

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction. It contains some subjects which explain the background of the study, research problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, and definition of the key terms.

A. Background of Study

English consists of four main skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Among these skills, reading is considered a key to gaining broad knowledge. It is considered a basic skill that can help students master other skills. As stated by Ikhtiyorovna (2023), reading is a basic skill that plays an important role in understanding information and gaining new knowledge. Tomarong et al. (2023) also explain that reading is an essential basic skill for students in education and personal development. They also emphasize that many students struggle to achieve optimal reading proficiency, which can negatively affect their academic performance and long-term development. According to Yuzar and Rezeki (2020), reading skill is also included in receptive skills, which is the ability to understand various types of written texts with varying levels of complexity. They also emphasize that texts are easier to understand if they are aligned with student's ability, or those that are not related to their abilities, that are symbolic, deviant, or political texts, such as poetry and newspapers. Fakhurriana and Herdina (2024) emphasize that students' difficulties in receptive skills include a lack of vocabulary, difficulty identifying texts, and language elements.

According to Viani and Roswati (2025), there are three levels of reading comprehension: literal, inferential, and critical. Literal comprehension is the basic level of reading and involves taking information directly from what is explicitly stated in the text. Inferential comprehension requires readers to go beyond the text and to conclude meaning that is not explicitly stated. Critical comprehension represents the highest level of reading and involves evaluating the content of a text in terms of credibility, logic, and relevance. Atmowardoyo and Sakkir (2021) argue that media or material can be used as a tool in receptive skill, such as English books, novel, and comics. According to Baron and Alawiyah (2023), fiction novels have a positive influence on improving abilities from literal, inferential, to critical comprehension levels. They also emphasize that students' level is still at inferential comprehension, which was dominated by reading comprehension. Viani and Roswati (2025) explain inferential comprehension involve understanding implications, finding connections between concepts, predicting results, and making conclusions Based on the previously obtained information. From that explanation, this study focuses on the level of inferential comprehension as the most relevant level for the selected participants and learning medium.

English novels have often been used as learning media in class or outside the classroom to improve students' reading comprehension. As stated by Hikmah (2023), using an English novel as a medium can help students improve their reading comprehension ability. The study also explains that organizing textual information benefits students to easily understand the main idea and supporting details of the text. According to Palupi et al. (2021), novels

are reading media that have an extensive storyline, use a wide range of vocabulary, and provide culture and social background. Choeda (2019) discusses that a work of literature in the form of narrative or fiction that is sufficiently long, in which characters and events representing real life are described in a less or more complex storyline, is the definition of a novel. From that explanation, reading comprehension through English novels focuses more on the part of the long storyline, understanding characters in more detail, understanding implied meaning, or understanding vocabulary that has its own meaning or style of language. Aldahash and Altalhab (2020) state that the use of real stories and popular graphic novels can be used for various aspects of reading, such as identifying main ideas, drawing conclusions, vocabulary, and identifying specific information.

Difficulties in reading comprehension can be found in all types of texts, including English novels. These difficulties can be identified through students' inability to understand main ideas, limited vocabulary, and lack of understanding of text structure. As stated by Saraswati et al. (2021), there are five factors of difficulty in reading comprehension: determining the main idea, finding reference, understanding the meaning of vocabulary, making a conclusion, and finding specific information. According to Siahaan et al. (2022), the difficulties in reading comprehension can be identified as difficulty understanding the meaning of vocabulary, difficulty understanding long sentences, difficulty finding the main topic, difficulty understanding grammar, and difficulty making a conclusion. Although there are many difficulties in

reading comprehension, there are still solutions or strategies to overcome these difficulties.

Using English novel is a solution to overcome reading comprehension difficulties, such as low reading interest, story genre, etc. According to Atmowardoyo and Sakkir (2021), using a novel as a tool can give students motivation in reading comprehension. The story of a novel can be interesting because a novel has specific tragedies, complex issues related to real life, and is interesting to analyze. From the students' perspective, these methods are commonly used to overcome the difficulties in reading comprehension. There are three strategies commonly used by students: (1) guessing the meaning of vocabulary, (2) using dictionaries and contextual clues, and (3) applying techniques such as skimming and scanning (Ramadhianti & Somba, 2023). The strategy in class varies from group discussion, roles, learning with peers, and guided reading sessions to encourage active student participation (Fadila et al. 2024). In every problem, including reading comprehension, there is a solution or a strategy to overcome the problem encountered, such as using media as a tool, including an English novel to help simplify the resolution of problems they face.

