

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

In Indonesia, English language learning focuses heavily on strengthening reading comprehension skills. Realizing that reading comprehension is an important subject that must be addressed in junior high school to develop and extend students' learning, educators need to be equipped with strategies to enhance their students' reading comprehension skills. It is widely accepted that the achievement of reading comprehension outcomes is considerably shaped by the various instructional strategies chosen by teaching professionals (Mikraj & Robiah, 2024).

The junior high school curriculum defines reading comprehension as pupils' understanding, analysis, and interpretation of written English texts. Furthermore, their reading comprehension skills continue to fall well short of the curriculum's requirements (Ningsih, 2023). This reading comprehension skill is critical in junior high school English learning because it helps students not only understand the subject content but also build literacy and higher order thinking skills, which assist learning in a variety of domains.

Students' understanding of English subjects is still very low, especially in reading comprehension skills. The problems faced by students are the lack of interesting and interactive learning strategies and the lack of learning media which are the main causes of students' difficulties in understanding the material.

Because teachers predominantly use lecture techniques and rarely use various active learning strategies, students struggle to comprehend descriptive writings in English. In addition, students feel limited learning media such as student worksheet/lembar kerja siswa (LKS) which is less interesting, so they tend to feel bored.

Typically, junior high school students do their tasks by reading as quickly as they can until they come across a term that they are unsure about. Students will either skip the word and go on to another sentence or jump to another text when they are unable to understand the material. It's terrible to practice reading like this (Ningsih, 2018). It is important for students to discover the appropriate method to address their comprehension difficulties when reading the material, based on the problems previously mentioned (Handayani et al., 2022). Small Focus Group Discussion (SFGD) is one method, which is effective in improving this skill. This approach facilitates students' comprehension of the material and enhances their English language skills more effectively (Rahmadani & Adityo, 2023). This method can influence student engagement and make reading more understandable in line with learning objectives (Ningsih et al., 2021).

According to Theofilus & Adi (2021), the learning approach known as "SFGD" involves 3-5 students in one group with the aim of discussing the expertise or information of each member. This approach encourages students to voice their thoughts and opinions. In addition, this approach can create a comfortable teaching and learning environment. As a result, the entire learning process can be made more interesting for students. According to Kamalia et al.

(2022), SFGD has been shown to be successful in a variety of educational settings in earlier studies. This method enhances students' academic performance while also boosting their confidence in expressing themselves and engaging in meaningful discussions.

This research focuses on the application of SFGD method in reading comprehension learning, especially how this method affects students in overcoming various difficulties such as lack of interest in reading, unsupportive learning environment, low self-confidence, and limited vocabulary. Therefore, there is still room to encourage students' reading comprehension skills through the use of more efficient and entertaining techniques, such as the SFGD method which makes it easier for students to share ideas with each other and makes it easier for them to understand the results of discussions with their peers.

SMPN 11 Tanjungpinang is located in a rural area far from the city centre, the researcher decided to conduct the study there. The lack of resources available to students at school could affect their comprehension level. In addition, this school is willing to try new methods to improve students' reading comprehension and has adequate facilities to facilitate SFGD activities. Based on the above context, the researcher is interested in investigating the extent of "The Influence of the Small Focus Group Discussion Method on Reading Comprehension of the Eighth Grade Students at SMPN 11 Tanjungpinang".

1.2 Identification of the Problem

Based on the background, the researcher observed many concerns concerning students reading comprehension, which are mentioned below:

1. Students had a low level of comprehension of the English texts they read.
2. Learning methods were a factor in students' lack of interest in reading and learning.
3. Unsupportive learning environment made students feel insecure.
4. Students had limited vocabulary mastery.

1.3 Limitation of the Problem

This research was limited to exploring whether the small focus group discussion method approach had an effective influence in overcoming the reading comprehension challenges that were faced by eighth grade students at SMPN 11 Tanjungpinang.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the limitation of the problem, the researcher formulates the following research question:

“Does the Small Focus Group Discussion method influence the reading comprehension of the eighth grade students at SMPN 11 Tanjungpinang?”

1.5 Objective of the Study

Based on the research question, to find out the influence of small focus group discussion method on reading comprehension of eighth grade students at SMPN 11 Tanjungpinang.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This section is expected to be useful both theoretically and practically, as follows:

1. Theoretically

This theoretical research contributes to the development of existing knowledge in English language education, particularly in reading comprehension within English classrooms. Collaborative and interactive teaching strategies for students through several investigation of SFGD method can influence students' cognitive and linguistic abilities in addition to the development of their reading comprehension.

2. Practically

a. For Students

This research can influence students' learning motivation, as SFGD method encourage active interaction, idea-sharing, and the development of critical thinking skills, ultimately boosting their academic achievements.

b. For Teachers

This study helps teachers to move away from boring teaching methods and get students more engaged by using fun interactive techniques. So, the SFGD method helps teachers to know if their students really understand the material and can give them the opportunity to adjust their teaching as needed.

c. For Other Researchers

This study proposes other researchers to contribute to the use of more efficient teaching strategies to influence students' reading comprehension ability while offering a new perspective on the application of the SFGD method in reading instruction in junior high school.

1.7 Definitions of Key Terms

This section defines important terms contained in this study. These definitions are meant to simplify and prevent misunderstandings. Terms are as follows:

1. Influence

Influence can either increase or decrease reading comprehension. This influence involves updates or improvements based on the results of this study.

2. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the ability to develop and expand students' thinking in understanding the content of sentences and the meaning of each word of the written text they read.

3. Small Focus Group Discussion

SFGD is a method that makes it easier for students to understand the material. By exchanging ideas with each other, students are more comfortable and active. And communication conveyed by friends is easier to understand.