

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Reading as a receptive skill stimulates learners' language learning by providing language input that trains the brain to process and understand the target language. It allows EFL learners to expand their vocabularies, improve fluency, and develop speaking and writing abilities, ultimately supporting their mastery of the target language (Anaktototy & Lesnussa, 2022). Furthermore, reading proficiency unveils many opportunities and enhances personal and intellectual growth for learners (Aditomo & Hasugian, 2018). Iftanti et al. (2023) underline that the ability to read plays a significant role in fostering cognitive abilities, promoting academic performance, broadening understanding and language skills, boosting communication abilities, and stimulating lifelong learning. Aligned with this statement, Alghonaim (2020) highlights that reading helps learners to develop the ability to independently comprehend complex written information while evolving their competence in both academic and professional skills. He notes that successful readers tend to exhibit a higher level of comprehension as they are able to connect multiple ideas, grasp complex notion and simultaneously analyse the information while reading. It indicates that reading comprehension significantly affects EFL learners' performance as it is critical for language learning, academic success, professional development, and lifelong learning. Thus, fostering reading

comprehension for EFL learners is essential as it promotes language learning, enhances cognitive competence, and opens up numerous opportunities for personal and intellectual growth.

Beyond serving as a core component of language learning, reading comprehension is closely linked to the development of critical thinking among learners of English as a foreign language. Reading comprehension and critical thinking are considered as crucial competencies for 21st century learners (Paige et al., 2024). The term of critical thinking refers to the ability of inquiring, analysing, making inferences, resolving issues and good decision making (Akatsuka, 2020; Wang & Seepho, 2017). Dogan and Tosun (2019) note that EFL learners should be involved in critical thinking procedure due to it assist to develop particular skills such as reasoning, identifying and connecting ideas, making inferences, making decisions based on the background knowledge and the context as well as enhancing communication skill in the target language. As learners immerse in reading, they are not only processing the explicit content of the text, but also expected to be able to make interpretation of the text which this process requires higher-order thinking skills to enable learners to go beyond surface-level understanding, allowing them to interpret, analyse, and synthesize information, which enhances their comprehension (Roberto-Flórez et al., 2022). It indicates that critical thinking plays significant role in reading due to it assists the students to deeper their comprehension regarding the text and think beyond it to gain better understanding. The ultimate goal of reading proficiency is comprehension which has been shown to have a

reciprocal relationship with the enhancement of cognitive skills and academic performance indicating that improvement in reading comprehension is associated with the development of critical thinking abilities and vice versa (Paige et al., 2024; Anaktototy & Lesnussa, 2022). It implies that reading comprehension and critical thinking are reciprocal cognitive processes, whereby learners with strong reading comprehension skills are likely to possess strong critical thinking abilities as well. Therefore, this two-way relationship plays a crucial role in language learning, allowing learners to interact with texts on a deeper level and thereby strengthen both their comprehension and language proficiency.

Despite the acknowledgement of reading comprehension and critical thinking as crucial competencies for 21st century learners (Paige et al., 2024), Indonesian EFL learners continue to face significant challenges within these areas. They tend to avoid reading activities due to the complex nature of the reading process and this reluctance is further caused by traditional teaching strategies (Diasi & Murniati, 2023). Sinaga et al. (2023) report that unclear instructional objectives in the curriculum as well as the ineffective teaching strategies and approaches inhibit the development of critical thinking skills among Indonesian EFL learners which in turn negatively affect learners' reading proficiency. They believe that lack of critical reading practices inside the classrooms hinders its development among the Indonesian EFL learners. In summary, the challenges faced by Indonesian EFL learners in reading comprehension and critical thinking stem from multiple interconnected factors,

including lack of reading ability, the persistent use of ineffective teaching strategies and unclear instructional guidance. Since reading is a non-innate skill and most of the individuals are not born as readers (Iftanti et al., 2023), there is a clear need for more effective and innovative strategies to enhance literacy and critical thinking skills, especially in Indonesian EFL context.

