CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter briefly describes the entire content of the study. This chapter explains the background of the research, research questions, research objectives, research scope, research significance, theoretical framework, and previous research.

A. Background

Critical literacy is understood as an active reading skill to get in-depth information. Critical literacy is a way to understand the text more wisely according to the facts. According to Luke and Dooley (2011), critical literacy analyses and changes the relationship of cultural, social, and political forces to overcome social, economic, and cultural injustice and inequality by using texts. Critical literacy is also referred to as the ability to understand texts by changing perspectives, focusing on socio-political issues, changing perspectives, and following up on reading results. However, this is important to implement, especially for students in today's era who face many hoaxes and texts that spread that cannot be interpreted correctly by everyone. It also explained that critical literacy is related to the text. Robinson (2003) explained that in critical literacy, the text is understood as "a medium in which individuals communicate with one another using the rules and conventions of society." students can develop their critical literacy by deconstructing the text.

Unfortunately, the literacy interest of Indonesian students is still low, which refers to the 2009 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) report. Indonesia is one of the countries with low achievement in terms of literacy quality (OECD, 2009). Therefore, this makes students need easy and exciting learning to be motivated to learn critical literacy. While based on initial observations of the English learning process in English class at SMA IT Nurul Wasilah, which were obtained from interviews with English teachers there. Most students are less interested in doing literacy activities, especially reading. It is because the long text used by the

teacher is considered difficult and tedious by the students. Therefore, they are more challenging to learn critical literacy.

In the 21st century, where technology is increasingly sophisticated, even though many learning media are taken from the internet, memes can be suitable for increasing students' critical literacy. The word meme was coined by Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book, The Selfish Gene, to explain how cultural information spreads (Shifman, 2014 as cited in Purnama, 2017). Memes are ideas and thoughts that people share because they represent their feelings. Currently, memes have become a medium often found on the internet. According to Purnama (2017), the examples of memes are tunes, ideas, phrases, clothing, fashion, and a way to make a pot or an arch (Dawkins, 2006: 192). Memes can contain hidden meanings related to symbols, words, or images.

Several researchers have studied critical literacy such as Hikmat (2017) discusses strategies for improving students' critical literacy from many problems students have, such as the low ability of critical literacy, lack of self-confidence, low English ability, and guidance dependence. This previous research focuses on the strategy to improve students' critical literacy from many problems, while this research focuses on using memes to promote critical literacy. The second is Romero and Jelena (2021), which focuses on exploring and identifying the needs of 21st century EFL/ESL students to view and think about memes in EFL/ESL classrooms. This previous research focuses on exploring and identifying student needs about memes, while this research focuses on using memes to promote critical literacy. Moreover, Purnama (2017) focuses on keeping students motivated to learn a second language using memes. This previous study focuses on keeping students motivated to learn English with a meme, while this study is concerned with using memes to promote critical literacy.

According to this issue, the research focuses on developing students' critical literacy in reading lessons through memes. It was conducted during the second semester in UIN Bandung.

B. Research question

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

1. How does the teacher use memes to promote students' critical literacy in reading lessons?

2. How do students respond to critical literacy using memes in reading lessons?

C. Research Purpose

The aims of this research are as follows:

1. To find out how teachers implement memes to promote critical literacy in EFL students.

2. To find out students' responses about their interest and enthusiasm for critical literacy learning through memes.

D. Research Significances

The results of this study are expected to be useful both theoretically and practically, as described in the following section.

a. **Theoretically**

The results of this study are expected to support theories related to the students' critical literacy development during teaching reading skills through memes.

b. **Practically**

a. For a teacher, the results of this study are expected to provide information to English teachers, especially in guiding students to develop their critical literacy in a fun way by using memes during teaching reading skills.

b. For students, it is hoped to encourage students to develop their critical literacy while actively learning reading skills.

c. For a researcher, this research is expected to be a reference for future researchers to facilitate critical literacy research and memes. This research will provide more

information and knowledge about how to teach students to develop their critical literacy with fun using memes in reading class.

E. Research Scope

To clarify the problem, the researcher limits the problem as follows. First, this study focuses on using memes in interpretive reading classes to develop students' critical literacy. Furthermore, this research will be conducted at SMA IT Nurul Wasilah, especially in the XI Grade. Then, the study participants were the XI students who will be observed, and 5 of them will be interviewed.

F. Theoretical Framework

Reading is the most common technique students use in obtaining new information (Grabe and Stoller, 2014). Furthermore, Sadiku (2015) emphasizes that reading brings wisdom. Through reading, we absorb a lot, and it is the most prominent language skill. Bojovic (2010) underlines that "Reading is complex, purposeful, interactive, understanding, flexible activities that require sufficient time and resources to develop". Reading is fast, meaning that the reader must regulate the flow of information in a particular direction in sufficient proportions to make connections and conclusions in understanding. In other words, reading means more than just knowing the meaning stated implicitly and explicitly.

