

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a brief overview of theories that support the study. The theories related to perspectives, defining literacy, literacy in educational contexts, reading activity in EFL classrooms, and emancipated learning.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Defining Literacy

Traditionally, literacy refers to the ability to read and write. The definition then evolves into the ability of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills that everyone requires to reach their full potential (Jama & Dugdale, 2012). Literacy also refers to an individual's ability to comprehend, assess, and apply knowledge learned from various sources (Jusmirad et al., 2023). Frankel et al. (2016) state that literacy is defined as the process of using reading, writing, and spoken language in the context of socially situated practices to interact and engage with multimodal texts to extract, create, integrate, and evaluate meaning. Reading and writing are important literacy components to learn. Shara et al. (2020) stated that mastering reading literacy is very important for other literacies because reading fluently and understanding the information or meaning in the text requires high concentration. Not only that, writing has a central role in literacy as a means of expression and communication. The act of writing for an audience can be viewed as a process of conveying information, a process in which the writer aims to convey the message as effectively as possible to the reader (Kroll, 1984). Speaking and listening also have a central role in the context of literacy as a medium of expression that allows individuals to communicate, convey, and understand ideas and information. Putra (2017) explained that speaking ability is very important for everyone to communicate with others, convey ideas, opinions, messages, feelings to others, express thoughts and desires, and socialize themselves to communicate or interact. Meanwhile, effective listening involves literal and critical understanding of ideas and information conveyed through oral speech (Smith, 1995 as cited in Mousena, 2020).

The concept of understanding literacy is also widely known in Indonesia. As explained by Rintaningrum (2019), the Indonesian term for literacy is commonly known as '*melek huruf*' or literate in English, and it refers to the ability to read and write. Besides being related to reading and writing skills, literacy has a general definition that includes many different aspects. Hobbs (2016) stated that while reading and writing are the most well-recognized aspects of literacy, definitions of literacy often include the ability to comprehend, develop, and share ideas, experiences, information, and meanings through culturally significant symbol systems. These abilities to read, write, and understand the information will affect someone's ability to be considered literate. Paul (2018) stated that being literate was defined as having the ability to access and understand written or printed information. This statement is also supported by an explanation which says that a person is considered to be literate if they understand the information required for all tasks that need literacy to participate effectively in society, as well as the knowledge gained through reading and writing that enables them to apply it on their own (Rajagukguk et al., 2022). A person is considered literate if they have a means of literate thought. It is explained that literate thought refers to the ability to access (visually or auditorily) and interpret (comprehend and apply) learned (e.g., serious, scholarly, and academic) information either through the air or in the "captured information mode" (e.g., audiobooks, signed books, print, Braille) (Paul, 2018).

Based on the definition of literacy and literate person above, it can be seen that literacy is the ability to understand several types of literacy. In one article, Anggraini (2016) explains three types of literacy: visual literacy, oral literacy, and print literacy. These three types of literacy lead to language activities that are recognized as language skills in different cultures. The three types of literacy are then explained. The first is the ability to read and write, which is related to the interpretation of one's visual imagery, which is the main focus of visual literacy. Next, speaking and listening are the two most important oral literacy skills for communication. The last is writing and reading activities and skills directly related to printed texts, referred to as written literacy. Therefore, it can be concluded that since reading and writing are commonly associated with literacy, literacy is an

integrated complex of language and thinking processes and skills, which includes a variety of habits, attitudes, interests, and knowledge that are useful for a variety of purposes in a variety of contexts (Rintaningrum, 2009).

Lastly, it can be said that literacy is the capacity to understand, assess, and apply knowledge from various sources, including reading, writing, listening, and listening skills. It involves social practices to interact with multimodal texts and extract, develop, integrate, and critique meaning. Literacy is defined as accessing and understanding written or printed information, and literate thought refers to interpreting learned information. There are three types of literacy: visual literacy, oral literacy, and print literacy. Literacy is an integrated complex of language and thinking skills, encompassing various habits, attitudes, interests, and knowledge.

2.1.2. Literacy in Educational Context

Literacy is the foundation for all other academic knowledge and abilities in education (Smith, 2023). Concerning the world of education, literacy is an important part of the growth and development of students as subjects of education. Thus, Smith (2023) explained that literacy skills are very important in education since they impact students' ability to learn about complex topics, communicate effectively, and retain knowledge. Anis and Bariroh (2020) stated that literacy is a way for students to recognize, comprehend, and apply what they learn in school.

To help students recognize, comprehend, and apply literacy to their learning at school, there must be some fundamental shifts that can be given during the learning process. The goal of literacy learning in schools is to habituate students with the necessary reading and writing skills, which is the teacher's responsibility in all subject areas (Khofifah & Ramadan, 2021). Frankel et al. (2016) explained that literacy emphasizes four key shifts: productive and receptive processes, the context of social practices, conceptualizations of literacy, and modalities beyond written language. In addition, in the article, he explained that each of these key shifts has an explanation that refers to several aspects of understanding or literacy. Some of those key shifts explain that literacy involves both productive and receptive processes, with reading taking place in the context of social practices and culturally rooted activities. It is a disciplinary approach that influences the

participation of students and teachers in literacy practices such as teaching and learning. Literacy is compounded further by modalities other than written language, such as image, sound, and gesture, which can convey unique meanings that differ from reading written words (Frankel et al., 2016).

