

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of The Study

In Indonesia, English has become a crucial subject and one of the core competencies that students are expected to master starting from junior high school. The ability to read English comprehensively is considered a fundamental skill that supports the attainment of comprehensive language proficiency. However, data from the Ministry of Education and Culture indicate that many junior high school students still struggle to understand English texts. This has led to low average achievement scores in several regions, including Central Bengkulu.

The low level of interest and ability in reading English texts among students is believed to be influenced by teaching methods that remain conventional and lack interactivity, as suggested by the Constructivist Theory Collins et al., (2021). Instruction that depends solely on teacher explanations and textbooks tends to make students passive and less motivated to actively engage in reading or understanding learning materials. This condition is further exacerbated by the absence of engaging learning media that match the characteristics and learning styles of today's learners.

Technological advances in information and communication offer potential for developing more interactive

and engaging educational media. Tools such as digital applications, online quizzes, instructional videos, and animations have been shown in various studies to support student motivation and learning experiences. For instance, research indicated that interactive learning media incorporating voice recognition technology supported junior high school students in developing their listening, speaking, and reading skills in English.

Nonetheless, at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah, the use of interactive learning media may result in less dynamic classroom practices. As a result, students have fewer opportunities to develop their English literacy skills.

As an initial step to understand the actual teaching environment, the researcher conducted two early observations on November 13, 2025, and November 15, 2025. These observations confirmed that the English teacher at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah utilized the Interactive Reading Approach when delivering narrative text lessons. The findings further indicated meaningful interaction among the teacher, the students, and the reading materials, showing that the approach was implemented in authentic classroom settings.

Previous studies on interactive English learning have primarily focused on the development of digital learning tools and their role in supporting students' literacy and interest in reading. However, interactive reading has been discussed in

previous studies as a promising approach in language learning, particularly for fostering reading comprehension. Several studies have demonstrated its role in supporting students' engagement and cognitive skills.

However, there remains a significant lack of research that investigates how interactive reading is actually implemented in real classroom environments, especially at the junior high school level in regions such as Central Bengkulu, which pose unique contextual and infrastructural challenges. Islam & Etilib (2020) argue that “there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding the techniques used to develop the reading skills through classroom interaction” (p. 2). A similar concern is echoed by Fitria et al. (2024), who state that “there is still not enough information on specific strategies that can be used to solve these problems in the Indonesian setting” (p. 73). Likewise, Hermansyah, (2025) highlighted that “many studies are context specific, making generalization challenging” (p. 1012). These findings collectively indicate the need for further qualitative investigations that explore how interactive reading is applied and experienced in real classroom situations.

This study seeks to address that gap by employing a qualitative approach to explore the implementation, strategies, and challenges involved in applying interactive reading as a method of teaching English at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah. The approach aims to present a holistic view of

effective teaching practices that are aligned with student needs and local learning conditions.

By focusing on the actual classroom application of interactive reading strategies, this research also aims to identify both the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the implementation, as well as the roles that teachers and students play in the learning process. These findings are expected to provide practical recommendations for enhancing English teaching quality in similar educational settings.

This study is expected to contribute to the field of language education and educational technology by offering valid empirical evidence on how interactive reading strategies are implemented at the junior high school level, especially in areas that have yet to experience widespread digital innovation. Theoretically, the study aims to enrich the development of interactive learning models that are contextually relevant and adaptable to the specific characteristics of under resourced schools.

Furthermore, the findings of this research are anticipated to support the development of digital literacy applications in language learning within Indonesia's local educational context. Practically, the results can serve as a reference for teachers at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah and similar schools to optimize the creative use of available media and

teaching methods without relying on expensive or advanced technological infrastructure.

In addition, this study is also intended to offer valuable insights to curriculum developers and local education authorities in designing policies that promote equitable quality in English language education across Indonesia. These findings may serve as a foundation for crafting more effective and engaging learning strategies while fostering inclusivity and reducing disparities in communication skills and academic achievement.

The main objective of this study is to qualitatively describe how the interactive reading approach is applied at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah and to identify the benefits and obstacles encountered during the process. The study is expected to strengthen the concept of interactive learning within the broader field of language education.