Critical literacy is understood pedagogically by incorporating post-structuralism, critical, and Freireian theories. Critical literacy claims that post-structuralism is ideologically constructed in a discourse system. Critical social theories insist that any textual content is critiqued continuously. In addition, Freire proposed that literacy practices should consider justice, freedom, and equality (Behrman, 2006; Luke, 2006; Luke and Dooley, 2011; McLaughlin and DeVoogd, 2004) cited in (Rohadi, 2018).

Certain principles characterize critical literacy. First, it encourages readers to become active members of the reading process. Second, it helps the reader move from passive receiver to active questioning, investigating, and questioning the power

relationship between reader and writer. Third, specialize in power issues and encourage reflection, transformation, and action. Fourth, create awareness that an experience is traditionally built on certain power relationships. Finally, this book helps lively readers recognize socially constructed concepts, discrimination, and injustice in human relationships (Behrman, 2006; Luke, 2006; Luke and Dooley, 2011; McLaughlin and DeVoogd, 2004) cited in (Rohadi, 2018).

Critical literacy in its development and acquiring contextual knowledge explains the methods used by teachers and students to deconstruct textual content. It is a fantastic tool to inspire readers to impeach the development and creation of textual content. Using critical literacy tools, readers consider inclusion, exclusion, and illustration in the text, relate the textual content to their lives and consider the impact of the textual content. The critical literacy approach to coaching is flexible (Behrman, 2006; Luke and Dooley, 2011; McLaughlin and DeVoogd, 2004) cited in (Rohadi, 2018).

Luke (1995) and Luke and Freebody (1990, 1999) conceptualize literacy as a social exercise that addresses both conventions of analyzing texts and ideological critical evaluation construction. They delivered four components in textual content engagement: code solving (phonics, vocabulary), textual content participation (analyzing understanding), use of textual content (socialization with meanings made from texts), and critique of textual content (critical reflection and evaluation). The four sources of this model describe critical literacy as a dynamic amalgamation of code-breaking, textual content participation, use of textual content, and criticism. In this sense, critical literacy builds on developing a "textual content critic," someone familiar with that "texts are not ideologically natural or neutral—that they are unique factors from perspective while silencing others" (Luke and Freebody, 1999) cited in (Huh, 2016).

When criticizing textual content, the teachers question students, such as how the text is ideologically biased and whose cultural knowledge is preferred and marginalized (Burns and Hood, 1998; Stevens and Bean, 2007; Wallace, 2001). In

this research, the following components have been used: the target audience of the analytical text (whose cultural interests and values are presented, lost, and marginalized?), the writer's cultural beliefs (what does the text believe about the issue? What do you need to accept as truth to believe it?) and a more excellent democratic approach to addressing problems and viable approaches to contain dominant ideologies. (Sluys, Lewison, and Flint, 2006) as cited in (Huh, 2016).

Meanwhile, Behrman (2006) identified six guidelines for applying critical reading to provide insight into practicing critical literacy in different educational contexts. These practices are:

1. Give students opportunities to read texts such as works of fiction, nonfiction, and texts from popular culture so they can explore and question social issues.

2. Letting students read several texts by different authors on the same topic.

3. Encourage students to read from an unpleasant point of view.

4. Let students write a counter-narrative as an individual reflection on the topic being studied.

5. Promote student-choice research projects to link curriculum-required topics to topics of interest to students.

6. Encourage students to take social action and share their everyday problems with the world outside the classroom.

Therefore, memes are a suitable medium to promote critical literacy. The fundamental explanation of a meme is something this is transferred from someone character to another. This particular component can take many forms: ideas, instructions, behaviors, or facts fragments, Blackmore (1999: 4). The word meme is coined by Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book, The Selfish Gene, to explain how cultural information spreads (Shifman, 2014). "The examples of memes are tunes, ideas, phrases, clothing, fashion, and a way to make a pot or an arch." (Dawkins, 2006: 192) This small lifestyle unit unfolds from character to character through copying or imitation (Purnama et al., 2017).

Internet memes may be created in diverse formats, including pictures or

videos. Websites that permit humans to generate net memes effortlessly have created a ripe surrounding for sharing information consisting of fake news (Borzsei, 2013) cited in (Wells, 2018).

In the sector of education, memes are not new. As quoted in Kariko (2012), Scott Stiller, an English instructor at the University of Tsukuba in Japan, thinks the internet meme, Rage comics, is excellent for training English. Anger Comics are cartoons that use an ever-increasing series of internet memes. They include the famous faces and expressions–anger, surprise, defeat, surprise, pleasure, success, or horror, which expose widespread emotions or feelings of various levels beneath various conditions. Anger comics are used as a vehicle to proportion reports with humor (Huh, 2017).