To address these challenges, learners need to be taught and trained using effective and innovative teaching strategies which consistently promote critical thinking in reading. Various teaching strategies have been implemented to enhance the development of critical reading skills, with group discussions being one of the most commonly employed methods (Kanchana & Cherukuri, 2024). By engaging in group discussions, learners are encouraged to become active participants in the learning process, critically engaging with the text by discussing different perspectives, ideas, and sharpening understanding through collaboration (Kurjum et al., 2020). For this reason, teaching strategies that emphasize collaboration are worth exploring, and research should be conducted to investigate their effect on learners' reading comprehension and critical thinking skills.

Regarding this case, cooperative learning is one of the teaching strategies that strongly emphasizes collaboration (Kagan & Kagan, 2009). Cooperative learning is well-known as an instructional use of small groups whereby learners work together to achieve learning objective as a group (Slavin, 1982). This approach is believed to successfully promote reading

achievement and emphasizes cognitive development through collaborative activities, peer tutoring, and modelling which contribute to the development in both academic performance and self-esteem (Gillies, 2007). In addition, there are several cooperative learning strategies that effectively fostering reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. One such strategy is Think-Pair-Share (TPS). Specifically, several studies have been conducted to explore the use of Think-Pair-Share in the context of teaching EFL reading and critical thinking (Pratolo et al., 2025; Fiqhiyah et al., 2025; Rosalia & Candraloka, 2023; Salim, 2023; Theabthueng, 2022; Kurjum et al., 2020; Dwigustini et al., 2020; Sari et al., 2018). Collectively, these studies have shown that Think-Pair-Share is a highly effective approach for improving both reading comprehension and critical thinking.

The results of several studies discussed earlier seem to reinforce theoretical claims regarding the effectiveness of Think-Pair-Share in teaching EFL reading and developing critical thinking skills. Think-Pair-Share, initially proposed by Lyman, provides cooperative situation that promote learners' participation. Think-Pair-Share is a structured discussion method consists of three different cycles which are thinking, pairing and sharing. It begins by presenting a question or problem to learners, giving each of them time to *think* individually, followed by discussing their ideas in *pairs*, and then, *share* their insights with the whole groups (McTighe & Lyman, 1988). It illustrates that Think-Pair-Share encourages learners to actively engage with the material by providing individual thinking time to respond thoughtfully to the question,

collaborating with a partner to refine their ideas, and then sharing their discussions with other pairs, which strengthens their learning (Lobo-quintero, 2025). Moreover, this structured interaction allows students to process information more deeply, develop their ideas through discussion, and learn from the perspectives of others which shaping their critical thinking in reading process (Kurjum et al., 2020). Align with this statement, Silva et al. (2022) note that this process creates a responsive thinking classroom where learners can escalate their understanding and promote higher-order thinking skills as they analyse the content of the text, and integrate ideas through discussion. In another words, by regularly engaging in these discussions, students will be more accustomed at forming well-reasoned arguments and making connections between different concepts, which are essential skills in both academic and real-world contexts. Given these benefits, Think-Pair-Share has been selected as the cooperative strategy for teaching reading and critical thinking in this study.

The aforementioned findings proposed that Think-Pair-Share was originally introduced as a teaching strategy employing three different stages of activities including *think*, *pair* and *share* (McTighe & Lyman, 1988). Kagan in 1991 expanded on the use of Think-Pair-Share, describing it as a highly effective and adaptable strateg. Kagan and Kagan (2009) explained that Think-Pair-Share is a flexible strategy because it allows the modification of its three steps in various ways, leading to various forms or combinations. For examples, during the think stage, learners could visualize the content through creating a

list of numerous ideas or recollect facts from the lesson. Then, during the pair stage, learners in pairs can interview each other, take turns listing ideas or debate on an issue. Lastly, during the share stage, all pairs could share their discussion with the whole class simultaneously or express the responses through act it out. Due to its openness to flexibility, Think-Pair-Share is a compelling area for research, offering numerous opportunities for students to engage with the learning material, collaborate with peers, and share their insights with others.

