

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the research which aims to explore the use of Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy in helping students to develop their comprehension skills. This chapter also includes the research question, the scope of the research, the significance of the research, the clarification of key terms, and the organization of the paper.

1.1 Background

Reading is a skill that every learner should master. Reading is an interactive process in which the reader's prior knowledge of the world interacts with the message conveyed directly or indirectly by the text (Smith, 1995). Based on this definition, reading is defined as a process because reading has various stages, namely before-, during-, and after-reading stages, which will be passed sequentially in which different tasks need to be performed in each stage. Reading is also defined as interactive. It is because, in the process of reading, the reader's mind interacts with the text to decode, assign meaning, and interpret the messages contained in the text. The readers also apply their prior knowledge in reading activity. Although reading seems to be a complex process, many benefits will be acquired by everyone who reads.

Nation and Macalister (2020) stated that reading is a source of knowledge and enjoyment. Thus, judging from the purpose, reading is categorized into two types: reading for information and reading for pleasure. Reading for information is reading to get information to gain knowledge. With this aim, people may read to criticize the author's ideas or someone's writing style. Reading according to this category is very closely related to increasing knowledge for the reader. The next category is reading for pleasure, namely reading activities as a source of pleasure. With this goal, people read to eliminate tiredness and entertain themselves. These two categories greatly benefit everyone, especially students in this study.

Students will gain many benefits from reading activities such as enhanced intelligence (Ritchie et al., 2015). Through the reading process, students will gain a lot of new information and knowledge which will elevate their intelligence. Reading

can promote creativity (Djikic et al., 2013), where through the reading process, imagination is trained by letting the words describe a certain image while the reader manipulates the picture in mind. Reading could also encourage creativity, which brings about new ideas into their life and creativity is also hugely involved in innovation.

Another benefit of reading is strengthening memory (Natasya, 2022). As Stinemorrow (2023) stated, reading for pleasure is a good activity for the reader and helps their mental abilities. The example of a mental ability is episodic memory, this ability allows the reader to remember what happened in a book's previous chapters and make sense of the ongoing story. Another mental ability is working memory, which means the capacity to hold things in our minds as we engage in other mental processes. It helps us keep track of things that happened in recent paragraphs as we continue reading. Moreover, through reading for pleasure, stress can also be reduced (Long et al., 2019). Reading helps to relieve stress by shifting your mind and attention to something different rather than your present state, which improves your mental health and promotes longevity.

On the contrary, if students do not possess good reading skills, they will experience difficulties both in the academic world and social environment. In terms of the academic world, when students have less power in reading skills, they will have low self-esteem and motivation which limits them from accomplishing well in school (Main, 2023). In line with this, Tam (2017) also argues that students without foundation literacy skills, one of which is reading, are unlikely to excel in school and later studies. Whilst, in the social environment students who have difficulties in reading will also face many challenges. As Bal and Velkamp (2013) reported that students would also experience difficulties in showing empathy, sharing feelings, and imagining something which prevents them from being creative and innovative when they lack reading skills. Tam (2017) also pointed out an extreme effect of poor reading skills in the workplace. Those who have difficulties in these skills will face some difficulties in entering the workforce. They will struggle in finding employment, reading job advertisements, writing relevant resumes, and mastering communication skills and experiencing in an interview. Therefore, it is

understandable that students must possess reading skills in the academic field and everyday life, especially in this case, learning English.

One of the core factors in determining a student's success in reading is comprehension. Comprehension is needed in any language skills, as well as reading skills. Reading comprehension is the ability to translate written language into forms similar to those employed in inner thinking or dialogue (Gardner & McIntyre, 1991). Harris and Graham (2007) also define reading comprehension as a complex process of creating meaning by coordinating a number of decoding, word reading, and fluency abilities, as well as the integration of prior knowledge, vocabulary, and previous experiences. Thus, comprehension is a process of creating meaning from reading through interaction with the text. This process is influenced by the experience and knowledge previously possessed by the reader. Reading comprehension is a complex process in learning English. It is because students need to deal with many elements such as vocabulary, expression, grammar, conjunction, background knowledge, etc which are contained in the text. This also became a reason behind many issues regarding reading comprehension found in EFL learners. This argument has been proven by the fact that many students worldwide need help understanding a text (Zarei, 2018; Dara, 2019).

