

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background

One of the most important receptive skills for language acquisition is reading. Reading plays a crucial role in language acquisition, according to Harmer (2007). How much and how often a person reads greatly affects their language comprehension. The more frequently students are exposed to reading texts, the better they understand structure, vocabulary, and meaning in various contexts. Brown (2001) also states that, along with listening, speaking, and writing, reading is one of the four essential skills required for language learning. Reading is considered one of the most important skills because it helps individuals understand written information, both within and beyond the academic world.

Students are not only required to recognize letters and words in the reading process, but they are also expected to understand the overall meaning of what they read. Eskey and Dubin (1986) stated that reading is a receptive process in which readers extract information from a text. Alyousef (2006) reinforced this idea by stating that reading is an interactive process between the reader and the text, and when practiced regularly, it can lead to reading fluency, or the ability to read smoothly. Oakhill et al. (2015) emphasized that reading ability is not limited to word recognition alone; deep comprehension of the text is also essential. Readers must be able to predict what they are going to read, ensure they understand what they are reading, clarify ambiguous parts, and connect new information with what they already know. Therefore,

reading skills—particularly reading comprehension—are crucial for students' success across various subjects.

Nevertheless, students' reading ability in Indonesia is still considered low. According to the 2019 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report, Indonesian students ranked 62nd out of 70 countries in reading literacy. The data revealed that most students in Indonesia struggle to comprehend texts, particularly in identifying implicit meanings, drawing conclusions, and connecting information to the appropriate context. Similar problems are encountered by students when learning English. They often face difficulties answering text-based questions, making inferences, and interpreting the meaning of words or sentences within a broader context. At SMA Negeri 6 Bengkulu Tengah, especially in grade X, similar phenomena are observed. Based on initial interviews with the English teacher at the school, many students demonstrate limited understanding of reading texts. They are unable to grasp the overall meaning and tend to rely on word-for-word translation without comprehending the text in its entirety.

In response to this situation, the English teacher at SMA Negeri 6 Bengkulu Tengah decided to use Wattpad as an alternative medium to help students learn English, particularly to improve their reading skills. This idea emerged from the need for a new learning medium that could engage students while effectively supporting their reading abilities, without relying on conventional textbooks that are often rigid and unappealing.

Wattpad is a digital platform launched in 2007 by Allen Lau and Ivan Yuen from Toronto, Canada. Through this application, users can write and read various stories from a wide range of genres and cultural backgrounds. Wattpad offers a vast and diverse collection of content and has grown into the world's largest community for writers and readers, with 77% of the available stories written in English (Wattpad, 2023).

Wattpad offers many advantages due to its vast content and user-friendly interface. It features a wide range of story genres, including romance, mystery, horror, fantasy, science fiction, fan fiction, and teen life stories. The communicative and contextual language style used in these stories is highly relevant to the everyday lives of teenagers. Since students feel connected to the topics discussed, it becomes easier for them to understand the reading material. Wattpad is also free to use on digital devices such as smartphones or laptops, allowing students to read anytime and anywhere.

Wattpad also includes interactive features that can encourage students to read. Readers have the ability to communicate directly with authors or other readers through the comment section. On the other hand, the bookmark and reading list features make it easier for users to organize their reading materials. With these elements, the reading process becomes more enjoyable and does not feel like a burden, unlike what is often experienced with formal textbook.

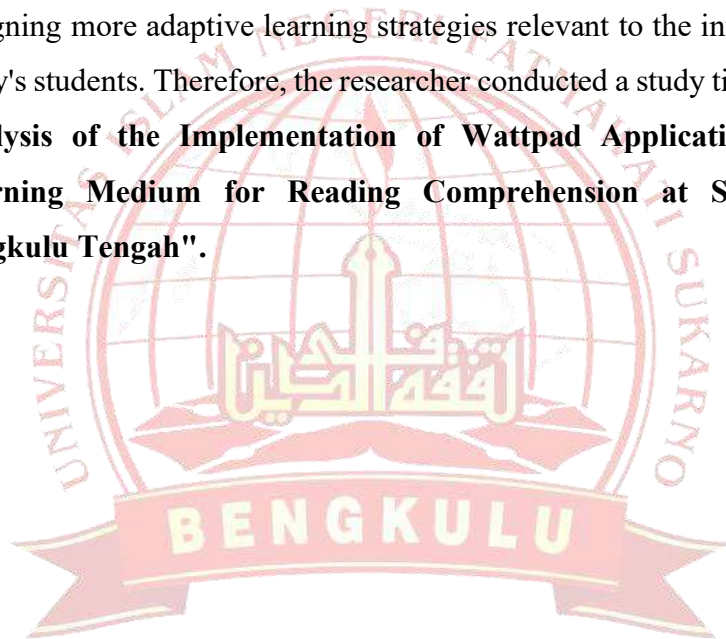
At SMA Negeri 6 Bengkulu Tengah, the use of Wattpad as an alternative learning material has been integrated into English language instruction. The selected English stories are tailored to match the students' proficiency levels and interests. In its implementation, students are assigned to read the stories individually or in groups, both

