

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

English is widely recognized as an international language used for communication, education, science, technology, business, and global interaction. As globalization continues to develop, English proficiency has become increasingly important because it enables individuals to access information, exchange knowledge, and communicate across different countries and cultures. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language and is included as one of the compulsory subjects in junior high schools. Through English language learning, students are expected to develop communicative competence by mastering the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are interrelated and play a significant role in supporting students' academic achievement and future communication needs. Among the four language skills, reading is considered one of the most fundamental skills because it serves as the primary means through which students acquire knowledge and information. Most learning resources, such as textbooks, reference books, journals, and digital materials, are presented in written form. Consequently, students need adequate reading ability to understand learning materials effectively and to participate successfully in classroom activities. Reading, therefore, is not merely the ability to recognize written words but also the ability to comprehend, interpret, and evaluate the meaning conveyed in a text.

Grabe and Stoller (2020) define reading as a complex cognitive process in which readers actively construct meaning by integrating linguistic knowledge, background knowledge, reading strategies, and comprehension processes. This definition indicates that successful reading requires readers to interact actively with a text rather than simply decode written symbols. Likewise, Snow (2002) explains that reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction with written language. This process involves three essential components: the reader, the text, and the reading activity. Therefore, successful reading depends on readers' ability to connect their prior knowledge with the information presented in the text.

Supporting these views, Nunan (2003) states that reading is an interactive process in which readers combine textual information with their background knowledge to construct meaning. Through reading, students are expected not only to understand explicit information but also to identify implied meanings, interpret the writer's intention, and evaluate ideas critically. Therefore, reading is regarded as an active learning process that contributes significantly to students' intellectual development and academic success.

The importance of reading has been emphasized by many scholars because reading is the foundation of learning across various disciplines. Students with good reading ability are generally better able to understand learning materials, solve academic problems, and develop independent learning habits. In contrast, students

with limited reading ability often encounter difficulties in understanding written information, completing classroom assignments, and achieving expected learning outcomes. Consequently, improving students' reading ability remains one of the primary objectives of English language teaching.

In the twenty-first century, reading has become increasingly important because students are expected to access, evaluate, and utilize information from both printed and digital sources. Reading not only supports language development but also promotes higher-order thinking skills, such as analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information. Therefore, developing students' reading ability is essential to prepare them for academic success and lifelong learning.

The importance of strengthening students' reading ability is also reflected in international educational assessments. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 reported that the reading performance of Indonesian students remained below the (OECD, 2023) average. Only around one-quarter of Indonesian students achieved at least Level 2 proficiency in reading, the minimum level at which students are expected to identify the main idea, locate explicit information, and make simple interpretations of written texts. These findings indicate that many Indonesian students still experience difficulties in comprehending written information and suggest that improving reading ability remains an important challenge for education in Indonesia.

The results of PISA are consistent with findings from previous studies, which indicate that many students continue to experience difficulties in understanding English texts. These difficulties are commonly associated with limited vocabulary, insufficient background knowledge, lack of reading practice, and challenges in interpreting information presented in written texts. Such conditions suggest that students' reading ability requires continuous attention from teachers, researchers, and educational institutions to improve the quality of English language learning.

Considering the important role of reading in education and the challenges still faced by many students, it is necessary to examine students' reading ability more comprehensively. One way to achieve this is by analyzing students' reading skills in understanding the text types taught in the English curriculum. Such analysis can provide valuable information regarding students' current reading ability and help teachers identify areas that require further improvement. The discussion of reading skills as the main focus of this study is presented in the following section. Reading skills are one of the essential competencies that students need to master in learning English. Reading skills refer to students' ability to understand, interpret, and construct meaning from written texts. Students who possess good reading skills are able to identify important information, understand the writer's message, and use the information obtained from reading to support their learning process. Therefore, reading skills are regarded as one of the key indicators of students' success in English language learning.

