

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Reading skills are one of the literacy skills. Warschauer emphasizes the necessity of reading skills for students. He states that ‘English reading skills are essential for participating in the knowledge of economy and society information’ (Mardiah & Anastasia, 2017). It is intended to obtain knowledge or information from a reading. Reading aloud is one type of reading that can be done early.

Reading aloud can help students improve literacy skills and increase self-confidence. Apart from reading, literacy skills include understanding symbols or illustrations that can enable students to interpret the meaning of symbols or illustrations in a text. The information is subsequently communicated to the listener through the process of reading aloud. Usually, students face a lot of glare and nervousness when they read aloud in public. However, if reading aloud is done and applied systematically, it can build students’ self-confidence.

Reading aloud in junior high school students allows them to have some common challenges such as lack of fluency, mispronunciation, not being confident, and anxiety. Lack of fluency in reading aloud students is likely because they are not yet used to difficult vocabulary or vocabulary that they have never seen before. It makes students stutter, slow, and allows them to feel frustrated by their lack of understanding. Similarly, students make mispronunciations when reading aloud, it happens because the vocabulary in the reading is complicated and new. When students face this challenge, their focus will be disturbed, and they will start to feel anxious and lack self-confidence. Hence, reading aloud skills need to be taken more seriously.

The use of *Let's Read Asia* has the potential to improve reading-aloud skills in junior high schools. *Let's Read Asia* is a website or application designed to improve students' reading skills through interesting stories according to their reading ability level. *Let's Read Asia* has several benefits, including the *Let's Read Asia* application is free of charge, hence it can be accessed for free. The storybook can be used online and offline by downloading the pdf. file and is available in various languages, such as foreign languages, national languages, and regional languages in Indonesia. The presence of the *Let's Read Asia* digital storybook using an innovative and technology-based approach that can be accessed via smartphones, laptops, etc., *Let's Read Asia* can attract students' interest in reading, hence *Let's Read Asia* can be an effective solution in improving reading aloud literacy.

In the 2022-2023 academic year, the *Kemendikbudristek* (*Kementerian pendidikan, kebudayaan, riset dan teknologi*) began to officially implement the *Merdeka* curriculum in Indonesia. Literacy is the main focus in the development of the *Merdeka* curriculum. Literacy skills refer to the ability to read, write, count, and adapt to technology. Language skills are closely related to literacy skills, especially reading aloud skills. By implementing and practicing reading aloud in junior high schools, it can develop reading skills in students. It will be the beginning of improving literacy skills, which is the goal of curriculum development in Indonesia.

Based on the curriculum developed in recent years that focuses on curriculum development in improving literacy in Indonesia as an important part of recovering from the learning crisis, it will be the topic of discussion in this study. Several studies on the use of *Let's Read Asia* in learning have been previously studied by previous researchers, such as; 1.) (Tahta & Puspasari, 2022) entitled *Students Perceptions on Reading Digital Storybook "Let's Read": Efl Junior High School*. 2.) (Diana Putri & Savitri, 2022)

entitled *The Use of Digital Book Let's Read in Improving Reading Comprehension for Junior High School*. and 3.) (Pratiwi et al., 2024) entitled *The Implementation of Let's Read Application Towards Students Literacy*. Most of these studies only focus on junior high school level outside Jambi. Research on the effect of *Let's Read Asia* on students' reading aloud skills at the junior high school level using quasi-experiment research has never been studied in Jambi, hence it can be a gap for the author to conduct this research.

Hence, it can be concluded based on the background, that this study is focused on efforts to improve English literacy skills in junior high schools. Thus, this study aims to determine the effect of using the *Let's Read Asia* digital library on the English reading-aloud skills of students at SMP Negeri 9 Muaro Jambi. Through this study, it is hoped that *Let's Read Asia* can be a practical solution to improve English reading-aloud skills in junior high schools, as well as provide a positive contribution to the quality of education in Indonesia.

1.2 Limitation of the Research

To avoid misunderstandings when interpreting the problem, the author must make the limitations of the problem. The object of this research is the 7th grade at SMP Negeri 9 Muaro Jambi. The limitation of the story taken from the *Let's Read Asia* application is that it uses nouns with the animal category. The author wants to know about the ability of reading aloud, namely volume, pace, phrasing, and reading accuracy.

1.3 Formulation of the Research

Based on the background, the author formulates the research questions in this study:
Is there any significant effect of using *Let's Read Asia* on 7th-grade students' reading aloud at SMP Negeri 9 Muaro Jambi?

1.4 Purposes of the Research

The purpose of the research is a hope that the author can achieve after conducting the research. The purpose to be achieved is: To find out the significant effect of using *Let's Read Asia* on 7th-grade students' reading aloud at SMP Negeri 9 Muaro Jambi.

1.5 Significance of the Research

This research hopes to give another effective English learning media of teaching reading through the *Let's Read Asia* to 7th-grade students of SMP Negeri 9 Muaro Jambi. Hence, the findings of this research are useful for, as follows:

1. Teacher

This research is expected to be used by teachers to use appropriate media in teaching English, especially *Let's Read Asia*, and to encourage teachers to use digital and visual media in order to make students enjoy, motivated, and interested in learning English.

2. Other Researchers

The result of this research expects that it can be a source as well as a guide for other researchers when conducting a similar study.

1.6 Hypothesis of the Research

There are two hypotheses to be tested in this study. They are alternative hypothesis (H_a) and null hypothesis (H_0).

H_a (Hypothesis alternative) : There is any significant effect of *Let's Read Asia* on 7th-grade students reading aloud at SMP Negeri 9 Muaro Jambi

H_0 (Hypothesis null) : There is no any significant effect of *Let's Read Asia* on 7th-grade students reading aloud at SMP Negeri 9 Muaro Jambi

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

The following definitions are offered to comprehend various elements and components associated with this study.

1. Reading aloud is reading a written text with a loud voice and still paying attention to the audible volume of voice, pace, phrasing, and reading accuracy.
2. *Let's Read Asia* is an application in the form of a digital library that provides various storybooks in various languages, interesting illustrations, audio, and other support features.
3. Media is a tool used to support the teaching and learning process hence, the learning goes more effectively and optimally (Fadilah et al., 2023).