

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Reading means developing a meaning through interaction between the reader, the text, and prior knowledge in addition to simply identifying written words. As a result, in order to read successfully, students must actively process information while using the proper reading strategies (Castles, Rastle, & Nation, 2018). Additionally, daily reading activities can enhance students' motivation and involvement in language learning, especially when the right teaching techniques are used (Khonamri et al., 2024). Given these functions, reading should be seen as a way to support students' overall academic development in addition to being a language skill, making it a crucial part of junior high school English instruction. For junior high school students, reading serves as an important source of English exposure, as learners frequently encounter the target language through textbooks, learning materials, and other written texts (Nguyen & Habók, 2023). Through reading activities, students can develop their vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension, which are fundamental components of language proficiency (Tong et al., 2023). Reading also supports academic learning by enabling students to access, process, and construct knowledge from various sources of information (Khonamri et al., 2024). Furthermore, reading encourages learners to develop critical thinking skills as they interpret, analyze, and evaluate ideas presented in texts (Le & Nguyen, 2024). Therefore, reading is considered a fundamental skill

that supports students' English language development and academic success in EFL learning (Khonamri et al., 2024).

Even though reading is a crucial EFL skill, reading comprehension is more than just reading a text. To process, comprehend, and control their reading activities, students must use appropriate learning strategies (Li et al., 2022). By employing learning strategies, students may approach reading assignments more skillfully and get past previous comprehension challenges (Khellab et al., 2022). According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), these strategies may include cognitive strategies for processing textual information, metacognitive strategies for planning, monitoring, and evaluating comprehension, as well as socio-affective strategies for seeking support and managing emotions during learning. Therefore, the use of appropriate learning strategies plays an important role in supporting students' efforts to develop their English reading skills and achieve better reading comprehension.

Unfortunately, a lot of EFL students still struggle to develop their English reading skills. One of the main challenges is their limited vocabulary, which makes it difficult for them to comprehend new words and derive meaning from texts (Taladngoen et al., 2022; Hu et al., 2022). However, students' strategies for monitoring comprehension and resolving comprehension issues have an impact on reading comprehension in addition to their language proficiency. In order to comprehend how junior high school EFL students deal with reading challenges, it is crucial to look into the learning strategies they employ.

Another challenges faced by students is identifying main ideas and interpreting interpreting important information, particularly when reading texts that contain unfamiliar vocabulary and complex sentence structures (Hamid & Yulianto, 2022). Limited use of English outside of the classroom may also hinder their reading development by limiting their opportunities to practice reading in real-world settings (Li & Gan, 2022). Additionally, students' engagement and performance during reading activities can be negatively impacted by affective factors like low confidence, low motivation, and reading anxiety (Li & Gan, 2022; Wahyuni & Syafitri, 2021). Because of this, even though reading is crucial for language development, many EFL students still struggle to understand English texts.

Since English is taught as a foreign language and students have few opportunities to use or interact with it outside of the classroom, SMPN 2 Tampaksiring offers a suitable setting for this study. Preliminary observations indicate that there are few opportunities for students to interact with real English reading materials during classroom reading activities, which mostly rely on textbooks and teacher guidance. As a result, the majority of students develop their reading skills through guided exercises like comprehending texts, responding to comprehension questions, recognizing important concepts, and picking up new vocabulary from textbook passages. Because of these learning conditions, SMPN 2 Tampaksiring is a good place to look at how eighth-grade students use learning strategies to improve their English reading abilities. By exploring the strategies they use, this study seeks to provide a better understanding of how students handle

dealing with reading difficulties and continue to develop their comprehension despite limited exposure to English outside school.

Preliminary classroom observations conducted in Class VIII during lessons on narrative and descriptive texts, as well as informal interviews with the English teacher, revealed several challenges related to students' English reading skills. The observations showed that some students relied heavily on word-by-word translation when reading English texts and frequently asked the teacher or their peers for the meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary. Several students appeared to focus on translating individual words rather than understanding the overall meaning of the text. The observations also indicated that some students experienced difficulties in identifying main ideas, locating relevant information, and answering reading comprehension questions accurately. During classroom discussions, only a limited number of students actively shared their ideas, while others tended to wait for explanations from the teacher. Furthermore, information obtained from the English teacher suggested that students rarely demonstrated strategic reading behaviours such as planning how to approach a text, monitoring their understanding while reading, or evaluating their comprehension after completing reading tasks. These classroom observations show that students experience various challenges when reading English texts. Therefore, it is important to investigate the learning strategies they use to help them develop their English reading skills.

