

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes the research study's introduction, containing the study's background, identification, limitations, problem statements, purpose, significance, and definition of important terms. It also examines the study's purpose, significance, and problem statements.

### 1.1 Research Background

Literacy is the ability of a person to comprehend, analyze, evaluate, use, and communicate with various textual forms (including written, visual, and digital) to achieve personal, social, and professional goals. According to Frankel et al., (2016), literacy is the ability of an individual to use a text in a particular social context by employing reading, writing, and speaking in a way that is relevant to that context. Lewis & Wray (2001) emphasize that literacy is a significant value everyone should uphold because it significantly impacts daily life, education, employment, and community participation. According to them, literacy is not just about reading and writing; it is also about understanding context, conducting critical analysis, and effectively using language.

Mastery of the English language is essential, especially in the current digital and globalization era. Good English literacy can benefit students in their daily lives in numerous ways, including the ability to communicate across cultural barriers and improve academic performance (Hui et al., 2018). They discovered that students' prospects of academic and professional success could be increased by having a solid command of the English language. Students who are proficient

in English are better able to comprehend and make use of international information sources. Students who study English must be able to communicate in English not only to succeed academically but also to deal with information they have acquired and interact directly with people from other nations as a result of the requirements for interpretations that can comprehend the exchanges that take the position, particularly in English, when processing information, literacy skills significantly impact how students communicate. In learning English literacy, there are bound to be many difficulties faced by students. For that, the teacher must have a way to overcome and help with the difficulties faced by students. Several factors cause the problem: lack of facilities and resources, lack of teacher skills, lack of student motivation, and low quality of the curriculum (Zubaidah, 2016). If students do not learn English literacy, they will face problems such as limitations in communication, limited access to information, hampered career opportunities, low self-confidence, and limitations in mobility. All these problems show the importance of increasing English literacy in Indonesia and improving the quality of learning English in schools (Kurniasih et al., 2020)

Digital literacy uses technology-based devices with interests, attitudes, abilities, and skills. These abilities are utilized with new knowledge, establishing relationships or communicating with others, and accessing, managing, integrating, analyzing, and evaluating the information required and obtained. According to Bawden, (2001), using digital literacy is a vital skill for students, given the significant shifts in how students learn and access information. Digital literacy refers to an individual's ability to effectively use digital technology and the internet to access, evaluate, and critically utilize information (American Library Association, n.d.).

Given how crucial English literacy is to developing students' critical thinking in the classroom, educational institutions must continue to help students with their English literacy

(Anaktototy & Lesnussa, 2022). SMPN 1 Petang faces challenges in fully utilizing students' literacy abilities, highlighting the urgent need to emphasize English literacy from junior high school onwards. Addressing this issue involves enhancing students' English literacy skills and fostering an awareness of its importance, beginning with junior high school education.

The solution addresses this; the *Let's Read* application can be utilized as a learning medium, which may be effective for enhancing literacy skills in learning English. *Let's Read* is a mobile application like an e-book that can be used as a source of literacy learning. The application can get around the lack of books in Asia and be used after reading for fun (Ermerawati, 2019). All the tasks planned for this advanced reading class are built around the books, from easy to hard. The application can help students learn to read and write, but it is essential to research before using it to ensure it works and has benefits. This application provides access to a wide range of children's story books in English and local Asian languages. This application is easy to use and apply. Therefore, the *Let's Read* application is expected to influence students' literacy skills.

Empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of the *Let's Read* application in various educational settings. Ermerawati (2019) found that the application, combined with a task-based learning (TBL) approach, positively influenced students' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and motivation to learn English. Similarly, Prihartono (2021) demonstrated that the *Let's Read* application effectively promoted extensive reading practice, enhancing students' reading motivation and comprehension in an online classroom setting. Moreover, Grames (2020) showed that the *Let's Read* application improved literacy skills and fostered reading interest during the pandemic. These studies suggest that the *Let's Read* application can be valuable for enhancing literacy skills and promoting autonomous learning among EFL learners.

More research still needs to be done on how the *Let's Read* application benefits students' reading skills in junior high school. A lot of the studies that have been done on this topic so far have been on the primary level. Only a few have examined how well it works at the junior high school level. Additionally, most previous studies utilized descriptive research designs, with only a few employing quasi-experimental designs. The researcher can objectively evaluate the effectiveness of the *Let's Read* application through a quasi-experimental setup, including control and experimental classes. The author implements the *Let's Read* application, addressing a research gap where the implementation of this learning media, particularly for 7th-grade students at SMPN 1 Petang, has yet to be previously explored.

