

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the introduction of the study, comprising the background of the study, the research question, the purpose of the research, the scope of the research, the significance of the research, the terms of clarification, and the organization of the paper.

### 1.1 Background of the Research

Reading comprehension is significant in every human's life. Through reading, students can deepen their understanding of one specific topic, develop analytical and critical thinking skills, and gain new language structure as well as vocabulary (Think Student, 2022; Grand Canyon University, 2020). These skills are very beneficial in academic life since students should interact with the text by making predictions, asking some critical questions, analyzing the new information, and summarizing (Academic English UK, 2022). Lack of reading skills leads students to have a serious academic challenge (Millin, Millin, & Pearce, 2020), one of which is that it is hard to understand what is being written in the text. Weak vocabulary foundations and phonological awareness lead students to experience a longer period to process the text (Lynch, 2020; Mohammed & Amponsah, 2018) and decreased their comprehension of the text. Students with low comprehension are hard to fit into academic life and risk dropping out of school (Wanzek, et al., 2018; Partanen, et al., 2019; Millin & Millin, 2018). Therefore, reading skills become important to decrease the rate of students who face serious academic challenges.

The importance of reading comprehension is the priority of the Indonesian government. As of today, the Indonesian government is implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka*, in which the English language is one of the subjects taught to Grade 1 to Grade 12. Listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, and presenting various kinds of text types are the main focus of English learning (Aditomo, 2022). Especially in terms of reading skills, learners are hoped to have the ability to understand, use, and reflect a text based on its aim in order to develop their knowledge and potential (Aditomo, 2022). Therefore, with the knowledge they gain, they are expected to be a good part of the society who can do real-life action to solve specific problems.

However, doing real-life action can possibly be done when students have good reading comprehension skills. To comprehend a text is not an easy task. Students need the

ability not only to recognize and decode the single words written in the text (Nation, 2005; Mih & Mih, 2008) but also the ability to understand, use, reflect, and interpret every text that they read (Hamra & Syatriana, 2010). Specifically, in processing the text, students must go through lower-level and higher-level processes which can be reflected into three different levels - literal, inferential, and interpretive. On literal levels, students are expected to find the meaning exactly in the text, such as finding the main ideas of each paragraph and organizing the sequence of events that occurred in the text (NSW Government, 2021; Rose & Martin, 2019a). As far as an inferential level is concerned, students must make connections between the words they are reading with other words and text elements such as illustrations, sentences, metaphors, similes, or idioms (Rose & Martin, 2019a). At the interpretive level, students must connect the elements of the text with their own experience, attitudes, or knowledge of the topic (Rose & Martin, 2019a).

Looking at the long journey of the reading process, it is no wonder that EFL students still face some barriers in comprehending the text. As discovered by Suryanto (2017), Indonesian students are still struggling in pronouncing and decoding English words as English words have different phonetics. When children cannot decode the word quickly as the text is read aloud by the teacher, they tend to forget the decoded material before they even have the chance to understand the meaning (Sari et al., 2020). Furthermore, Indonesian students also still find it difficult to acquire the information from the text due to lack of vocabulary (Hamra & Syatriana, 2010; Rizqon et al., 2021). They are failing to process the text even in the lower comprehension process where they should recall the main points and find the literal meaning of the text (Kendeou et al., 2014). In line with the failure of processing the lower comprehension, students also experience a struggle in inferencing the text as the higher comprehension process (Rizqon et al., 2021).

The barriers happen due to a lack of exposure to English (Sunggingwati & Nguyen, 2013), as English is a foreign language in Indonesia. Lacking exposure in the EFL context results in less motivation for students to read and comprehend the English text (Nanda & Azmi, 2020; Rombot et al., 2020; Sunggingwati & Nguyen, 2013). Hence, the need to simplify the comprehension process through teaching approaches is the demand in today's EFL young learners' classroom.