Moreover, in the 21st century learning, the immergence of technology has transformed education, reshaping the way learners learn and teacher instruct (Lionenko & Huzar, 2023). This transformation has led to emergent practices related to the flexible nature of Think-Pair-Share, particularly in English language teaching, through the integration of digital platform. One such tool is Padlet, a digital board for posting, organizing and sharing content which enhances the collaborative and interactive elements of Think-Pair-Share (Muslimah et al., 2020). It is a virtual wall that enables learners to engage and participate in class discussions while simultaneously offering teachers insights and feedback on the learning process (Nadeem, 2019). Thus, the integration of digital platform like Padlet into the flexible nature of Think-Pair-Share further enhances the effectiveness of this collaborative learning strategy.

Besides promoting cooperative learning, Padlet has been recognized as an effective digital tool for improving students' reading comprehension and

critical thinking skills. Previous studies have investigated the effectiveness of Padlet in supporting reading instruction and fostering higher-order thinking abilities (Bayu et al., 2025; Dewi & Budiarsa, 2024; Reyes & Alvarado, 2024; Hossain, 2023; Lionenko & Huzar, 2023; Nadeem, 2019; Rathakrishnan & Ahmad, 2018; Rathakrishnan et al., 2017). Padlet enables learners to post, organize, and exchange ideas in an interactive online environment, making it highly suitable for supporting each stage of the Think-Pair-Share strategy.

During the *think* stage, students use Padlet as a personal workspace to record their initial thoughts and reflections on their own. This phase promotes independent understanding and encourages learners to take ownership of their ideas before moving forward. In the *pair* stage, learners work together by reading and responding to each other's posts, jointly building meaning from the material. This collaborative exchange pushes students to analyze the text, pick out key details, and condense the main ideas—steps that ultimately deepen reading comprehension (Reyes & Alvarado, 2024). Padlet's interactive, visual layout further facilitates rich discussion and boosts learner engagement. As students articulate, compare, and revise their thinking, their grasp of the reading material becomes sharper, while their critical thinking is simultaneously reinforced through the acts of questioning, reasoning, and linking ideas together (Rathakrishnan & Ahmad, 2018). In the final *share* stage, pairs present their jointly developed understanding to the class via Padlet. Instead of depending only on verbal presentations, students can showcase their combined insights through digital posts, making the sharing of

knowledge more organized. Beyond boosting collaborative involvement, this stage also leaves a visible trace of students' comprehension and analytical reasoning on a platform the whole class can access (Muslimah et al., 2020). In light of this, combining Padlet with the Think-Pair-Share strategy shows considerable promise for improving reading comprehension instruction while also nurturing students' critical thinking.

Several other studies have likewise explored how Padlet and similar digital tools can support the implementation of Think-Pair-Share. In a quasi-experimental study, Muslimah et al. (2020) looked at how Think-Pair-Share combined with Padlet influenced writing instruction, finding that students taught using this Padlet-assisted approach outperformed those taught with conventional Think-Pair-Share in terms of writing achievement. Along similar lines, Lobo-quintero (2025) investigated an AI-enhanced version of Think-Pair-Share aimed at boosting collaborative learning and linguistic creativity, comparing a group using TPS with AI chatbot support against a group using traditional TPS without such assistance through a quasi-experimental design. Results showed that the group using AI support produced more writing and generated a wider range of ideas than the comparison group, leading the researcher to conclude that technology-based scaffolding can meaningfully strengthen collaborative learning when incorporated thoughtfully into TPS. Adding to this body of work, Putri and Dewi (2025) examined how pairing Think-Pair-Share with digital games affected students' critical thinking and learning-related anxiety, again using a quasi-experimental design to compare a

digital-game-supported TPS group with a conventionally taught group. Their findings indicated that the group using digital games showed markedly greater gains in critical thinking and a larger drop in learning anxiety compared to the conventional group.

Taken together, these studies suggest that pairing Think-Pair-Share with Padlet and other digital tools can meaningfully support student learning. However, relatively few studies have specifically explored how Think-Pair-Share combined with Padlet can be used to teach reading and build critical thinking within an EFL setting. This gap is what motivates the novelty of the current study—namely, applying Padlet within a Think-Pair-Share framework specifically for teaching EFL reading and cultivating critical thinking. Building on this, the present study seeks to examine how using Padlet within the Think-Pair-Share strategy affects EFL students' reading comprehension and critical thinking. Accordingly, this study aims to determine whether the use of Padlet in conjunction with Think-Pair-Share significantly influences the reading comprehension and critical thinking of high school EFL students.