The implementation of this approach at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah is also driven by the region's specific challenges. As an area located outside the island of Java, Central Bengkulu often faces infrastructure limitations and restricted access to modern learning resources Rahmawati et al. (2022). Therefore, an interactive reading model that emphasizes discussion, group collaboration, and opportunities for students to express their understanding both orally and in

writing offers a promising solution for building their self confidence and developing academic communication skills

## **B. Identification of Problem**

Based on the author's description several ,issues were identified by the research :

1. Students at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah demonstrate a wide range of English proficiency levels, which stems from their diverse social, cultural, and educational backgrounds. This variation makes it difficult for teachers to implement teaching strategies that are appropriate for all students.
2. The current English teaching practices at the school are still largely teacher-centered, focusing primarily on lectures and the rote memorization of vocabulary and grammar. These approaches result in low enthusiasm and passive classroom participation.
3. A shortage of interactive learning tools and supporting technological resources hinders the application of engaging reading strategies that could potentially foster students' interest and comprehension.
4. The existing learning conditions have contributed to decreased student motivation and weak English reading skills, which in turn negatively impact their academic performance and foster disinterest in learning the language.

### **C. Research Questions**

Based on the identification of the problems mentioned above, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. How is the Interactive Reading Approach implemented in English language teaching for eighth grade students of Class 8B students at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah?
2. What are the barriers encountered by both the teacher and students during the implementation of reader-text interaction in understanding narrative texts?
3. How can the application of the Interactive Reading Approach improve students' reading comprehension compared to the conventional teaching methods?

### **D. Research Objective**

Based on the issues outlined above, the objectives of this study can be formulated as follows :

1. To analyze the implementation of the Interactive Reading Approach in English language learning for eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah.
2. To identify the barriers and challenges faced by both the teacher and students during the implementation of reader-text interaction in understanding narrative texts.
3. To evaluate how the application of the Interactive Reading Approach improves students' reading comprehension compared to the conventional teaching methods.

## **E. The Importance of Research**

The importance of this study aims to fill the gap by using a qualitative approaches to explore the processes, strategies, and challenge in implementing interactive reading at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah. Previous studies have tended to focus more on the development of digital media or measuring learning outcomes numerically, resulting in limited understanding of the actual dynamics in the classroom. This condition is important because SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah has unique characteristics, such as the diversity of students' backgrounds and potential infrastructure constraints, which influence how the learning approach can be applied.

For this reason, qualitative methods were chosen as a way to explore the deeper meaning of experiences, perceptions, and the socio cultural context surrounding the learning process. By focusing on the narratives and perspectives of the actors (teachers and students), this study is expected to provide a comprehensive and contextual picture. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the study of language education and interactive learning methods. Practically, the results of this study are expected to be a useful reference for teachers and curriculum developers in designing learning strategies that are more contextual, innovative, and in line with the needs of students in schools with similar characteristics.

## **F. Definition of key Term**

To avoid misunderstanding and to provide a clear insight into the terms used in this research, the following definitions are provided :

### **1. Interactive Reading .**

Interactive reading is a dynamic process characterized by the simultaneous interaction between the reader's mental processes and the textual content. According to Grabe and Stoller (2020), this approach integrates two primary cognitive processing types:

- 1) Bottom-Up Interaction: Focuses on decoding linguistic elements such as vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation to understand sentences.
- 2) Top-Down Interaction: Focuses on the use of prior knowledge, assumptions, and predictions to comprehend the global meaning of the text.
- 3) The Interactive Model (Synthesis): The ideal synthesis where the reader utilizes both bottom-up and top-down processing simultaneously. For instance, when students encounter difficult vocabulary (bottom-up), they use the surrounding context and background knowledge (top-down) to derive meaning.

In the context of this study, interactive reading specifically refers to classroom-based activities at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah, where students engage with both

the teacher and narrative texts to achieve a deeper understanding through these dual processing mechanisms.

## **2. Junior High School Student**

Junior high school students, generally aged 12 to 15, are in a developmental phase marked by major cognitive, emotional, social, and physical changes that influence their academic and interpersonal behavior Hamdah, (2025) Each student brings distinct characteristics that require adaptive teaching approaches.

## **3. English Language learning**

English language learning in this study refers to the process of acquiring language skills specifically reading comprehension for students whose first language is not English. It involves not only mastering vocabulary and grammar but also engaging in meaningful communication and multimodal learning to meet the students' diverse needs in a modern EFL classroom Motteram & Dawson (2024).