Several issues regarding reading comprehension were found in a number of countries where English represents a foreign language. As a study conducted by Chawwang (2008), Thai EFL learners found difficulties in reading English texts. It happened because the learners' vocabulary knowledge was limited. Vocabulary knowledge is very important for learners to understand complex reading material, such as textbooks which regularly contain specific technical terms or expressions (Carlisle, 2000; Qian, 2002). Furthermore, EFL learners also experienced difficulties in understanding complex sentences (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). According to Scott (2009), complex sentences consist of several clauses and some connecting words such as because, although, however, and furthermore etc.

A number of studies also reported that EFL learners found difficulties in understanding coordinating conjunction, prepositional phrases, and normalization. Those make the writings more complex and difficult to understand. A study by Al Jarrah and Ismail (2018) involving Arabian EFL learners show that their ability to

recognize the types of text is limited, their attention during the lesson, words difficulty, and also grammatical knowledge also poor. While in Indonesia, learners found difficulties in comprehending English text due to lack of motivation, low prior knowledge and poor English vocabulary (Nanda & Azmy, 2020; Darjito, 2019). Based on these problems, the learners' comprehension ability at the literal, inferential and evaluative levels is still low. As a solution, a practical approach is needed to tackle those problems.

Several studies have shown that a number of approaches can be used to support EFL learners' reading comprehension, such as Fix up Strategy (FUS) (e.g., Annisa, Hidayanti, & Muhassin, 2021), blended learning approach (e.g., Rombot et al., 2020), Question and Answer Relation (QAR) (e.g., Chien, 2013), Genre Based Approach (GBA) (e.g., Angraini & Rozimela, 2020; Pham & Bui, 2021) and Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy (e.g., Rose & Martin, 2012; Damayanti, 2017, Bogale, 2018; Becerra, 2020; Mataka, Mukurunge, & Bhil, 2020; Vencesla, 2021; Lestari, 2022). Those studies report that those approaches support EFL learners' reading comprehension at literal, inferential, and evaluative levels, and also close the literacy gap.

Many studies have proven that the pedagogy of Reading to Learn (R2L) can effectively solve the previous problem. R2L was developed based on Vygotsky's theory of socio-cultural, Halliday's theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics, and Breinstain's theory of pedagogical discourse. The three theories all have an impact on one's ability to learn a foreign language. According to Foley (1991), language is a tool of learning when the ways of thinking and patterns of linguistic use are social processes, and that language shapes and reflects experience from childhood. A child learns to speak in a language first, and then develops those communicative abilities to fit into the unique discourses that society has developed. As a result, language teachers must comprehend all three of these concepts in order to generate learners who use language skills in social interactions.

Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy, which develops based on those theories, is an approach to supporting academic reading and writing skills with different students' ability levels in the same class. Not only reading comprehension but also it equally supports students' literacy (Acevedo & Rose, 2007; Acevedo, 2010).

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Researchers have conducted various studies on implementing this R2L pedagogy approach at all levels of education, such as universities or tertiary level, secondary level, as well as primary level (e.g., Damayanti, 2017; Bogale, 2018; Becerra et al., 2020; Mataka, Mukurunge, & Bhila 2020; Lestari, 2022).

Bogale (2018) conducted research on implementing the Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy approach in teaching reading comprehension to university students in Ethiopia. The results of this study indicated that R2L has a good effect on increasing students' reading comprehension skills. Meanwhile, Mataka et al. (2020) reported on the positive effect of Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy on literacy development of upper secondary school students in South Africa. Similar to Mataka et al. (2020), Becerra et al., (2020) also conducted a study implementing this approach to the lower secondary students to see their comprehension of explanation text. The result showed that this approach could develop the participants' ability to understand academic written text which is explanation text. While in Indonesian, Damayanti (2017) examined the use of the R2L pedagogy approach in lower secondary school students to see its impact on their ability to write narrative text. Results indicated that the participants were more literate in written narratives after the lesson was conducted. Furthermore, a study by Lestari (2022) revealed that this approach supported a young learner's reading comprehension in descriptive text.

However, as mentioned previously, only a few researchers are examining the implementation of Reading to Learn (R2) pedagogy in teaching reading comprehension to Indonesian EFL learners. Therefore, research still needs to be carried out on implementing R2L pedagogy to Indonesia EFL learners with reading comprehension of descriptive text as the targeted skills. In line with this background, this present study aims to determine the implementation of R2L pedagogy in teaching reading comprehension to lower secondary school students in Indonesia.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the research background explained in the previous subchapter, this research is conducted in an attempt to answer this research question:

"What other factors of reading-to-learn (R2L) pedagogy supports learners' reading comprehension at literal, inferential, and evaluative levels?"

