

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **A. Merdeka Curriculum**

Indonesia's education system has recently introduced the Merdeka Curriculum under the Ministry of Education and Culture to give teachers flexibility in customizing teaching approaches to meet student requirements (Kemendikbud, 2022). This curriculum promotes student-centered learning by enhancing thinking abilities and problem-solving skills while encouraging learning. In contrast, to the curriculum that focuses more on the teacher's authority and control in the classroom setting the Merdeka Curriculum allows teachers to choose teaching approaches tailored to students' unique traits and requirements (Nurtanto et al., 2020).

The Merdeka Curriculum incorporates core values of project-based learning and problem-based learning. This methodology fosters not students' acquisition of knowledge but the nurturing of essential 21st-century competencies, like teamwork effective communication skills creative thinking, and innovative capabilities (Priyantho, 2021). This approach enables students to not just memorize facts but also grasp the context of the information acquired. It helps them see the significance of what they learn so they can effectively use it in their lives (Wijayanti & Abdurrahmans, 2021).

In Merdeka Curriculum, reading comprehension is one of the basic skills that receive special attention, especially at the senior high school level. This skill is considered an important ability that underlies students' academic success in various fields of study (Alwasilah, 2021). Reading comprehension involves not only the ability to read words or sentences, but also the ability to understand meaning, analyze information, and connect the information with existing knowledge (Gani, Yusuf, & Susiani, 2019). With these skills, students are expected to become independent learners and think critically, which is the main goal of Merdeka Curriculum.

Although Merdeka Curriculum offers greater flexibility, its implementation is not without challenges. Teachers are required to abandon traditional teacher-centered teaching methods and switch to a more interactive and student-based approach (Setiawan et al., 2022). This requires major adjustments, especially for teachers who are used to conventional methods. In addition, not all schools have access to adequate resources, such

as professional training and digital tools that support project-based or problem-based teaching (Sukarno & Widodo, 2020). These limitations could become obstacles in the implementation of this new curriculum.

Teachers are required to adapt their methods to the specific needs of students in the context of this new curriculum. Some teachers may choose to use strategies such as scaffolding, group discussions and deep questioning techniques to develop students' reading comprehension (Wulandari, 2020). On the other hand, there are teachers who may create their own methods or modify existing methods to suit the local context, as found in the observation at MA YTP Kertosono. This flexibility reflects the essence of Merdeka Curriculum, which values teacher's initiative in creating an effective learning environment that suits their students' conditions (Andriani, 2021).

## **B. Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension is the cognitive skill that goes beyond the mere reading of words or sentences but also includes the ability to understand meaning, analyze information, and connect the information obtained with existing knowledge (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). This skill is very important in learning since text comprehension serves as a foundation for students to master different subjects. This is a complex mental process involving the identification of important information, making inferences, evaluation of meaning, and synthesizing information (Snow, 2002).

Comprehension theory indicates that there are certain key components, namely, decoding, activation of schemata, and monitoring of comprehension that play a crucial role in the process of text comprehension. Decoding refers to the ability of the student to identify and understand the meaning of the words in the text; this is actually a first step into reading. Further, the schemata or background knowledge of the students also plays important role in understanding the text. Students will relate new information to experiences and previous knowledge, hence developing a deeper understanding of the text (Kintsch, 1998). The other important metacognitive strategies in this process, apart from comprehension monitoring, where students are supposed to specifically check and evaluate their understanding of the text have been suggested by Paris and Winograd (1990).

Senior high school reading comprehension is particularly important since it is at this level that learners are exposed to more complex and abstract texts in a range of subjects.

In Indonesia, reading comprehension has become one of the major focuses in the latest curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum, since the said ability is considered one of the key skills underlying academic success (Kemendikbud, 2022). Research has shown that good reading comprehension ability empowers learners to perform more difficult academic tasks and supports them in the process of developing their critical thinking skills (Alwasilah, 2021).

Some strategies exist that can be applied in order to enhance students' reading comprehension. The scaffolding strategy is commonly used, where the teacher provides gradual support to the student in order to understand difficult texts. Another effective strategy is questioning techniques; students are involved in asking and answering questions during the reading process, which will help them process information more deeply (Gani, Yusuf, & Susiani, 2019). Metacognitive approaches, which involve students in the active process of observing and appraising their knowledge, are also central to developing this capacity (Flavell, 1979).

### **C. Teaching Reading**

Teaching reading forms an important part of language teaching since the ability to read affects students' learning of texts and other academic material. According to Harmer (2007), reading instruction means more than merely word and sentence structure recognition; it also means the development of critical and analytical thinking abilities necessary for understanding, analyzing, and evaluating the texts read.