According to Grabe and Stoller (2020), reading skills involve the integration of linguistic knowledge, cognitive processes, background knowledge, and strategic thinking to construct meaning from written texts. Successful readers actively interact with the text by connecting new information with their prior knowledge, monitoring their comprehension, and applying appropriate reading strategies to achieve their reading purposes. Similarly, Brown (2004) explains that reading skills require learners not only to recognize vocabulary and grammatical structures but also to interpret explicit and implicit meanings presented in written texts. These definitions indicate that reading skills involve higher-order thinking processes that enable students to comprehend texts effectively.

Reading skills play a significant role in students' academic achievement because almost every learning activity requires students to understand written information. Students who possess adequate reading skills are generally able to comprehend textbooks, identify important ideas, complete classroom assignments, and achieve better learning outcomes. Conversely, students with poor reading skills often experience difficulties in understanding learning materials, resulting in lower academic performance. Therefore, developing students' reading skills should become one of the primary objectives of English language instruction.

In junior high schools, students are introduced to various genres of texts as part of the English curriculum, including descriptive, narrative, procedure, report, and recount texts. Each genre has its own communicative purpose, organizational structure, and language features. Consequently, students are expected to develop sufficient reading skills to comprehend different types of texts effectively. Among these genres, recount text is one of the materials taught to eighth-grade students.

According to Anderson and Anderson (1997), a recount text is a text that retells past events or experiences in chronological order for the purpose of informing or entertaining readers. Similarly, Derewianka (2020) states that recount text reconstructs past experiences by presenting events in the order in which they occurred. To understand recount texts successfully, students need to identify important information, understand the sequence of events, interpret the writer's message, and construct the overall meaning of the text. Therefore, adequate reading skills are essential for students to comprehend recount texts effectively.

In the Merdeka Curriculum, recount text is one of the learning materials studied by eighth-grade students in junior high school. Students are expected to understand the social function, generic structure, language features, and information presented in recount texts. However, achieving these learning objectives is not always easy because many students still encounter difficulties in understanding English texts. Several studies have reported that students often struggle to comprehend written information due to limited vocabulary, insufficient

background knowledge, unfamiliar sentence structures, and inadequate reading strategies. These challenges may prevent students from understanding the content of a text and negatively affect their English learning achievement.

Considering the importance of reading skills in understanding recount texts, it is necessary to analyze students' reading skills to obtain a clear description of their current reading ability. The findings of such analysis are expected to provide useful information for English teachers regarding students' strengths and weaknesses in reading. Furthermore, the results may serve as a reference for improving reading instruction and developing learning activities that better address students' needs. Therefore, analyzing students' reading skills in comprehending recount texts is considered important in order to support the improvement of English language teaching and learning.

Several previous studies have investigated students' reading ability in English language learning. Harahap (2024) analyzed students' reading comprehension of recount texts and reported an average score of 68.34, which was categorized as good. Similarly, Hidayati et al. (2025) examined English reading comprehension skills among junior high school students and reported differences in students' reading performance across reading components. These studies indicate that students' reading ability remains an important issue in English language learning.

Other researchers have focused on improving students' reading achievement through instructional strategies or learning media. For instance, Puspita et al. (2023) investigated the use of Padlet to improve students' reading skills in comprehending recount texts. The findings showed that the use of instructional media contributed to students' reading performance. These studies demonstrate that various approaches have been used to investigate and support students' reading development.

Other researchers have focused on improving students' reading achievement through instructional strategies or learning media. For instance, Fahmi (2025) investigated the use of comic strips to improve students' reading comprehension of recount texts and found that the instructional media positively influenced students' reading achievement. Likewise, Puspita (2023) examined the implementation of digital learning media to enhance students' reading skills and concluded that appropriate instructional media could improve students' reading performance. These studies demonstrate that teachers' instructional practices play an important role in supporting students' reading development.

Although previous studies have provided valuable contributions to English language teaching, several limitations can still be identified. Most previous researchers focused on measuring the effectiveness of instructional strategies, learning media, or classroom interventions designed to improve students' reading comprehension. In addition, many studies emphasized students' reading

comprehension in general without specifically describing students' reading skills in recount texts. Furthermore, previous studies were conducted in different educational settings and involved different participants. Consequently, the findings cannot be directly generalized to the context of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 17 Bintan.

