

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview the background of the study, research problem, and objective. It also explains significance of the study, scope and limitation and provides clarification of the key term.

1.1 Background of The Research

Reading is a fundamental skill that contributes significantly to students' academic success. It enables learners to comprehend texts, acquire knowledge, and develop critical thinking abilities (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). Reading activities show students to new vocabulary, sentence structures and writing styles, all of which help them improve their general language ability. That extensive reading significantly improves vocabulary acquisition and grammatical awareness among EFL learners. Strong reading skills contribute to better performance in all academic areas, not just language-related subjects. Studies indicate that students with higher reading proficiency tend to perform better academically compared to those with average reading abilities (Cadiz-Gabejan and Quirino, 2021).

Teaching reading is a complicated process that develops through systematic instruction and continuous practice, starting with phonemic understanding and advancing to word identification, fluency, and comprehension. Effective reading instruction often relies on scaffolding strategies, where teachers provide temporary support such as prompts, guiding questions, or visual aids that is gradually reduced as students gain independence (Eliata & Miftakh, 2021). Evidence also shows that repeated reading and related tasks significantly enhance reading fluency and

comprehension, especially among secondary learners (Hudson et al., 2020). Complementary practices like summarization and question-answering further deepen students' analytical and interpretive skills when engaging with texts (Jahro et al., 2024). Moreover, exposure by allowing access to various materials narrative, expository, and digital texts provides learners with balanced experiences that nurture adaptability in reading across different genres (Gingerich & Adler, 2020).

Students face various difficulties in developing their reading skills. Many students struggle with reading comprehension because they lack sufficient vocabulary. Limited word knowledge prevents them from fully understanding texts, making it difficult to grasp key ideas and concepts. Research by Schmitt (2021) emphasizes that vocabulary size is a strong predictor of reading comprehension, particularly among EFL learners. Some students find reading activities less engaging, which can affect their participation during the learning process. This lack of interest is often caused by the absence of engaging reading materials that match students' preferences and language proficiency (Day & Bamford, 2020). Study by Wahyusukartiningih (2024) identifies obstacles that students face in reading comprehension, such as a lack of interest in reading and limited vocabulary.

Using the Wattpad application as a learning tool can help solve reading skill problems. Wattpad provides diverse stories with different writing styles, allowing students to experience various sentence structures, vocabulary, and narrative techniques. Exposure to different writing styles can help improve students' reading fluency and comprehension, as they learn to adapt to different text complexities (Rini & Sari, 2022). Wattpad offers stories that are relevant and interesting to

students, making reading more engaging. Unlike traditional textbooks, which may feel rigid and less relatable, Wattpad features contemporary and interactive stories that align with students' interests, encouraging them to read more frequently (Putri & Hidayat, 2023). The accessible and interactive features of Wattpad provide a more engaging reading experience where students can interact with stories and other readers, supporting better comprehension (Rahmawati & Yusuf, 2024). These advantages demonstrate that Wattpad serves as an effective digital medium for helping EFL students improve their reading abilities.

Among various digital media, the Wattpad application has emerged as one of the most promising tools to enhance learning activities. A study by Damayanti et al. (2021) states that Wattpad can be considered an innovative learning platform, providing a rich and engaging context that enhances students' comprehension in ways traditional texts may not. Additionally, the use of short stories on Wattpad is intended to help students better understand what they are learning (Kusnandara, 2023).

Despite the growing popularity of Wattpad, there is limited empirical research examining its impact on reading comprehension development among EFL learners. A previous study (Astiantih et al., 2024) found that the Reading Wattpad application did not significantly improve students' reading comprehension. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of Wattpad as a reading platform on EFL students' reading comprehension, particularly when compared to traditional instructional materials. This research will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of Wattpad in fostering reading comprehension, thereby contributing

to the broader discourse on innovative teaching methodologies in language education. The findings of this study may offer educators practical strategies for integrating digital content into their curricula, ultimately enhancing the learning experience for EFL learners. Therefore, the research is entitled **“The Effectiveness of Wattpad Application in Improving EFL Learners’ Reading Comprehension.”**.