In the Merdeka Curriculum, the Learning Outcomes (CP) in reading comprehension skills focus on developing in-depth and critical literacy skills. Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning with a project-based approach, specifically to strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile, which includes character, critical thinking, and analytical skills. The curriculum is designed to give students more time and space to understand the material thoroughly, including in literacy aspects that include critical reading comprehension, text analysis, and independent thinking development (Randall et al., 2022).

At the high school level, CP for reading comprehension focuses on students' ability to evaluate and analyze information in texts and relate it to real-life contexts. With customized learning strategies, such as Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Problem-Based

Learning (PBL), students are invited to be actively involved in the learning process, hone critical literacy skills, and learn to solve problems through relevant learning contexts.

Official sources from the Ministry of Education also highlight that this CP is implemented to ensure students gain competence in reading that is not only textual, but also develops applied critical thinking, in line with the Merdeka Curriculum's goal to improve literacy comprehension across all levels of education (Rizaldi & Fatimah, 2022).

In a reading class, the goals of teaching reading are to help students read accurately and comprehend the text's meaning, structure, and purpose. In English education, reading instruction involves students identifying main ideas, summarizing information, and relating text content to personal experiences (Nunan, 2015). This also informs students about different reading techniques: skimming (reading for general information) and scanning (reading for specific information).

According to Brown (2004), this is the important component in teaching reading, to wit:

- Vocabulary Acquisition and Language Understanding: The advanced vocabulary and better understanding of the structure of language lead the students to gather deep insight from texts.
- Cognitive and Metacognitive Skills: Cognitive strategies such as making predictions, inferences, and connections of ideas in the text form the crucial framework of understanding. Metacognitive techniques like overseeing and assessing comprehension can help a student enhance their comprehension skills.
- Development of Reading Motivation: Encouraging students to actively engage in reading is crucial for their development. Using texts relevant to students' interests may make them more interested and motivated towards reading.

Some of the more familiar teaching reading methodologies might include Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which focuses on using language in context; Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which invites learners into activities simulating real-life tasks; and lastly, project-based approaches like Project-Based Learning (PjBL), which enables students to delve into issues in great depth and critically.

Although there is much to be gained through teaching reading, there is a host of challenges that teachers encounter, such as differences in reading abilities among learners, a limited vocabulary, and a lack of interest in reading. Teachers have to be creative in

strategies and approaches to ensure that every child goes through a meaningful reading experience, notwithstanding the challenges.

#### **D. Teaching Strategies in Reading Comprehension**

Teaching strategies are a general description of the plan of a lesson such as the needs or objectives for implementing teaching strategies (Antoni, 2010). It can be concluded that the teacher is a means of knowledge that can help the student's learning process. That way students can gain knowledge about learning, especially in English. Teaching strategies are related to teaching and learning activities used by teachers such as techniques, structures, methods, approaches, and procedures (Harmer, 2001). It is a tool for teachers to help students meet specific learning goals. Teachers must also be creative in their content selection and inspire their students to learn. Teachers must therefore adapt a number of ways to support teaching and learning (Purwanto, 2022).

According to Grabe and Stoller (2019), the selection of appropriate strategies largely depends on the students' needs, learning objectives, and the type of text being read. Some common strategies used in teaching reading comprehension are Question-Answer Relationship (QAR), scaffolding, metacognitive strategies, Project-Based Learning (PjBL), and Problem-Based Learning (PBL).

##### **a. Question-Answer Relationship (QAR)**

The Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy was created to allow students to learn how to find the answers to different kinds of text-based questions. The strategy classifies questions into two broad categories: questions for which the answer is in the text (where the student can find the answer directly) and questions that require inference or reasoning (Raphael, 1986). According to Raphael, 1986, the QAR strategy successfully guides students into thinking more critically in answering questions and trains them to understand the relationship between the question and the text deeply.

##### **b. Scaffolding**

Scaffolding is a technique that provides temporary support to students in understanding complex texts. The support may come in the form of guidance, questions, or instructions that help the student complete the task on their own once the support has been removed (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). The expectations through scaffolding are that students should improve in comprehension and confidence as

readers. Scaffolding allows teachers to also pinpoint areas where students need more help and adjust their approach according to the abilities of the students.

c. Metacognitive Strategies

The term metacognitive strategies describe students' involvement in the process of thinking about one's own thinking while reading. Through these strategies, students are taught to monitor, evaluate, and self-regulate the process of their comprehension (Flavell, 1979). According to Flavell, 1979, those readers who use metacognitive strategies are better able to overcome difficulties in the understanding of texts and to find more important information while reading. They have been shown to improve reading comprehension and, more importantly, to create an independent reader out of every student with awareness of his own comprehension process.