Previous studies show that understanding reading in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) depends on several factors. A recent review by Vettori and others (2024) highlighted that knowing vocabulary, thinking skills, and higher-level

thinking are very important for good reading comprehension. Similarly, Hu and others (2022) found that knowing vocabulary is a key factor for EFL learners because it helps them understand new words and make sense of texts. Besides language skills, how well students read is also affected by how they manage their own learning. Li and Gan (2022) found that using self-regulated learning strategies and being motivated to read greatly helps students develop their reading skills. This helps them deal with difficulties when reading. Classroom learning environments are important for helping students develop their reading skills. Desyantaningsih and Artini (2022) found that in junior high schools, reading lessons mainly focus on textbooks. This means teachers need to use reading tasks well to help students understand better. Rahendra (2022) also reported that good reading lessons depend on both the quality of the reading materials and how teachers use textbook activities to get students involved. These results show that what happens in the classroom is key to helping students develop their reading skills.

Previous studies have explored language learning strategies in various EFL contexts, yet relatively little is known about how junior high school students in rural or semi-rural settings use these strategies to support their reading development. Therefore, this study aims to explore how eighth-grade students apply cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies when engaging with English reading tasks. Examining these strategies is important because reading comprehension is influenced not only by students' linguistic knowledge but also by how they plan their reading, monitor their understanding, and respond to comprehension difficulties throughout the reading process. By focusing on eighth-grade students at

SMPN 2 Tampaksiring, this study aims to provide contextual evidence of how learners employ learning strategies to cope with reading difficulties in an environment where opportunities to engage with English outside the classroom are relatively limited. The findings are expected to inform English teachers in selecting instructional practices that better support students' reading development.

1.2 Problem Identification

Based on preliminary classroom observations conducted in February 2025 during English lessons in Class VIII B at SMP Negeri 2 Tampaksiring, several students were found to experience difficulties in developing their English reading skills. The observations took place during reading activities in which students were asked to read English texts from the textbook and answer comprehension questions. The observations indicated that students employed several strategies when completing reading tasks. Some students tended to rely on word-by-word translation, rereading sentences repeatedly, and asking the teacher or their peers for immediate explanations when they encountered difficulties. These strategies were primarily used to understand unfamiliar vocabulary and sentence meanings. However, they were generally applied in an unsystematic manner and did not consistently result in effective comprehension of the texts.

In contrast, more effective reading strategies such as skimming to obtain general ideas, scanning to locate specific information, predicting content before reading, monitoring understanding during reading, and summarizing the text after reading were rarely observed during the classroom activities. This indicates that although students do use certain reading strategies, their use is still limited, not well-

varied, and not consistently applied in supporting reading comprehension. Furthermore, informal discussions with the English teacher of Class VIII B supported these findings. The teacher stated that students often depended on teacher explanation during reading activities and tended to focus on translating individual words rather than using independent strategies to understand the text. The teacher also noted that students' awareness of reading strategies varied, and many students had not yet developed consistent strategy use in reading comprehension tasks.

These suggest that the core issue is closely related to students' use of learning strategies in reading English texts. In particular, students tend to rely on a limited range of reading strategies and do not consistently select, apply, or vary appropriate strategies during the reading process. As a result, their reading comprehension is not fully supported by effective strategic reading behavior. Therefore, investigating students' learning strategies is essential to understand how they approach reading tasks, what types of strategies they employ, and to what extent these strategies are applied effectively. Such an investigation is important to identify how students' learning strategies can be further developed to enhance their English reading comprehension skills. In order to better understand how students' learning strategies are developed and applied in reading activities, it is also necessary to consider the learning context in which these strategies are used.

SMP Negeri 2 Tampaksiring is located in Gianyar Regency, Bali, and serves students from surrounding villages. In this context, students' opportunities to practice English outside the classroom may be influenced by contextual conditions such as limited exposure to English and limited access to learning resources. These

contextual conditions may influence students' reading development and their opportunities to practice English outside the classroom. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the learning strategies employed by students in Class VIII B in developing their English reading skills and the challenges they face during the reading process. The study focuses on identifying the types of learning strategies used by students, the frequency and variation of strategy use, as well as the effectiveness of these strategies in supporting reading comprehension.

1.3 Research Questions

As regards the problem identification, there are two research questions formulated. Those can be explained as follows:

1. What learning strategies are employed by students at SMP N 2 Tampaksiring to enhance their English reading skills?
2. What challenges do junior high school students at SMP N 2 Tampaksiring face in developing English reading skills?

1.4 Research Objectives

Based on the research questions, the formulated research objective can be explained as follows:

1. To describe the learning strategies employed by students at SMP Negeri 2 Tampaksiring to enhance their English reading skills.
2. To describe the challenges faced by junior high school students at SMP Negeri 2 Tampaksiring in developing their English reading skills.