Internet memes are images with text, short videos, and repetitive videos. Image memes can be of two types. The first is an image with text above and below the image. The second is an image that has only text over the image. Meme photos are also known as macro photos (Dongqiang, 2020).

As quoted in Suswandari (2021), "Shifman divides memes into nine groups, or nine genres as follows:

1. Reaction Photoshops/photo processing: digitally altered photographs as comments on events and official news;

2. Photo fads: photos and videos (one of the most well-known examples is "planking"

3. Flash mob: a group of strangers gather in a public space and perform a particular act simultaneously. After that, they leave the scene

4. Lipsynch: videos in which a person or persons try to match their lip movements to popular songs;

5. Misheard lyrics: funny mistranslation of spoken sounds or songs' written words;

6. Recut trailers: the re-editing or remixing of film footage by the users;

7. LOLCats: pictures of cats accompanied by systematically misspelled captions;

8. -Stock character macros: so-called "advice-animals" macros, animals with absurd advice phrases as if uttered by a dog, penguin, etc.

9. Rage comics: featuring a set of expressive characters, each associated with a typical behavior or emotion."

According to Dongqiang (2020), integrating the education system, the internet, and the media has given rise to new ways of interacting with information between people. A mainstay of visual culture at the time, memes quickly spread across networks, building on the media platforms in use today (with Facebook and Instagram dominant and Zoom and Microsoft Teams and other platforms). As an educational medium for students, memes can effectively convey educational content and bridge and connect teachers and students. Therefore, meme studies are efficient and important in the educational process.

G. Previous Research

Many academics report memes, such as Romero and Jelena (2021), which focus on discovering and identifying the needs of 21st-century EFL/ESL students to view and reflect on memes in their contexts in EFL/ESL classrooms. It uses mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) with questionnaires and meme-based tasks as tools. The participants of this previous study were 52 final year students of an English Studies degree at the Complutense University of Madrid in Spain. These findings emphasize critical thinking and visual literacy skills in EFL/ESL college classrooms. Visual communication is becoming more prominent in a competitive world when students lack preparation in this field. In comparison, this previous research focuses on discovering and identifying the needs of 21st-century EFL/ESL students to view and reflect on memes. In contrast, this research focuses on using memes to promote critical literacy to EFL students and qualitative methods with case studies and diverse participants.

Purnama (2017) focuses on keeping students motivated to learn a second language using memes. He uses the qualitative method with observation and

interview as a tool. The participants in this study were 50 EFL students. They are considered elementary students by higher education students. This study shows that students respond positively to the creation of meme activities. Most of the responses from EFL students found the training to be enjoyable and, therefore, likely to boost their motivation. Previous research focuses on keeping students motivated to learn a second language using memes. In contrast, this study uses meme to promote critical literacy among EFL students with different participants. Also, there are similarities in discussing memes and using the same methods and instruments, qualitative methods with observation and interview instruments in this study.

Hikmat (2017) discusses strategies for improving student critical literacy for many problems faced by a student. Qualitative methods with observations, interviews, and documentation served as a means. The subjects were 20 students from the Faculty of English Education and three instructors reading at Muhammadiyah University in Surakarta. The results showed that the strategies adopted by faculty members included the use of various textbooks, student involvement, important question questions, question discussions, and summary and answer creation. The challenges faced by faculty in developing student critical literacy were low student critical literacy, lack of student self-confidence, poor student English proficiency, and reliance on student guidance. In comparison, the previous research focuses on strategies for improving student critical literacy for many problems faced by a student. In contrast, this study focuses on using memes to promote critical literacy to EFL students in different classes and participants. While in this study, there are similarities in using qualitative methods.

Sorte (2020) focuses on analyzing the multi-literacy theory of the use of memes in English education. The search method is based on document search as an extension of the literature search. For this reason, the researcher chose memes as a tool for developing critical and reflective English education. In comparison, the previous research focused on analyzing the multi-literacy theory of the use of memes in English education. In contrast, this research focuses on using memes to promote

critical literacy. The method used is also different because this study uses a qualitative approach. The only things they have in common are memes in learning English.

Lubis et al. (2017) focus on improving critical literacy skills. This research uses a mixed-method with a simultaneous triangulation model. The instrument used is an interview and questionnaire, and the Population in this research was the students of class XI IPA MAN 2 Padangsidimpuan in the 2016/2017 academic year. There are 145 students spread over six classes in this school. The results of this study indicate that the skills and critical literacy of students who use science textbooks will increase. The previous research focuses on improving critical literacy and skills, while this study focuses on using memes to promote critical literacy. The method used is different, namely only qualitative, and the instruments use interviews and observations. Moreover, the participants of this research are EFL students in XI grade.