Studies have shown that lots of approaches can be used to improve EFL student reading comprehension, such as Interactive Model of Teaching Reading Comprehension (IMTRC) (e.g., Hamra & Syatriana, 2010), Fix Up Strategy (FUS) (e.g. Muhassin et al., 2021), Question and Answer Relation (QAR) (e.g., Raphael & Au, 2005; Chien, 2013), and

blended learning approach (e.g., Rombot et al., 2020). In the meantime, Genre Based Approach (GBA) (e.g., Montero-Arévalo, 2019; Pham & Bui, 2021; Anggraini & Rozimela, 2019) and Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy (e.g., Rose & Martin, 2012; Vencesla, 2021; Damayanti, 2017; Becerra et al., 2020; Mataka et al., 2020; Millin & Millin, 2018; Millin, Millin, & Pearce, 2020; Bogale, 2018) are proven as effective approaches in teaching both writing and reading skills. All mentioned approaches improve EFL students' ability in understanding, interpreting, and reflecting the text as well as closing the literacy gap (Hamra & Syatriana, 2010; Raphael & Au, 2005; Rose & Martin, 2012; Daniarti et al., 2019; Ariyandar et al., 2020; Phirunkhana & Phichiensathien, 2018; Millin, Millin, & Pierce, 2020; Millin & Millin, 2018).

Among all reading comprehension approaches, Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy that was developed from Genre-based Approach (GBA) is considered as the appropriate approach in motivating and improving reading comprehension skills. R2L pedagogy offers a learning experience that scaffolds children to become independent learning (Damayanti, 2017; Becerra et al., 2020; Ariyandar et al., 2020) by chunking the complex academic literacy into smaller forms in which can be followed by any levels of students (Millin, Millin, & Pierce, 2020; Ariyandar et al., 2020; Millin & Millin, 2018). This scaffolding can be reflected in a three-level cycle which supports students to comprehend the text and deconstruct the model text. Comprehending and deconstructing a model text allows students to have a detailed comprehension and to use the language they have learnt from reading into writing. Students will also gain the knowledge of meanings, wordings, and spelling from the cycle (Rose & Martin, 2012) as well as achieve detailed explanations in terms of content, structure, and language features as well as language skills (Yamac & Ulusoy, 2016; Becerra et al., 2020; Shum et al., 2016; Millin & Millin, 2018).

Becerra et al. (2020) found that R2L pedagogy helped EFL students improve the results of reading tasks. R2L pedagogy also allows students to have a better understanding toward the explanation text through step-by-step summarizing and detailed reading. These strategies helped students to focus on lexicogrammar, facilitated students in identifying key features of explanation text, and motivated them to read independently. Moreover, the research revealed that the Preparing for Reading stage and Detailed Reading play a significant role in helping students be independent readers. Other research also showed that using genre-based approach and reading to learn pedagogy is effective in making them easily understand the text, solving their difficulties in differentiating language functions, comprehend the text, mastering lexical items, summarizing the text, and creating more

cohesive and coherent texts (Daniarti, et al., 2019; Ariyanfar & Mitchell, 2020; Phirunkhana & Phichiensathien, 2018; Millin, Millin, & Pierce, 2020; Millin & Millin, 2018). These results were gained because of building knowledge of the field, preparing for reading, and detailed reading phases in which they gained the needed knowledge (Mauludin, 2020; Menco-Haeckermann, 2020; Becerra et al., 2020).

Despite all research, there is still a gap in utilizing Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy in reading comprehension. As shown by Becerra et al. (2020), there is a need to investigate how R2L pedagogy affects students' reading comprehension in narrative, argument, descriptive, or recount text in EFL learning. Moreover, although a large number of research investigated the implementation of Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy in different EFL educational levels (e.g. Menco-Haeckermann, 2020; Bogale, 2018; Millin & Millin, 2018; Damayanti, 2017; Shum et al., 2016; Becerra, et al., 2020), there is still a call for investigating this issue in the EFL elementary school. Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy is still applicable in elementary school, as proven by its successful development and implementation in Sydney school, Australia (Rose & Martin, 2012).

Against this background, this study aims to investigate the implementation of Reading to Learn (R2L) in teaching reading comprehension to a young English language learner.