1.2 Problem Identification

The aforementioned research background reveals several key issues related to reading comprehension and critical thinking skills among Indonesian EFL learners. Many learners face significant challenges within these areas. Diasti and Murniati (2023) underline that regardless of the importance of reading comprehension and critical thinking skills, Indonesian EFL students

often exhibit low levels of reading comprehension and critical thinking. The complexity of the reading process and the use of traditional teaching strategies contribute to the students' reluctance to engage in reading activities. This reluctance not only hinders language proficiency but also negatively affects learners' academic performance and cognitive development.

Furthermore, Sinaga et al. (2023) note that unclear instruction in the curriculum as well as the ineffective teaching strategies and approaches hinder the development of critical thinking which limits learners' ability to engage with texts on a deeper level. They assert that lack of critical thinking practices in the classrooms exhibit its development among the Indonesian EFL learners. Hence, the factors contributing to these challenges are the lack of reading ability, unclear instructions and the constant use of ineffective teaching strategies. Traditional methods often fail to engage learners actively in critical thinking or deep textual analysis, which are necessary for improving reading comprehension and enhancing cognitive skills (Diasti & Murniati, 2023). As a result, students struggle to develop the ability to understand, interpret, and analyse information, which is crucial for their academic and intellectual growth.

To address these issues, there is a clear need for more effective, innovative, and collaborative teaching strategies that actively engage learners and promote both reading comprehension and critical thinking. Strategies that emphasize collaboration and active participation, such as Think-Pair-Share, offer promising alternatives for addressing these gaps. However, there is limited research exploring the integration of digital tools like Padlet with cooperative

learning strategies such as Think-Pair-Share in the context of teaching EFL reading comprehension and critical thinking.

In light of these problems, further investigation is needed to explore the potential effect of integrating Padlet into Think-Pair-Share strategy. This study aims to address the gap in research by examining whether the integration of these strategies has a significant effect on reading comprehension and critical thinking among Indonesian high school EFL learners.

1.3 Problem Limitation

The present study is limited to examining the significant effect of integrating Padlet into Think-Pair-Share strategy on students' reading comprehension and critical thinking skills in the EFL classroom. The study focuses on the implementation of Padlet-assisted Think-Pair-Share as an instructional strategy applied during reading activities. This research is conducted among Indonesian EFL learners at the senior high school level. The investigation emphasizes the use of Padlet as a digital collaborative platform that facilitates students' participation during the thinking, pairing, and sharing stages of the learning process. Through this integration, the study focuses on how the integration of Padlet in Think-Pair-Share strategy influence reading comprehension and critical thinking skills among first grade senior high school students in SMA Negeri 2 Kuta Selatan.

1.4 Research Question

According to the aforementioned research background and problem identification, the present study formulates the following research questions:

1. Is there any significant effect of Padlet use in Think-Pair-Share strategy on reading comprehension of first-grade senior high school students?
2. Is there any significant effect of Padlet use in Think-Pair-Share strategy on critical thinking of first-grade senior high school students?
3. Is there any simultaneous effect of Padlet use in Think-Pair-Share strategy on both reading comprehension and critical thinking of first-grade senior high school students?

1.5 Purposes of the Study

Based on the research questions mentioned above, the objectives of the current study are formulated as follows:

1. To investigate whether there is a significant effect of Padlet use in Think-Pair-Share strategy on the reading comprehension of first grade senior high school students at SMA Negeri 2 Kuta Selatan.
2. To investigate whether there is a significant effect of Padlet use in Think-Pair-Share strategy on the critical thinking skills of 1st grade senior high school students at SMA Negeri 2 Kuta Selatan.
3. To investigate whether there is a simultaneous effect of Padlet use in Think-Pair-Share strategy on both reading comprehension and critical thinking skills of first grade senior high school students at SMA Negeri 2 Kuta Selatan.