Based on the explanation, in an era where everything is instant, including obtaining information, reading has become an important skill to master, among other skills for obtaining information. As explained by Saraswati et al. (2021) and Siahaan et al. (2022), the difficulties commonly faced by students are understanding the content of texts, that can make it difficult for

them to obtain the information. Therefore, this study was focus more on reading comprehension, specifically on the level of inferential comprehension.

Before starting the research, the researcher found 3 previous studies related to this topic. The first research by Miranda (2023) talked about the difficulties in reading comprehension, such as the lack of vocabulary mastery, the inability to understand the content of the text, and the lack of interest in reading. The second research by Sapitri et al. (2022) talked about the most dominant difficulties and factors affecting reading comprehension in a report text. Similar to the previous one, this research also mentioned limitations in understanding the content of the text. The last research by Fitri et al. (2022) showed the kind of difficult aspect in reading comprehension of the descriptive text faced by students. This research mentioned difficulties in reading, such as genre and topic, comprehension tasks, negative expectation, reading strategy, and vocabulary.

Based on the previous research, the similarity between this study and the relevant research mentioned above, namely, the difficulty in reading comprehension, previous research has only talked about the difficulties in reading comprehension in short texts, such as descriptive, report, and exam texts. The difference in this research is discussed in terms of the difficulties and ways to overcome them in reading comprehension using an English novel. This study was analyzed students' perspectives on difficulties in understanding texts and how they overcome them at the inferential comprehension level. It uses English novels as the main learning medium to enhance students' interest and motivation in reading. By conducting this research, it is hoped that it was

provide a new perspective when students face difficulties in reading comprehension in this era.

According to Ramadhianti and Somba (2023), EFL students have the most common difficulties in reading comprehension, such as a lack of interest in the topic and a lack of vocabulary. For this reason, the participants in this study are EFL students in the 7th semester at UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri who have experience reading English novels. They are selected as researcher participants because in the 7th semester, they have completed reading skill courses in the previous semesters, which studied language in depth and in accordance with the researcher's objective. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method because this research method is in line with the researcher's objective, which is to get a deeper understanding of subjective meanings, experiences, and perspectives.

Based on the explanation, this research aimed to discover students' difficulties in reading English novels and their strategies to overcome them.

B. Research Question

Based on the background above, this study aims to analyze the English novel's reading difficulty faced by students and ways to overcome it, as well as answer the following research questions:

1. What difficulties do EFL students of UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri encounter when reading English novels?
2. How do EFL students of UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri overcome difficulties in reading English novels?

C. Research Objective

In accordance with the problem statement, the writer's objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify reading difficulties experienced by EFL students of UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri when reading an English novel.
2. To find out how EFL students of UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri overcome difficulties in reading English novels.

D. Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this study aims to enrich the theory and methods of overcoming difficulties in reading comprehension. Practically, the significance of this study is as follows:

1. For teachers

This study is expected to serve as a reference for teachers in using English novels as a tool to aid reading comprehension. It will broaden teachers' knowledge of the difficulties students face in reading comprehension and how to overcome them.

2. For students

It is hoped that the results of this study will provide new insights for students by using English novels as a reference to increase their interest in reading and to identify difficulties and ways to overcome reading comprehension problems.

3. For further researchers

It is hoped that this study will motivate researchers to contribute to the field of education by conducting related research. In addition,

researchers who wish to conduct research in this field can use this study as a reference and as a consideration in understanding student reading. This research served as a reference for researching other topics relevant to this study.

E. Scope and Limitation

Based on the identification of the background of the study, the scope of this study is limited to the students' perspectives on difficulties and how they overcome them by using English novels in reading comprehension, with an emphasis on inferential comprehension. English novels are limited in the level of inferential comprehension that is dominant for the students at their level. The researcher was focus on EFL students in the 7th semester of English Education at UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri who have often read English novels and have completed reading skill courses in the previous semesters.

F. Definition of Key Terms

1. Reading comprehension

This skill involves not only reading, but also processing, comprehending the meaning, and understanding the content of the text in greater depth. Reading comprehension can be used as a form of assessment in student reading ability tests.

2. Difficulties in reading comprehension

A situation in which students feel an obstacle in understanding the content of the text they are reading. In this condition, students need to make more effort to overcome the difficulties they face in reading comprehension.

3. Strategies to overcome the difficulties in reading comprehension

Controlling difficulties in reading comprehension so that students can be managed better, or finding solutions and ways to deal with problems and difficulties in reading comprehension.

4. English novel

A work that depicts real life or a deep fictional story, such as a more complex plot, more detailed character development, including their traits and personalities, and a clear and specific setting, such as place, time, conditions, or social context.