1.5 Research Significances

The results of this current research are expected to contribute on theoretical and practical significances.

1.5.1 Theoretically

This research aims to determine the reading strategies that junior high school students employ and explore the challenges that they face when reading English-language literature. By providing a clear and comprehensive explanation of these strategies, the results are expected to deepen the understanding of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading in junior high school. Results might also contribute to the development and reinforcement of current theories of language learning processes, particularly those pertaining to cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies. Furthermore, this research offers valuable information about how frequently they use particular strategies, and what issues hinder their comprehension. These observations can be used as a starting point to build more specific and efficient reading activities and classes that support students' growth as English readers.

1.5.2 Practically

a. For Teachers

This study is expected to provide English teachers with a better understanding of the learning strategies that junior high school students employ in developing their English reading skills and the challenges they may encounter during the reading process. The study is expected to serve as a useful reference for teachers in planning reading instruction, selecting appropriate reading materials, and designing learning activities that accommodate students' learning needs and

abilities. In addition, this study may encourage teachers to introduce and reinforce the use of cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies during reading instruction. By promoting greater strategy awareness and providing appropriate guidance, teachers are expected to help students become more active, independent, and confident readers.

b. For Students

This study is expected to help students develop greater awareness of the importance of using appropriate learning strategies when reading English texts. Through a better understanding of different learning strategies, students may become more aware of how to approach reading tasks, overcome reading difficulties, and monitor their own comprehension. It is also expected that this study will encourage students to become more independent learners by applying suitable strategies according to their learning needs and reading purposes. Ultimately, this study is expected to support students in developing their English reading skills and strengthening their reading comprehension.

c. For Future Research

This study is expected to serve as a reference for future researchers who are interested in investigating learning strategies in developing English reading skills among EFL learners. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies involving participants from different schools, educational levels, or learning contexts to obtain broader perspectives on students' learning strategies and the development of their English reading skills.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

In order to ensure a thorough and consistent grasp of ideas relevant to students' learning processes for enhancing English reading skills, this section defines a number of essential words utilized in this research. The conceptual framework for the analysis and discussion in the following chapters is established by the definitions given here.

1.6.1 Learning Strategies

According to Oxford (1990), learning strategies are specific actions, behaviors, or techniques used by learners to make learning easier, faster, more effective, and more self-directed. In the context of English reading, learning strategies help students understand texts, solve comprehension problems, and support their learning process during reading activities. In this study, learning strategies refer to cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies used by students in developing their English reading skills. These strategies include processing information, monitoring comprehension, managing emotions, and interacting with others during reading activities.

1.6.2 Cognitive Strategies

Students employ cognitive strategies, which are direct mental processes, to work with language and comprehend textual meaning. Predicting content, skimming for the main idea, scanning for specific material, finding important concepts, drawing inferences, inferring word meanings from context, summarizing, and translating are a few examples. These strategies concentrate on how students absorb and process information while reading.

1.6.3 Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies involve students' consciousness of their reading processes and their capacity to oversee them. These strategies enable learners to plan how to understand a text, monitor their comprehension while reading, and evaluate their understanding afterward. Examples include setting reading goals, choosing suitable reading strategies, checking comprehension during reading, and reflecting on their reading effectiveness. In this study, metacognitive strategies refer to the deliberate ways students manage and regulate their reading activities.

1.6.4 Socio-Affective Strategies

Socio-affective strategies refer to the steps readers take to regulate emotions, boost self-confidence, and seek help from others while engaged in reading. These strategies help students manage anxiety, maintain motivation, and develop comprehension through social interaction. Examples include asking a friend or teacher for clarification, discussing the meaning of the text together, providing encouragement when facing difficult tasks, and managing feelings that can interfere with comprehension. Overall, socio-affective strategies contribute to building a positive and supportive environment that facilitates successful reading.

1.6.5 Reading Skills in EFL Context

According to Grabe and Stoller (2019), reading skills in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context refer to learners' ability to understand, interpret, and construct meaning from English texts through various reading processes and strategies. These skills involve vocabulary understanding, identifying main ideas, making inferences, and comprehending information from written texts. In this study, reading skills in the EFL context refer to students' ability to comprehend

English texts during classroom reading activities. These skills include identifying important information, understanding vocabulary in context, recognizing main ideas, drawing conclusions, and interpreting the meaning of texts. Reading skills are essential because they support students' academic learning and help them understand information more effectively. In EFL learning, the development of reading skills may be influenced by students' vocabulary mastery, reading habits, learning environment, and classroom learning experiences.