Based on the review of previous studies, it can be identified that studies specifically analyzing students' reading skills in comprehending recount texts through a descriptive quantitative approach are still limited, particularly at the eighth-grade level of junior high school. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the reading skills of the eighth-grade students in comprehending recount texts. Rather than examining the effectiveness of a teaching strategy or instructional media, this study focuses on describing students' existing reading skills based on the results of a reading test.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on analyzing students' reading skills in recount texts through a descriptive quantitative approach. Unlike many previous studies that primarily investigated the effectiveness of instructional strategies or learning media, this study aims to provide a comprehensive description of students' reading skills without implementing any instructional treatment. The findings are expected to provide baseline information regarding students' reading ability and contribute to the development of more appropriate reading instruction at the junior high school level.

The researcher selected SMP Negeri 17 Bintan as the research site because recount text is one of the learning materials taught to eighth-grade students in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum. In addition, analyzing students' reading skills at this level is important because it provides information regarding students' current reading ability before they continue to more advanced English learning materials. The findings are expected to help English teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses in reading and serve as a reference for improving the quality of English language teaching at the school.

Based on the explanations above, reading skills play an important role in helping students understand written texts and achieve successful English learning. Previous studies have shown that students still experience difficulties in comprehending English texts and that further research is needed to describe students' reading ability in specific contexts. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled “An Analysis of the Eighth Grade Students' Reading Skills in Recount Text at SMP Negeri 17 Bintan.”

1.2 Limitation of the Problem

To make this study more focused and manageable, the researcher limits the scope of the study to analyzing the reading skills of the eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 17 Bintan in comprehending recount texts. This study focuses on students' reading skills as measured through a reading test based on recount texts. The data obtained from the reading test are analyzed using a descriptive quantitative approach to describe students' reading skills. This study does not examine the

effectiveness of any teaching strategy, instructional media, or learning method. In addition, it does not compare students' achievement before and after treatment because the purpose of this study is to provide a description of students' reading skills in comprehending recount texts.

1.3 Research Question

Based on the limitation of the problem above, the research question of this study is formulated as follows:

How are the reading skills of the eighth-grade students in comprehending recount texts at SMP Negeri 17 Bintan?

1.4 Objective of the Study

Based on the research question above, the objective of this study is: To analyze the reading skills of the eighth-grade students in comprehending recount texts at SMP Negeri 17 Bintan.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The results of this study are expected to give contributions as follows:

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, the findings of this study are expected to enrich the existing literature on reading skills, particularly in analyzing students' reading skills in comprehending recount texts. In addition, this study is expected to contribute to the development of knowledge in English language teaching and serve as a reference for future researchers who are interested in conducting studies related to reading skills or reading comprehension.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

1. For English Teachers

The findings of this study are expected to provide English teachers with information about the reading skills of the eighth-grade students in comprehending recount texts. The results may help teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses in reading and use the information to design more appropriate teaching and learning activities.

2. For Students

The findings of this study are expected to help students recognize their current reading skills in comprehending recount texts. It is also expected to encourage students to improve their reading ability and develop a better understanding of English texts.

3. For Future Researchers

The findings of this study are expected to serve as a useful reference for future researchers who intend to conduct studies related to reading skills, reading comprehension, or English language learning in similar contexts. The results may also provide supporting information for developing further research in the field of English education

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the terms used in this study, the researcher provides the following definitions:

1. Reading Skills

Reading skills refer to the students' ability to understand, interpret, and construct meaning from written texts. In this study, reading skills refer to the ability of the eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 17 Bintan to comprehend recount texts, as measured through a reading test.

2. Recount Text

Recount text is a type of text that retells past events or experiences in chronological order with the purpose of informing or entertaining the readers. In this study, recount texts are used as the reading materials to analyze the reading skills of the eighth-grade students.

3. Analysis

Analysis is the process of examining, organizing, and interpreting data systematically to obtain meaningful information. In this study, analysis refers to the process of analyzing students' reading test results to describe the reading skills of the eighth-grade students in comprehending recount texts at SMP Negeri 17 Bintan.