Given the advantages of the *Let's Read* application, it is worthwhile to examine these variables. Consequently, this study evaluates the effectiveness of the *Let's Read* application in enhancing literacy skills among junior high school students.

## **1.2 Problem Identification of the Study**

The implementation of this research is based on the specific problem of insufficient English literacy skills observed at SMPN 1 Petang. Despite ongoing efforts, current English literacy instruction has yet to yield significant or optimal results for young learners due to the lack of appropriate language learning media and a lack of literacy habits. Teachers are urged to employ learning media to create better student learning outcomes. This study aimed to implement the *Let's Read* application as a learning medium and evaluate its impact on students' literacy skills. The effectiveness of using the *Let's Read* application as a supplementary educational tool must be examined to determine its role in enhancing students' English literacy. This study aims to determine whether implementing the *Let's Read* application significantly affects 7th-grade students' English literacy skills.

### 1.3 Limitations of The Study

Given the constraints of time and resources, the main objective is to conduct an experiment using the *Let's Read* application. The research aims to implement and analyze the effectiveness of the *Let's Read* application in enhancing English literacy skills among junior high school students, specifically focusing on the 7th-grade second-semester students at SMPN 1 Petang. While English literacy encompasses a broad range of skills, including reading, writing, listening, speaking, and knowledge of English, this study's assessment is limited to evaluating reading comprehension only. The literacy skills are tested using multiple-choice tests, primarily measuring students' ability to understand and interpret written texts.

### 1.4 Research Question

The author proposes the following formula for the research problem in light of the above information:

1. Is there any significant effect on the use of the *Let's Read* application in 7th-grade students' English literacy?

### 1.5 The Objective of the Study

The following are the goals of this study, which are based on the researcher-formulated research question.

- a) This study aims to assess the effect of the *Let's Read* application in teaching English literacy to 7<sup>th</sup>-grade students at SMPN 1 Petang.

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

The outcomes of this research are intended to offer theoretical and practical insights into teaching and learning English, particularly for younger students. The researcher anticipates the study will contribute valuable practical applications and theoretical knowledge.

### 1) Theoretical significance

Theoretically, this study supports concepts related to the progression of educational tools, specifically using the *Let's Read* application as instructional material to enhance students' English literacy skills. In addition, this research aims to generate new ideas that can be used in the future.

### 2) Practical significance

Practically literacy, it is believed that the completed research will provide young students, English teachers, and other researchers:

#### a. For Young Learners

Young learners anticipate benefitting from this research by employing reading materials like the *Let's Read* application in the classroom to boost their learning process and enhance their literacy skills.

#### b. For English Teacher

This study can assist English teachers in using a more structured *Let's Read* application to raise students' reading levels. This research will help teachers learn about employing technological media to enhance student learning.

#### c. For Other Researcher

Future researchers in the same field are anticipated to use this research as a guide, and it is hoped that it will provide empirical support for future research that will be conducted.

## 1.7 Definition of Key Terms

### 1. Students' Literacy

#### a) Conceptual Definition

Literacy refers to process and comprehend information through reading or writing. According to Sumarni & Sri Kuswardani, (2019)., literacy is more than only reading and writing because it is inseparable from spoken and written language abilities.

Students' literacy includes their proficiency in reading, writing, comprehending, and effectively communicating in a given language. It encompasses a broad range of skills and knowledge related to language, including reading fluency, comprehension, vocabulary development, writing proficiency, and critical thinking abilities (Pitri & Sofia, 2022).

#### b) Operational Definition

In this research, literacy encompasses students' abilities to read, write, comprehend, and effectively communicate in English, particularly as a foreign language (EFL). This study focuses on the learning outcomes of seventh-grade students at SMPN 1 Petang, who develop their literacy skills through various classroom activities, including reading, writing, and critical thinking. The impact of the *Let's Read* application will be evaluated using a post-test-only design, comparing the results between an experimental group and a control group. This approach aims to determine whether the use of the application significantly enhances the students' English literacy skills.

## 2. *Let's Read* Application

### a) Conceptual Definition

*Let's Read* is a reading-learning application designed for students of Asia. This application provides access to various easy-to-read materials relevant to the culture, context, and needs of users in Asia. Its goal is to enhance reading interest and proficiency and promote cross-cultural understanding among users from various Asian countries (Ermerawati, 2019).

### b) Operational Definition

The *Let's Read* application serves as an educational tool to teach literacy by using interactive media to assist students. It assesses reading abilities and story comprehension, broadens vocabulary, and deepens literacy understanding among students at SMPN 1 Petang.