1.6 Significances of the Study

The present study is expected to provide meaningful contributions both theoretically and practically in the field of EFL teaching and learning, particularly in relation to the integration of cooperative learning strategies and digital technology in reading instruction.

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of knowledge regarding the integration of digital learning platforms within cooperative learning strategies in the EFL context. By examining the significant effect of Padlet integrated into the Think-Pair-Share strategy on students' reading comprehension and critical thinking, this study provides empirical evidence supporting the role of technology-assisted collaborative learning in promoting higher-order thinking skills. Furthermore, the results are expected to strengthen theoretical perspectives that emphasize interaction, collaboration, and active engagement as essential elements in developing reading comprehension and critical thinking among EFL learners.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

a. For EFL Educators

The finding of the present study is expected to provide practical insights for ELT practitioner, especially in EFL context, regarding the use of technology-integrated cooperative learning strategies in classroom instruction. The findings may serve as a reference for teachers in

designing learning activities that facilitate students' participation while supporting the development of reading comprehension and critical thinking skills.

b. For EFL Students

Students are expected to benefit from improved reading comprehension and critical thinking skills through the implementation of Padlet within Think-Pair-Share strategy. Through structured discussion and digital collaboration, students are expected to experience a more appealing and collaborative learning environment that support deeper understanding of texts and encourages critical analysis.

1.7 Definition of Key Term

1.7.1 Conceptual Definition

1.7.1.1 Reading Comprehension

The aim of reading is to comprehend the meaning or message of the text at hand. Achieving this requires the integration of multiple processes. According to Klinger et al. (2007), reading comprehension occurs when learners understand the meaning of written words by connecting their own ideas with the information in the text. They further define reading comprehension as the process of constructing meaning, which involves complex tasks such as word recognition, vocabulary knowledge, and reading fluency.

Similarly, Grellet (1981) explains that reading comprehension refers to the ability of readers to obtain and understand information from written texts efficiently according to their reading purposes. It is not simply recognizing linguistic symbols but involves an active process in which readers interpret meaning by connecting textual information with their prior knowledge and experiences. Through this interaction, readers construct understanding rather than passively receive information. Grellet further explains that effective reading requires the use of appropriate strategies depending on the reader's objective. Readers may read to gain general understanding or to locate specific information, and each purpose demands different approaches. Several important reading strategies include skimming to identify the main idea, scanning to find particular details, intensive reading for detailed comprehension, and extensive reading for overall understanding and reading fluency.

1.7.1.2 Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is widely recognized as an essential higher-order thinking skill in education. According to Ennis (1996), critical thinking refers to a rational and reflective process that guides individuals in determining what to believe or what decisions should be made. This process requires individuals to examine information carefully rather than accepting ideas without evaluation. Ennis further explains that critical thinking involves both cognitive skills

and personal dispositions. The cognitive aspect includes the ability to analyse arguments, evaluate evidence, identify assumptions, and draw logical conclusions. At the same time, effective critical thinkers demonstrate positive intellectual attitudes, such as openness to different perspectives, willingness to reconsider opinions, and concern for accurate and well-supported judgments. These dispositions encourage learners to approach problems thoughtfully and objectively.

1.7.1.3 Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is a way of teaching that encourages students to work together in small groups to learn. Slavin (1982) highlights that cooperative learning allows students work together to reach the same academic goals while still being responsible for their own learning and the learning of the group as a whole. This method helps students learn by having them talk to each other, share ideas, and help each other understand the lesson material. Slavin emphasizes that there are a few important rules that must be followed for cooperative learning to work. Positive interdependence is an important part of this because it makes group members depend on each other to finish learning tasks. Individual accountability also makes sure that each student is responsible for their own work and not just relying on their classmates. Students also need to interact with each other in person, since talking and explaining things help them understand concepts better.

