

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The background of the Study

Reading is a crucial ability for individuals learning the English language. It is often referred to as a receptive skill, but this term shouldn't be misconstrued to imply that no active language production is required. In reality, you must still convey your comprehension of the text's meaning to demonstrate your understanding of its content. In accordance with the aforementioned concept, Saville and Troike (2006) mentioned that reading is categorized as a receptive activity; however, this does not imply that reading occurs passively or effortlessly. Students need to engage actively in constructing the understanding of the material they have examined.

As one of the key skills in mastering English, developing the ability to read effectively is vital for learners. The core element of reading lies in understanding the content presented in the text. According to Nunan (2003) as cited in Nurdiana and Rizki (2017), reading involves a seamless interaction between fluent readers, synthesizing information from the text along with their existing knowledge to derive meaning. Without grasping the central idea of the passage, reading serves no purpose. You will gain no insights from the material if comprehension eludes you. In line with Johnson (2008), reading loses its impact if it fails to generate meaning. It is essential to comprehend the essence of what is conveyed in the text. Understanding in reading text is referred to as reading comprehension. The skill of reading comprehension refers to a reader's capacity to

understand the significance of the written material. This capability requires the reader to grasp the text as a whole rather than just understand the individual words contained within it. According to Woolley (2011), reading comprehension involves the process of deriving meaning from the written material. The aim of reading comprehension is to achieve a comprehensive insight into what is presented in the text, rather than merely extracting significance from separate words or phrases. McNamara (2007) supports this view, indicating that reading comprehension is the capacity to understand the concepts within a text and the connections between the ideas conveyed.

In Indonesia, reading constitutes one of the essential skills that students cultivate. From kindergarten through university, learners are instructed in reading methods and are expected to develop this skill. Mastering reading is classified as a crucial language skill that every student should acquire since reading allows individuals to access information and derive meaning from the text. Additionally, reading serves as a means for students to expand their knowledge while learning English and to enhance their overall language abilities. In agreement with this perspective, Muhammad, Heidari, and Niry (2008) claim that reading receives more focus than other skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), identifying it as necessary to improve proficiency in English.

SMP GAJAH MADA is one of the middle schools located in Medan. This educational establishment offers English language courses to its students, with a particular emphasis on reading proficiency. The institution adheres to the 2013 curriculum as its framework for the educational process. According to the 2013

curriculum, reading is considered an essential competency in acquiring English, which is required to be taught and learned at the eight grade students of Junior high school.

In reading, eighth-grade students are required to attain a level of proficiency that includes understanding the purpose of social interactions, recognizing text formats, identifying language characteristics, and grasping the contextual meaning of straightforward descriptive texts. The English instructor conducts lessons for these students four times each week. When evaluating the students, there are four key English skills they must develop: speaking, reading, listening, and writing, all of which are integrated into the English curriculum. The minimum passing criteria for English are set at a score of 68 for the Natural Science Program and 65 for the Social Science Program. According to the National Standard Education Body's guidelines for the 2013 curriculum, eighth graders in Junior High School must meet two core competencies in reading descriptive texts, which are:

1. Recognizing the intent, structure, and linguistic features of simple written descriptive texts.
2. Interpreting the meaning of basic written descriptive texts.

From the quotes mentioned earlier, it is evident that proficiency in reading encompasses numerous elements that students need to master. This implies that if students fail to grasp the necessary components of reading as dictated by the curriculum, then engaging in reading activities will not be productive. According to the author's initial research conducted at SMP GAJAH MADA Medan, it is

apparent that a portion of the students continues to encounter challenges and obstacles in the English language, particularly when it comes to interpreting descriptive texts. Their ability to understand what they read is still not meeting the curriculum standards, despite having learned about descriptive texts during their time in junior high. This is evidenced by the disparity between the educational results of students and the minimum completeness criteria (KKM) is evident in several observations:

1. Certain students struggle to identify the central idea of a descriptive text.
2. Some students face challenges in locating specific details within the descriptive text.
3. A number of students take an extended period to extract implicit information from the descriptive text.
4. Some students are aware of the general structure of descriptive text yet find it difficult to recognize it within the text.

Moreover, there remains a limited number of researchers in Indonesia focused on students' comprehension of reading descriptive text. The majority of studies tend to link reading understanding with other factors, such as metacognitive awareness, motivation, and critical thinking. Consequently, the author believes that this investigation holds significance.

In light of the aforementioned issues, the author is keen on exploring these challenges and uncovering the actual state of students' understanding in reading descriptive text, culminating in a study centered around students' comprehension of descriptive text.

B. The problems of the Study

Based on the above background, It is evident that many students continue to face challenges, particularly regarding their understanding of descriptive texts. To clarify these issues, the research problems will be outlined as follows:

1. What are the levels of students' ability in reading descriptive text at grade 8 of SMP Gajah Mada Medan?
2. How do the students' level in reading descriptive text at grade 8 of SMP Gajah Mada Medan realize as the way they do?

C. The objectives of the Study

1. To find out the levels of students' ability in reading descriptive text at SMP Gajah Mada Medan.
2. To describe the process of students' level in reading descriptive text at SMP GAJAH MADA Medan.

D. The scopes of the Study

The scope of the research limits to analysis of students' ability in reading descriptive text at grade 8 of SMP Gajah Mada Medan.

E. The significances of the Study

This study expected to have both theoretical and practical contribution.

1. Theoretical significances

The significance of the study lies in this study can contribute to the broader field of educational research by providing insights into the reading abilities of middle-school students in a specific context. It may lead to a better understanding of how students engage with and comprehend descriptive texts, which can inform educational theories and practices.

2. Practical Significances

The practical significance of an analysis of students' ability in reading descriptive text at Grade 8 of SMP Gajah Mada Medan can be understood in several ways:

- a. **Educational Improvement:** Understanding students' reading abilities at this grade level can help educators identify areas where students may be struggling. This knowledge allows for targeted interventions and curriculum adjustments to improve overall reading comprehension skills, which are crucial for success in various subjects.
- b. **Individualized Instruction:** Through this analysis, teachers can identify specific students who may need additional support or enrichment in reading. This information can be used to tailor instruction to the needs of individual students, ensuring that they receive the appropriate level of challenge and support.
- c. **Resource Allocation:** Schools can use the findings to allocate resources effectively. For example, if a significant portion of students are struggling with reading descriptive texts, the school can invest in

additional reading materials, specialized teachers, or reading programs to address this issue.

- d. Curriculum Development: The analysis can inform the development of the curriculum, helping educators prioritize reading skills within the broader educational framework. This ensures that the curriculum aligns with the actual needs and abilities of the students.