d. Project-Based Learning

Project-Based Learning is an experiential way of learning through completing complex projects, allowing students to think critically and creatively in various ways, enhancing their literacy skills. It provides a real and achievable purpose that increases student investment and understanding. From an acquisition of comprehension perspective, Project Based Learning exposes students to different genres, promotes research, and creates products to demonstrate understanding. It aligns with Dewey's constructivism learning theory by engaging students in goal-oriented projects. Essential to the Merdeka Curriculum, Project Based Learning develops critical thinking, collaboration, and independence, deepening students' understanding of texts and themes through sustained project work.

e. Problem-Based Learning

Problem-Based Learning is an educational approach where students work as problem solvers in specific scenarios to deepen their understanding of texts. Barrows and Tamblyn (1980) emphasize that this method improves critical thinking skills by requiring students to reason while solving problems. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development theory supports this approach as students collaborate to solve complex issues with guidance from teachers or peers. This method enhances reading skills as students must comprehend text content to find solutions. In essence, Problem-Based Learning helps students analyze texts in depth, define problems, and devise solutions, ultimately enhancing their overall comprehension and critical thinking abilities.

f. Genre-Based Approach

Genre-Based Approach (GBA) is an approach that deals with the identification of the genre of the text as well as with its structural, rhetorical and social aspect. Halliday, according to Halliday (1978), thought that language has been used in the social context hence meaning that each and every text type of a language has some characteristic which if understood makes the readers understand the context of the text in the language.

In Genre-Based Approach, learning is divided into four stages:

1. Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF): This way students learn all the context and vocabulary related to the text that is going to be read.
2. Modelling of Text (MOT): The teacher introduces texts from a specific context and then students dissect them with the view of identifying its format and the writing style used.
3. Joint Construction of Text (JCOT): Students compose texts based on texts in the same genre as the one the teacher is going to check, and the students need the teacher's help.
4. Independent Construction of Text (ICOT): Students produce texts on their own, as a constructed product, which is the focus on the genre (Feez & Joyce, 1998).

That is why the genre-based approach is highly successful in reading comprehension lessons: clear identification of the text's structure and its purpose makes it easier for students to analyze and sort different types of texts when it comes to Merdeka Curriculum (Zidan, 2023).

## **E. Previous Study**

Various previous studies have examined the strategies used by teachers in teaching reading comprehension in the classroom. These studies provide insights into the effective strategies used, the challenges faced by teachers and their impact on students' comprehension skills. The following are some of the relevant studies that form the basis for this study.

The first previous study is entitled "An Analysis of Teachers' Strategies in Teaching Reading Comprehension at Tenth Grade Students of Vocational High School 2 Malang." by Anis Rahmawati Khusnul Chotimah (2020), a descriptive qualitative research at Vocational High School 2 Malang. The study aimed to provide teachers' strategies in teaching reading comprehension conducted by the English teacher. The results showed

that the observed teacher had created a lesson plan by considering important elements, such as learning objectives, activities, and media used. The teacher applied Question Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy and metacognitive strategy, which proved to be effective in helping students understand the reading text deeply. Teachers also divide teaching into three main stages: pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities. In addition, various digital platforms such as *Mclass*, *Google Classroom*, *Live Worksheet*, *ISL Collective*, *YouTube*, *WhatsApp Messenger*, and *Google Meet* are used to enrich learning.

The second previous study is entitled “The Analysis of Teacher’s Strategy in Teaching Reading Comprehension to Grade VIII Students of MTs N 3 Kuantan Singingi.” by Destari (2021), the purpose of this research was to find out the strategy used by a teacher in teaching reading comprehension. The results identified three main strategies applied by teachers, namely reading aloud, question and answer, and games. The reading aloud strategy is considered effective in helping students who struggle with pronunciation and vocabulary acquisition, as it allows them to hear and imitate the correct pronunciation. By reading aloud short texts, students can improve their pronunciation skills with guidance from the teacher.

The third previous study is entitled “An Analysis of Teacher’s Strategies in Teaching Reading at Eighth Grade Student of Excellent Students in MTsN 1 Kota Blitar.” by Lutfi Nur Cahyanti (2022), the aim of this study was to investigate Teacher’s Strategies in Teaching Reading for Eighth Grade Students at MTsN 1 Kota Blitar. The findings of this study show that teachers use three main strategies in teaching reading comprehension, namely Question-Answer Relationship (QAR), Scaffolding, and Vocabulary Self-Collection. These strategies assist students in understanding the text more deeply and expanding their vocabulary. Scaffolding strategies in particular provide gradual support to students so that they can understand the material more independently.

The three studies above provide an understanding of effective strategies in teaching reading comprehension and how these strategies affect students' reading skills. However, none of these studies specifically explored the impact of Merdeka Curriculum on the selection and effectiveness of teaching strategies. In addition, these studies do not highlight the adaptation of strategies that may be needed in the context of the new curriculum. Therefore, this study aims to identify the strategies used by teachers in the context of Merdeka Curriculum and understand the challenges faced by teachers in implementing these strategies.