## **1.2 Research Question**

Based on the research background, this research is addressed through the research question:

“How does Reading to learn (R2L) pedagogy support a young English language learner's reading comprehension?”.

## **1.3 Aim of the Research**

Through this research, the researchers want to explore how Reading to learn (R2L) pedagogy contributes to a young English language learner's reading comprehension.

## **1.4 Scope of the study**

Among many previous studies utilizing Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy, little has discovered the area of teaching reading comprehension to a young English language learner. Thus, the present study is expected to fill the gap. The present study used a young learner

aged 12 years old in Bandung as an attempt to in-depth discover the process of how Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy supports his comprehension. The R2L pedagogy is implemented using the R2L cycle by Rose and Martin (2012) in the stage of the preparing for reading and the detailed reading. The answers from comprehension questions prompted are analyzed based on three levels of reading comprehension proposed by Rose and Martin (2019) and thematic analysis by (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

### **1.5 Significance of the Research**

The result and discussion presented in this study are expected to contribute to the EFL young learners teaching and learning knowledge, especially in reading comprehension ability. Some of the significance which are hoped to be beneficial from this study will be discussed below.

#### **1. Theoretical Significance**

This study found that Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy was applicable in EFL young learners' classroom with considering their English ability and characteristics. The ability and characteristics were used in selecting the text and providing the maximum scaffolding. It was proven that the richness of theories underpinned Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy supports an EFL young English language learner, especially Systemic Functional Linguistics by Halliday and Children Cognitive Development theory by Vygotsky.

#### **2. Practical significance**

The present study was unfolding justification for the teacher to implement reading to learn pedagogy in EFL young learners' classrooms, especially in teaching reading comprehension. The results found that Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy could be conducted in an one-on-one learning context.

#### **3. Professional Significance**

The study found that Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy was applicable for Indonesian students in learning reading comprehension. As it was applicable for one-on-one learning, Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy was suitable for individualized learning.

### **1.6 Clarification of terms**

#### **1. Reading to Learn (R2L) Pedagogy**

Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy is the approach aimed to minimize the gap between low proficiency students and high-proficiency students in terms of reading

and writing skills (Rose & Martin, 2012; 2019). Adopting the aspects of Genre Pedagogy, Reading to Learn pedagogy allow all proficiency level students to achieve the same outcome. In this study, the student was expected to be able to follow and participate in preparing for the reading and detailed reading phase of R2L pedagogy due to the targeted skill. The present study focused on reading comprehension as it became one of the emphasized skills in *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

## 2. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the ability to recognize the words, understand, interpret, critique, and evaluate a text (Raphael and Au, 2005). To finally achieve reading comprehension is not an easy task. The student must go through a complex and long journey and reflect it on three levels of comprehension which are literal, inferred, and interpretive (Rose & Martin, 2019). In this study, the student's answers were analyzed using thematic analysis which was based on three levels of comprehension; literal, inferred, and interpretive.

## 3. Young English Language Learner

Young learners are children aged under 18 years old who have the same needs and rights but different in terms of physical, psychological, social, emotional, conceptual, and cognitive development (Ellis, 2014). Moreover, a young English language learner is a student who learns English at a young age under 18 years old. In this research, a sixth grader young learner aged 12 years old who is currently learning English as the foreign language became the participant. As he was in grade 6, he was in phase C at *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

## 1.7 Organization of the Paper

This research proposal will be divided into three chapters as explained below.

### Chapter I

This chapter explains the introduction of the study, comprising the background of the study, the research questions, the purpose of the research, the scope of the research, the significance of the research, the terms of clarification, and the organization of the paper.

### Chapter II

This chapter explains the theories related to the topic of this research including young English language learners, Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy, reading

comprehension, reading comprehension in Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy, and related studies.

### **Chapter III**

This chapter explains the methodology used in this research including the research design, participants, data collection, and data analysis.

### **Chapter IV**

This chapter explains the finding and discussion of the study. In this chapter, the researcher discussed the finding and correlated it to the theories.

### **Chapter V**

This chapter explains the suggestion and recommendation that hopefully will be beneficial for further researchers.