

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

Reading is one of the four fundamental language skills in English, alongside listening, speaking, and writing. In the context of Indonesia as an EFL country, reading plays a particularly important role in academic achievement. Indonesian students need to learn English to understand texts that are relevant to their studies and future careers. English is included as a compulsory subject in Indonesian schools, and students are formally introduced to it starting from junior high school. It is also a subject tested in the national examination, which emphasizes reading skills through paper-based tests (Pustaka & Wiedarti, 2019). However, reading in a foreign language poses significant challenges due to unfamiliar vocabulary, grammatical structures, and cultural references. According to PISA (2019), less than 30% of Indonesian students reach the expected proficiency in reading literacy, indicating the need for more effective reading instruction to support students' academic development.

In addition to these general challenges, reading comprehension specifically demands more than literal decoding; it involves interpreting ideas, inferring meaning, and constructing understanding from the text. However, recent evidence from Indonesian contexts shows persistent obstacles: limited vocabulary, inadequate exposure to grammar, low motivation, and lack of strategic reading habits among junior high learners (Nussy & Pekpekay, 2024; Rahmat, 2022). These

comprehension challenges hinder students' academic performance and highlight the need for innovative and adaptive instructional methods.

In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, Grade VIII students are expected to develop their literacy skills through various genres of texts, including narrative texts. Narrative texts are useful tools in helping students build imagination, recognize story structures, and develop emotional and moral awareness. Perdiana and Dede (2022) found that teaching with narrative texts significantly increased students' reading comprehension scores from an average of 50.00 to 80.00. This shows that narrative texts can be powerful in improving both comprehension and student interest in reading.

Despite these benefits, preliminary data gathered from interviews with the English teacher at SMP Negeri 3 Percut Sei Tuan shows that teachers still face several challenges when teaching narrative texts. These include students' limited vocabulary, difficulty in focusing during reading activities, low motivation, and inability to understand the content of what they read. One of the most pressing problems is students' limited vocabulary, which becomes a major barrier to understanding the narrative structure and meaning. This finding supports the study by Laia et al. (2023), who reported that 68.3% of students struggle with vocabulary in narrative texts. This problem reinforces the need for engaging teaching strategies that cater to students' diverse learning needs.

One approach that offers promise in addressing this issue is the multisensory technique. This method involves integrating visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile modalities in the learning process. According to Ghaleb and Majeed (2023), this

technique stimulates multiple areas of the brain, allowing students to better understand and retain information. Furthermore, Sarudin et al. (2019) emphasize that using visual, auditory, and tactile elements in class activities can improve students' word recognition and engagement. These features make multisensory teaching especially beneficial for students with diverse abilities or learning challenges.

Given these considerations, this study aims to investigate the use of the multisensory technique in teaching reading comprehension of narrative texts to eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Percut Sei Tuan. By observing the teaching process and how multisensory activities are implemented, this research hopes to provide insights into the technique's effectiveness in supporting students' understanding of narrative texts and addressing common classroom difficulties such as limited vocabulary.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

The problems of the study are formulated in form of a question as follows:

- 1) What types of multisensory techniques are used by the English teacher in teaching reading comprehension of narrative texts for eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Percut Sei Tuan?
- 2) How are the multisensory techniques used in the teaching of reading comprehension of narrative texts for eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Percut Sei Tuan?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to explore how the use of multisensory techniques influences the teaching of reading comprehension of narrative texts for eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Percut Sei Tuan.

- 1) To find out the types of multisensory techniques used by the English teacher in teaching reading comprehension of narrative texts for eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Percut Sei Tuan.
- 2) To investigate how the multisensory technique is used in the teaching of reading comprehension of narrative texts for eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Percut Sei Tuan.

1.4 The Scope of the Study

This study focuses on teaching reading comprehension through the use of the Multisensory Technique, specifically in teaching narrative texts to eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Percut Sei Tuan using the Merdeka Curriculum during the 2025/2026 academic year.

1.5 The Significances of the Study

The result of this study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical benefit as follows:

1. Theoretically: The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the development of theories related to teaching reading comprehension and the application of multisensory techniques in language learning. It aims to offer insights into effective strategies for teaching narrative texts through innovative and engaging approaches.

2. Practically:

This study is also expected to give practical contributions to various educational stakeholders.

- a. For the English teacher, this study offers alternative methods and strategies for teaching reading comprehension, particularly in the context of narrative texts, by using multisensory techniques to address diverse learning needs.
- b. For students, this study aims to enhance students' motivation and engagement in reading activities, helping them better understand narrative texts and improve their reading comprehension skills.
- c. For other researchers, this study can serve as a reference for future research in the field of language education, particularly in exploring multisensory techniques for teaching reading comprehension to middle and high school students.

