CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1   Research Background.

Literate millennial generation is the generation that has accessibility to up-to-date reading sources. The growth of reading culture is important considering that ability and skill to read are the basis for a person to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitude formation (Aida & Widiyati, 2020; Akib, et al.,2020). The purposes of reading are seeking for pleasure and enjoyment, obtaining an overview, locating specific information, identifying the central idea or theme, or developing a detailed and critical understanding, to mention only a few (Spencer & Wagner, 2018).

Reading is one of the four language skills trained in the Junior High School in Indonesia. The students are trained in reading different texts--descriptive, narrative, and recount texts. (Kemdikbud,2017). Broadly speaking, the learning goals of reading are to understand the social functions, text structures, and language elements used in personal, interpersonal, and transactional communications. The reading indicators are specified as to understand the main idea or central theme, specific information, textual reference, and word or phrase referential meaning of descriptive, narrative, and recount texts (Fitriani & Budiarta, 2021).

After conducting a preliminary observation towards seventh grade students of *SMP Negeri 3 Sukasada* in August 2021, the students complained about their inability in reading, especially 1) discovering main idea or central theme, 2) locating specific information about content, 3) relating nouns with pronouns or textual references respectively, and 4) getting word or phrase meanings contextually. Hidayati (2020) studied the first grade students in reading comprehension in the Senior High School at Darussalam, Aceh Besar. The research objective was to study the students' difficulties in reading comprehension. The method applied was that

of descriptive quantitative research. A reading test and a questionnaire were used as means to collect data. The test consisted of 20 items inquiring 1) main idea, 2) detailed information, 3) making inferences, 4) locating reference, and 5) vocabulary. Difficulty index and percentile were used to analyze the obtained data. The results showed that the majority of the first grade students of *SMAN 1 Darussalam,* Aceh Besar found difficulties in finding main idea, making inference, and locating reference questions. The most difficult aspect encountered by the students of *SMAN 1 Darussalam*, Aceh Besar was to find main idea or central theme. In addition, the students' responses were disclosed through a questionnaire. It was found that the students had difficulties in understanding vocabulary, grammar, and meanings of long sentences. These problems were speculated due to lack of learning media, and lack of knowledge of strategies in reading.

The present research was similar to some extent to Hidayati's research (2020). She focused on the facility value or difficulty index and percentile in finding the main idea, detailed information, making inference, locating inference, and vocabulary. She used a reading test and a questionnaire to conclude the students' difficulty in reading comprehension. The present research was different since the research objects were limited on the teachers' difficulties in 1) relating learning indicators to basic competency, 2) relating learning material, leaning indicator, and basic competency, 3) choosing learning method and technique, 4) determining effective learning activities, 5) relating assessment and learning indicator, 6) designing assessment instrument and technique, and 7) choosing learning media based on IT.

Moreover, the present research was also aimed at discovering the students' ability to understand the major reading indicators specified in the 2013 Curriculum. They are the main idea or central theme, specific information, textual reference, and word or phrase referential meaning of descriptive texts of a person, an animal, and a procedure. The test consisted of non-objective test items to avoid guessing blindly or smartly. Moreover, most types of objective

tests are limited to factual recall only and do not reveal the thinking process of the learner. Students don't get an opportunity to practice and demonstrate their reading skills; therefore, it is not suitable for language skills testing (Michael,2018; White,2019).

In summary, what new in the present research compared to the previous researches lied on: 1) the students' difficulty in understanding different descriptive texts, especially the prime indicators such as main idea or central theme, specific information, textual reference, and word or phrase referential meaning of descriptive texts of a person, an animal, and a procedure.; and 2) the students' source of difficulty in understanding different descriptive texts, especially the prime indicators such as main idea or central theme, specific information, textual reference, and word or phrase referential meaning of descriptive texts of a person, an animal, and a procedure.

1.2 Problem Identification.

Prior to stating the research questions, a preliminary study was conducted during the second week of August 2021. The students' difficulties in understanding different descriptive texts, especially the indicators such as main idea or central theme, specific information, textual reference, and word or phrase referential meaning of descriptive texts of a person, an animal, and a procedure, were pretested. The two descriptive texts of a person and animal were tested to the students independently using a non-objective test items. For example, '*What is the main idea or central theme of the text you just read*?; *Where does she work for a living*?; *What is the synonym of circumlocution?*; *How do you use commas and semicolons in the text*?; etc.). After so-doing, the problems in understanding descriptive texts of a person and an animal could be identified as follows.

1. Deducing main idea or central theme,

2. Locating specific information,

3. Relating noun with pronouns or textual reference, and

4. Getting word or phrase referential meaning of descriptive texts of a person, an animal, and a procedure.

1.3 Research Questions

1.3.1 What difficulties are found by the students in understanding different descriptive texts

viewed from the reading indicators in *SMP Negeri 3 Sukasada*?

1.3.2 What sources of difficulties are found by the students in understanding different descriptive texts viewed from the reading indicators in *SMP Negeri 3 Sukasada*?

1.4 Research Objectives.

1.4.1 General Objective.

The general research objective was to get the students' difficulties in understanding descriptive texts in *SMP Negeri 3 Sukasada*.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives.

The specific research objectives (*outputs*) are:

1) to get the students' difficulties in understanding descriptive texts viewed from reading indicators in *SMP Negeri 3 Sukasada*.

2) to analyze the students' sources of difficulties in understanding descriptive texts viewed from reading indicators in *SMP Negeri 3 Sukasada*.

1.5 Research Significance.

Research significance refers to the value (*outcomes*) of the research findings theoretically and practically. The present research significance is stated in the following section.

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance.

Theoretical significance of the present research is to improve effective reading skills through essential reading skills, strategies, differentiated instruction, systematic instruction, opportunities to apply skills and strategies in reading.

1.5.2 Practical Significance.

1) The students are certainly benefitted from the research findings since they could improve their reading literacy (habit, motivation, process, and ability) in a systematic fashion.

2) The English teachers could devise an effective reading instruction, emphasizing essential reading strategies with systematic instruction, and opportunities to apply skills in teaching to accelerate student progress and comprehension.

3) Future research could use the research findings as inputs for developing a more systematic and deeper endeavor in reading instruction in the Junior High School in a wider scope.

1.6 Research Scope

The present research had been limited on analyzing the students' difficulty and sources of difficulty in understanding different descriptive texts' of a person, an animal, and a procedure viewed from essential reading indicators. It was also limited on the academic year of 2021/2022.

1.7 Research Limitation

This research is only identifying one class of seven grade students' reading difficulty based on reading indicators of Curriculum 2013 and improving their reading skills. Moreover, the number of students' participation of research interview session is limited to 5 students due to the teacher's selection based on the lowest score in reading test.