at SMA Darul Fatwa, Jatinangor, Sumedang. Fourth, this research uses a qualitative approach as the research methodology.

