

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, identification of the problem, research problem, limitation of the situation, purpose of the study, significance of the study, and operational definition.

1.1 Background

Crystal (1997) states that English has become the most widely taught foreign language in over 100 countries, including Indonesia. English becomes a foreign language because there is a need for each person to learn the language, whether it is for academic purposes, business, trade, job purposes, etc. It is in line with Hutchinson & Waters (1987) that English is accepted as an international language where the learners who want to learn the language know what they need. One of the examples is students who learn English for an academic purpose, and their needs are to cover the areas of educational, communicative practice from the materials the students get, e.g., textbooks, journals, etc., and the interaction the students in the classroom (Hyland, 2006). To develop this skill, students can utilize the four essential English skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Reading is one of the essential skills that should be learned and can support the development of other skills (Maharsi et al., 2019). Reading as the receptive process will bring many benefits to the readers, e.g., knowledge, information, vocabulary, etc., that they can utilize to fulfill their needs. He also stated that reading is the process of learning meaning through text-based comprehension, and

depending on what they read, readers can learn new things by reading. Reading many sources in the foreign language they know will make them get used to understanding the information in their brain with the language, and it can also develop their reading skill. One of them is comprehension skills.

According to Taqwim (2017), comprehension is a part of reading skills that the readers should apply to understand the information from what they read. As Hidayati et al. (2020) stated, making sense of the text is a cognitive process known as reading comprehension. In this process, the goal of the readers is to comprehend what the text is describing instead of trying to figure out its meaning from a few individual words or sentences (Woolley, 2011 in Hidayati, Inderawati, & Loeneto, 2020). According to Kusdemir & Bulut (2018), reading involves multiple processes such as “word recognition, identifying the main idea, understanding the details, predicting the author's intention, comprehending the significance of the ideas presented, and evaluating and remembering all of this information.”

The students can develop comprehension skills by building a reading habit. This aligns with Anyaegbu et al. (2016) in Diets & Sengkey (2023), who stated that reading habits enable students to gain essential and necessary knowledge. They also said that when learners read frequently, they can better remember and understand unfamiliar vocabulary and grammar due to repeated exposure to the words and structures. Developing reading skills is essential for learners' progress in all learning areas (Ismail et al., 2017, cited in Diets & Sengkey, 2023). Moreover, it can also improve other English skills, such as speaking and writing. Therefore, students need to become more accustomed to reading various texts in English to comprehend specific texts accurately.

Based on the English Curriculum in the English Department of Jambi University, sixth-semester students at the English Department in Jambi University are expected to have mastered a B2 level of proficiency (Kurikulum, 2021), considered Upper-Intermediate according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This framework is a globally recognized tool that enables individuals to assess their foreign language skills, particularly in English. It is important to note that the CEFR is not a proficiency test but rather a guide that outlines the tasks and abilities that individuals can perform at each level of proficiency (EF Education First, n.d.). At the B2 proficiency level, students can work autonomously in general, academic, educational professionals, and work settings using English.

Regarding reading skills at the B2 proficiency level, individuals should be able to comprehend the details of articles and reports that address a diversity of current issues, comprehend the main ideas of complex texts on both concrete and abstract subjects, and present their views on a relevant topic without much effort to find a word to express their opinion. These skills can help comprehend various reading sources, particularly academic texts such as articles, reports, and coursebooks. As sixth-semester students, they have already completed courses that have helped them develop their reading skills. Therefore, they are already familiar with reading various academic texts and are expected to master the reading skills at the B2 proficiency level. Meanwhile, some sixth-semester English department students still find it hard to comprehend the meaning of a text, especially an academic text, because there are still unfamiliar words they do not understand.

Some students also spend more time reading non-academic texts than academic ones because they enjoy it and it satisfies them.

Developing good reading habits and behaviors is crucial for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, as stated by Iftanti (2012). However, Sakinah (2018) found that the reading habits of first-semester English Department students at Jambi University still need to improve. Out of 57 participants, only 44% read with adequate weekly frequency, and their reading duration was less than an hour. Moreover, students' reading habits for academic purposes are also low, with only 51% of participants reading for educational purposes. On the other hand, Utami's (2019) study found that sixth-semester students had good reading habits for academic purposes, showing higher concentration while reading than for recreational and hobbial reading habits purposes. It is important to note that both studies used different instruments to measure students' reading habits. Sakinah (2018) used a questionnaire, while Utami interviewed participants. Also, both studies have different participants and purposes, with Sakinah focused on the correlation between reading habits and academic achievement and Utami only on knowing students' reading habits.