1.3 Aim of the Research

The present study is aimed to investigate the use of R2L Pedagogy supports the ability of learners' reading comprehension for EFL learners in a lower secondary school in West Java.

1.4 Scope and Limitation

It was previously explained that there are still limited studies that examine the implementation of Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy to lower secondary school learners in Indonesia. Therefore, this present study addressed the gap. This research was conducted in a class of 7th-grader of lower secondary school in West Java as the participants in implementing the R2L pedagogy approach to observe their reading comprehension ability. Due to the target skills, this R2L pedagogy was implemented using a learning cycle proposed by Rose and Martin (2012), which consists of two stages: preparing for reading and detailed reading. Meanwhile, the data collection was analyzed based on cognitive levels, lower-order thinking skills, and higher-order thinking skills of Bloom's Taxonomy Revised which was proposed by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), and the content analysis by Krippendorff (2004).

1.5 Significance of the Research

The present study regards leading light in three aspects: theoretical, practical, and professional advantages. Each of these aspects is explained below.

1. Theoretical significance

The result of this study is expected to contribute new and further knowledge in teaching reading for EFL learners and how R2L supports their reading comprehension.

2. Practical significance

As for the practical advantages, the result of this study is expected to discover a suitable approach or method of reading comprehension in teaching reading to EFL learners in Indonesia. Also, the result of the study may inspire the English teacher to implement this approach in teaching-learning activities.

3. Professional significance

The result of this study is hoped to be a stepping stone for further research in strategy for teaching reading to EFL learners.

1.6 Clarification of Key Terms

There are several key terms utilized in this study. Therefore, to avoid ambiguity and misconceptions, below are definitions of key terms used in this study:

- a) **Reading to Learn Pedagogy** is an approach to teaching language, especially in writing and reading skills, by adopting aspects of genre pedagogy. This approach can assist students in their academic reading or academic writing skills. Furthermore, this approach aims to minimize the differences in student proficiency between lower and higher achievers in one class to accomplish the same outcome. In this study, reading comprehension was the targeted skill to be taught. Therefore students were expected to be able to participate in the sequence of activities that were carried out in the two phases of this approach, namely preparing for reading and detailed reading phase. Those activities aim to perceive the benefits of implementing the R2L pedagogy on learners' reading comprehension skills.
- b) **Reading Comprehension** represents learners' ability to construct the meaning of spoken or written texts through complex cognitive processes. Through this process, learners must be involved in a complex and lengthy process of generating meaning in a text by reflecting on two cognitive levels based on lower-order thinking skills and higher-order thinking skills adopted from Bloom's Taxonomy theory. In this study, learners' ability in reading comprehension was measured based on their ability to read two academic texts, which are descriptive.

- c) **EFL Learners** are those learning English as their foreign language in a non-English speaking country, such as Japanese people who learn English in Japan. Likewise, Indonesians who study English in Indonesia are categorized as EFL learners. They do not use English as the language in daily communication; however, they use English on certain occasions. There are some differences in teaching English to EFL learners regarding purpose, strategies, and method. Thus, particular skills are required for EFL teachers in the teaching process. In this study, EFL learners represent Indonesian people who learn English as one of the mandatory subjects taught in educational settings, which is schools.

1.7 Organization of the Paper

In terms of the organization of this research proposal, as many as five chapters are included here. Those are explained below:

- **Chapter I Introduction**

This chapter focuses on seven elements of the introduction of this study, namely the background of this study, the research question, the aim of the research, the scope and limitation, and the significance of the research. In addition, the clarification of key terms and the organization of this paper are also presented in this chapter.

- **Chapter II Literature Review**

This chapter mentioned several theories used in this study, including the theory of EFL learners, reading comprehension, Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy, and previous studies related to this topic.

- **Chapter III Research Methodology**

This chapter explains the research methodology of this research. It comprises several subchapters: Research Design, Research Site and Participants, Data Collection and Data Analysis.

- **Chapter IV Finding and Discussion**

This chapter discusses the findings and data analysis of learners' reading comprehension on descriptive text. It includes three subchapters that are focused on the strategies to improve learner's lower-order thinking skills, the strategies to improve learners' higher order thinking skills, and R2L and strategies to solve learner's problems.

- **Chapter V Implication and Suggestion**

This chapter sums up the findings of this research as well as concludes the pedagogical implication that is recommended to be implemented while teaching English especially in teaching reading comprehension. Moreover, recommendations for further research are also presented here.