1.7.1.4 Think-Pair-Share Strategy

Think-Pair-Share is one of the cooperative learning strategies introduced by Frank Lyman in 1981 at the University of Maryland. According to McTighe and Lyman (1988), Think-Pair-Share represents a structured discussion technique consisting of three sequential stages. First, during the thinking stage, students are provided with time to reflect individually on a question or problem presented by the teacher. Second, in the pairing stage, students collaborate with a partner to exchange ideas and discuss possible answers. Finally, in the sharing stage, each pair communicates the outcomes of their discussion to the entire class. Therefore, the Think-Pair-Share strategy highlights active student participation through individual reflection, peer discussion, and class-wide sharing activities.

1.7.1.5 Padlet

Nadeem (2019) defines Padlet as a virtual wall that enables the learners to engage and participate in class discussions collaboratively through sharing text, files, videos, links and images. Nadeem asserts that Padlet is a promising collaborative tool whereby it assists teachers to do different forms of assessment and offering them insights and feedback on the learning process through the shared wall.

1.7.1.6 Padlet Use in Think-Pair-Share

Think-Pair-Share is a cooperative learning strategy originally developed by Frank Lyman and later expanded by Kagan in 1991 to provide more flexible approaches for classroom implementation (as cited in Sharma & Saarsar, 2018). The strategy is widely recognized as an instructional approach that promotes active student participation through structured interaction and collaborative learning. According to Kagan and Kagan (2009), Think-Pair-Share is considered highly adaptable because teachers can create various learning activity sequences while maintaining its three essential stages such as thinking, pairing, and sharing.

Due to its highly adaptable structure, Think-Pair-Share offers broad possibilities for innovation in classroom practice and has become an important area of investigation in educational research. The strategy supports multiple modes of learning by allowing students to think independently, collaborate socially, and communicate ideas publicly. In English language teaching contexts, this flexibility has encouraged the integration of various instructional media and learning tools to enhance student engagement and comprehension. One emerging practice involves incorporating digital tools, such as Padlet or online collaborative platforms, to facilitate interactive knowledge sharing throughout the Think-Pair-Share process.

1.7.2 Operational Definition

1.7.2.1 Reading Comprehension

In this study, reading comprehension is defined as the extent to which students can understand and make sense of written English texts following the learning process. Operationally, this ability is measured through students' scores on a reading comprehension test administered as a post-test. The test assesses several skills, including identifying main ideas, finding specific information, inferring implicit meaning, understanding contextual vocabulary, and recognizing textual references. Improvement in students' reading comprehension is determined by comparing the post-test results of the experimental and control groups following the instructional treatment.

1.7.2.2 Critical Thinking

In the current study, critical thinking refers to students' ability to apply higher-order thinking skills while engaging with reading materials during classroom learning. Additionally, critical thinking is measured through reading-based assessment tasks that require students to interpret information, analyse ideas, make inferences, evaluate arguments, and draw logical conclusions. The level of students' critical thinking skills is presented in their responses to reading comprehension tasks administered in both group.

1.7.2.3 Cooperative Learning

The present study examines cooperative learning as the instructional process in which students work collaboratively with peers during classroom activities to achieve shared learning objectives. The cooperative learning process is implemented through structured interaction, peer discussion, and individual responsibility embedded in the implementation of the Think-Pair-Share strategy during reading instruction.

1.7.2.4 Think-Pair-Share Strategy

Think-Pair-Share in the present study refers to the teaching strategy implemented through three sequential stages during reading lessons. In the thinking stage, students individually analyse reading questions or texts provided by the teacher. In the pairing stage, students discuss their ideas with a partner to compare and refine their understanding. In the sharing stage, students communicate the results of their discussion to the class through oral responses or digital submission using Padlet. The strategy is applied as the main instructional treatment in the experimental group.

1.7.2.5 Padlet

Padlet in this study is defined as an interactive digital platform designed to enhance reading comprehension and critical thinking skills among EFL students. It serves as a collaborative tool for students to post their responses to reading materials,

facilitating engagement with peers and fostering deeper understanding.

1.7.2.6 Padlet Use Within Think-Pair-Share

Padlet refers to a digital tool in classroom activities to support collaborative and interactive learning. Padlet is used as a virtual platform where students post, organize, and share ideas during the Think-Pair-Share stages. Padlet enables students to brainstorm, discuss, and visualize their ideas at each phase of Think-Pair-Share, enhancing their engagement and understanding.