during class and outside regular school hours. After reading, they engage in discussions about the story content, answer comprehension questions, and create summaries or reflections based on what they have read. This approach is expected to enhance students' understanding of texts while also increasing their motivation to read English-language materials.

The use of Wattpad also allows for the implementation of differentiated learning. With the wide variety of available titles and genres, teachers can tailor reading recommendations based on each student's proficiency level and interests. Students who already have strong reading skills can be given more complex texts, while those who are still struggling can start with simpler stories that match their abilities. This approach provides space for each student to learn at their own pace and according to their individual learning styles, allowing their potential in understanding English texts to develop more effectively.

However, using Wattpad as a learning medium comes with certain technical and content-related challenges. Students have reported issues such as having to log in again after app updates, long loading times, and errors when opening or registering the application. Additionally, many Wattpad stories are covered by ads, some are not available for offline reading, and certain books are considered to fall short of educational standards. Despite these limitations, Wattpad can still be effectively used as an engaging and valuable learning tool if managed properly.

The ongoing experience of using Wattpad at SMA Negeri 6 Bengkulu Tengah indicates that this medium has significant potential to help students understand English texts in a more contextual and enjoyable way. Nevertheless, the implementation process, and how Wattpad influences reading comprehension from the perspective of both students and teachers, has not been thoroughly researched. This study is expected to provide a real picture of current Wattpad-based learning practices, as well as serve as a reference for educators in designing more adaptive learning strategies relevant to the interests of today's students. Therefore, the researcher conducted a study titled "**An Analysis of the Implementation of Wattpad Application as a Learning Medium for Reading Comprehension at SMAN 6 Bengkulu Tengah**".



## **B. The Research Questions**

The research question is formulated as follows:

1. How is the implementation of the Wattpad application in reading comprehension learning at SMAN 6 Bengkulu Tengah?
2. What are the students' perceptions toward the implementation of the Wattpad application in reading comprehension learning?
3. What are the teacher's perceptions regarding the challenges and opportunities in implementing the Wattpad application in reading comprehension learning?

## **C. The Research Objectives**

The objectives of this research are:

1. To describe the implementation process of the Wattpad application as an English language learning medium for reading comprehension among students at SMA Negeri 6 Bengkulu Tengah.
2. To analyze students' perceptions regarding the use of the Wattpad application as a learning medium for their reading comprehension at SMA Negeri 6 Bengkulu Tengah.
3. To identify and analyze the English teacher's perceptions concerning the challenges and opportunities during the implementation of the Wattpad application in reading comprehension learning at SMA Negeri 6 Bengkulu Tengah.

## **D. Significance of The Research**

This study is expected to provide several theoretical and practical benefits:

### **1. Theoretical Significance**

This research helps expand knowledge about the use of digital platforms in English language teaching, especially in reading skills. The results of this study can serve as a reference for other researchers who want to explore how technology can support language learning.

### **2. Practical Significance**

- a. For Teachers: This study can help English teachers understand how to use Wattpad as a reading source and how to implement it effectively in the classroom.
- b. For Students: This study may encourage students to become more interested in reading English texts, as the stories on Wattpad are more engaging and relevant to real life.
- c. For Schools: This study can provide schools with the idea that Wattpad can be an attractive learning tool to foster students' reading interest.
- d. For Future Researchers: This study can serve as a foundation or inspiration for other researchers who want to investigate the use of technology in language learning.

## E. Definition of Key Terms

Here are the explanations of several terms used in this study to ensure that readers share the same understanding. These explanations also aim to prevent any misunderstandings between the readers and the researcher. The terms are described as follows:

### 1. Reading

Dalman (2014) states "reading is an activity or cognitive processes that seek to find a variety of information that found in writing.

### 2. Wattpad

Wattpad is one of the online reading media. Wattpad is a website and application service based in Toronto, Canada. Wattpad is a collaboration between Allen Lau and Ivan Yuen that started in 2007. (Ganie et al., 2021)