Regarding the correlation between reading habits and reading comprehension, Sakinah (2018) found that the frequency and time spent on reading have a negligible relationship with students' reading achievement. In contrast, reading materials and reading purpose have a moderate relationship. Sartika's research (2020) conducted in a Senior High School showed a significant correlation between reading habits and reading comprehension. On the other hand, Diets & Sengkey (2023) conducted a study on first-semester English Department students

at Klabat University and found no significant correlation between reading habits and reading comprehension. Considering the variety of samples in previous research and the inconsistent results obtained, the researcher is interested in conducting a study to determine the correlation between reading habits and reading comprehension in sixth-semester students of the English Department at Jambi University. Moreover, the fact that there is still little research available on the correlation between reading habits and reading comprehension in the English Department, especially at Jambi University, has motivated the researcher to conduct this study.

1.2 Identification of The Problem

Based on the previous studies that showed inconsistent results, the following issues can be found:

1. Students' reading habits are still low especially in the indicator of "time spent on academic reading."

1.3 Research Problem

1. Is there any significant correlation between students' reading habits and reading comprehension in the sixth-semester students of the English Department at Jambi University?

1.4 Limitation of The Problem

1. The problem is limited to calculating the correlation between students' reading habits and reading comprehension.
2. This research participant is a sixth-semester student of English Department in Jambi University.

3. The indicators of reading comprehension skills include questions about the idea of the passage, directly answered questions, indirectly answered questions, vocabulary questions, and overall review questions (Philips, 2001).
4. The indicators of reading habit used Gaona & Gonzalez's (2011) theory, which includes attitude toward reading, the number of books read, the time spent on academic reading, the time spent on non-academic reading, the motivation in an academic setting, and the motivation in a family setting.

1.5 Purpose of The Study

1. To analyze the significant correlation between students' reading habits and reading comprehension in the sixth-semester students of the English Department at Jambi University.

1.6 Significance of The Study

1. For students

Students will know the indicators of good reading habits they should apply, which will help them develop their future reading habits. Also, they will know their level of reading habits and reading comprehension that will help them improve several skills they should increase.

2. For lecturers

Lecturers will know the student's reading habits and comprehension level. This will help the lecturers notice the most challenging part of reading comprehension and the lowest part of reading habits that the lecturers need to encourage them to increase their reading habits.

3. For further research

Other researchers in the same field may find the results of this study practical. However, if they plan to conduct further research in this area, they should consider the findings as both a potential concern and a suggestion for future investigations.

1.7 Operational Definition

1. Reading Habit

Reading is a receptive skill that requires people who read information from every source they have to understand it appropriately. Reading habits are repetitive behaviors that people engage in frequently and routinely, sometimes without even realizing it. Developing the habit of reading can enhance one's ability to comprehend information from various sources.

2. Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is analyzing written text, comprehending its meaning, and applying it to the reader's prior knowledge. The goal of the readers is to understand what the text is describing rather than trying to guess its meaning from a few isolated words or sentences (Woolley, 2011 in Hidayati, Inderawati, & Loeneto, 2020).

To sum up, the first chapter of the study provides the background information, outlining the two variables involved in the research and the reasons why the researcher is conducting it. The problem is identified based on previous studies and is clearly stated. There are four limitations to the research: (1) it only calculates the correlation between two variables, (2) only sixth-semester students

in the English Department at Jambi University are involved, (3) the level of reading comprehension will be based on Heilman et al.'s (1981) theory, and (4) the student's reading habits will be based on Gaona & Gonzalez's (2011) theory. The research problem and purpose are clearly stated: to find a significant correlation between students' reading habits and reading comprehension in sixth-semester English Department students at Jambi University. The significance of the study is also explained, outlining the benefits that students, lecturers, and future researchers can get from the results of this study. Finally, the operational definition describes the two variables involved in the research: reading habit and reading comprehension.