1.2 Research Question

This study compares the reading comprehension abilities of EFL students exposed to Wattpad with those that are not. The investigation is guided by the following research questions :

“Is there any significant difference in reading comprehension skill between students who use Wattpad as a reading media and those who use a printed book?”

1.3 Objective of Research

This study examines and compares students' reading comprehension skills in two groups: the experimental group using Wattpad and the control group using printed textbook, as measured by standardized reading comprehension tests. Furthermore, it seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of Wattpad as a reading tool by analyzing pre-test and post-test scores from both groups to determine any notable improvements in reading comprehension. Based on the results, this research also provides evidence-based recommendations for educators on incorporating Wattpad into reading curricula to enhance students' reading comprehension skills.

1.4 Hypotheses

In this study, the Hypotheses are stated as follows :

1. Null Hypothesis (Ho): There is no significant difference in students' reading comprehension between students who use Wattpad as a reading tool and those who use the school's printed book.
2. Alternative Hypothesis (Ha): There is a significant difference in students' reading comprehension between students who use Wattpad as a reading tool and those who use the school's printed book.

1.5 Significance of The Research

The results of this study are expected to provide significant impact to several parties. This research is valuable for EFL learners as it explores Wattpad, a modern reading platform that aligns with their interests. By examining its impact on reading comprehension, this study aims to encourage students' participation and involvement in learning activities, which may contribute to better academic performance. Additionally, it encourages students to explore diverse reading materials, fostering a lasting interest in reading.

This study presents empirical findings that show Wattpad effectiveness in improving students' reading comprehension, particularly for educators. Wattpad can help teachers build a more dynamic and engaged learning environment that meets the different requirements of their students. This research may inspire innovative teaching methodologies that incorporate digital literature, ultimately improving student engagement and learning outcomes.

This study serves as a foundation for future research in language education

and digital literacy. It opens opportunities to explore various digital reading tools and their effectiveness in language learning, allowing researchers to examine different demographics and contexts. The methodology can also be adapted for similar studies, promoting a deeper understanding of the role of technology in education.

This study contributes to previous studies on the use of digital media in language learning by providing quantitative data demonstrating how Wattpad can help enhance reading comprehension. The results will encourage the use of digital tools in education and educate policymakers and curriculum developers on the advantages of using modern reading materials into language instruction.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of Research

This research analyzes EFL learners in a specific educational setting, comparing the reading comprehension skills of students who use Wattpad as a reading tool with those who rely on traditional course materials, specifically school printed books. The research specifically analyzes the impact of Wattpad content, including its interactive storytelling and engaging narratives, on the development of reading comprehension skills.

However, the study has several limitations. However, the study has several limitations. The participants were limited to tenth-grade students at SMKN 3 Kediri, which may influence how far the results can be applied to other contexts. The research also focused only on narrative texts, without including other types of reading materials. In addition, differences in students' familiarity with Wattpad and the exclusive use of this platform may overlook the potential advantages of other

digital or multimedia resources.

1.7 Definition of Key Term

To ensure clarity, the key terms used in this study are described below :

1. **Reading Comprehension:** Reading comprehension is the process of 1. Reading comprehension is the process of building meaning from written texts by integrating prior knowledge with presented information. This complex cognitive activity requires the coordination of various skills, including decoding, word recognition, and the ability to make inferences.
2. **Teaching Reading:** Teaching reading is the instructional process of helping students build reading skills, beginning from word recognition to fluency and comprehension, through systematic guidance and supportive strategies.
3. **Wattpad:** Wattpad is a digital storytelling platform that enables users to read and write stories of all genres. It provides an interactive reading experience where readers can engage with authors through comments and feedback.
4. **Printed book:** A printed book is a structured learning material that provides texts, exercises, and activities to support the teaching and learning process. It serves as a main reference in the classroom, helping both teachers and students follow a systematic path in language learning.