Literacy that involves modalities beyond written language will be faced with several challenges. Challenges to the use of learning media may come from both external (online facilities and infrastructure) and internal (educators and students) factors, such as a lack of literacy, low absorption, level of understanding, and other non-technical factors (Sumin et al., 2021). In addition, Lie et al. (2020) also explain that one of the factors is a lack of infrastructure, including insufficient educational and local government support networks. Such inadequate support seems to discourage schools from implementing comparable projects that encourage the use of technology in education. Due to the challenges being faced, both teachers and students must have the ability to determine a solution to overcome the challenges. An important ability that teachers and students must be able to master to overcome each of these challenges is the problem-solving skills. Thus, Çelebi and Çopur (2019) explained that problem-solving skills and media literacy are affected and interoperable processes.

The explanation of the four key shifts and challenges and solution highlights that literacy and education play an essential life, especially for students. As Kurniawan and Parnawi (2023) explained, literacy and education are two important things in our lives. It is also supported that literacy is very important for students because literacy skills substantially affect their success in learning and their daily lives (Sukma et al., 2017). Their article also explained that a high level of literacy skill could help students interpret oral, written, and even visual materials, and literacy competence (reading and writing) in introductory class plays an important role in determining the students' learning progress. Literacy competence through reading and writing with comprehension can help open doors to shared information, understanding, communication, and critical thinking and affect students' progress in learning (Sukma et al., 2017).

In conclusion, literacy is important for students' academic progress and development because it affects their ability to study complex topics, communicate effectively, and retain knowledge. It includes productive and receptive processes, the context of social practices, literacy conceptualizations, and modalities other than written language. These shifts emphasize the significance of reading and education in everyday life, as proficient reading abilities can help students interpret spoken, written, and visual sources, leading to shared information, comprehension, communication, and critical thinking.

2.1.3. Reading Activity in EFL Classroom

Reading is a method or process for gaining information from a text. According to Audina et al. (2020), reading is a process of obtaining information to understand the significance or meaning of the text read. From the explanation, reading involves more than just looking at a group of letters that have been organized into words, groups of words, sentences, paragraphs, and discourse; reading is an activity that involves understanding and interpreting written symbols, signs, or meaningful writing for the reader to comprehend the author's intended meaning fully (Patiung et al., 2016). Looking into the definition, it can be said that reading is an important skill for teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) (Hidayat & Setiawan, 2020). Okasha (2020) also argues that reading is important because EFL specialists see it as both a productive and receptive skill. As they read, students take in and process the text's information before responding with questions, ideas, and comments. Therefore, Gurduza (2019) said that reading is an important skill for EFL students and is the most important ability to master since EFL readers with enhanced reading skills will make higher progress and achieve more significant improvement in all academic areas. Not only that, reading is also the primary instrument for EFL learners to improve their understanding of other aspects of English. Repeated exposure to the same English patterns and components through reading can help students improve their writing, spelling, vocabulary, and grammatical comprehension (Manihuruk, 2020).

Reading activities are referred to as boring, so teachers have to find ways or strategies that make reading enjoyable for students (Lubis, 2021). Successful

reading activities depend on the selection of appropriate materials and the implementation of engaging strategies. The teacher should be able to examine the materials while considering the student's goals and learning needs (Suwarso & Praseno, 2022). The student's needs must be determined before the material is developed so that the outcome fulfills those needs. Furthermore, they also emphasized that the teaching material should include activities that help students identify the components of the text they are studying and provide many opportunities for actual language usage. Therefore, in preparing EFL students to face and implement reading materials, it is necessary to have some reading strategies that are able to emphasize the ability to understand reading materials. According to Banditvilai (2020), reading strategies are assumed to be important for students' reading comprehension, and reading strategies provide students with skills to handle their reading effectively. He also argued that teachers can help students improve their reading comprehension through reading strategies because they are purposeful ways to understand the researcher's meaning.

In addition to implementing appropriate reading materials and reading strategies, teachers also have to integrate pre-reading and post-reading activities to add depth to the overall learning experience of EFL students. According to Anaktototy and Huwae (2020), pre-reading activities aim to assess students' prior knowledge about the reading subject, enabling them to understand the text better. In the pre-reading activities, teachers can activate students' background knowledge, communicate reading objectives, and motivate them at the start of the reading (Budiharso, 2014). By integrating pre-reading activities, it also described how each student has the motivation to learn differently and is connected to different strategies for teaching, such as encouraging students to engage with the lesson, assignments, and classroom activities and directing their focus toward the material by using an effective learning tool or strategy (Rahmat, 2023). In addition to the pre-reading activities, Budiharso (2014) also explained about post-reading activities. He explained that readers conduct post-reading activities to recheck their understanding of a text topic. They involve asking questions, summarizing the text, and encouraging active engagement with the text. Post-reading can also involve

discussion, either in group or whole-class settings, depending on the class size. Group discussions are more effective for larger classes, while smaller classes may benefit from whole-class discussions. Both pre- and post-reading activities could help students understand what to do during guided reading activities and what they will achieve after the class to understand the researcher's ideas and contribute to their understanding of the text.

In its implementation, reading activities have been implemented through literacy activities outside and inside the classroom. These literacy activities are carried out because of basic reading and reading comprehension skills are critical to have both inside and outside the classroom (Waugh, 2018). In its implementation, reading activities in outside the classroom focus on the implementation of the School Literacy Movement (GLS) and P5 activity programs, where in this GLS activity all students are given instructions and the opportunity to read reading books based on their interests and end with reviewing and presenting activities from the results of the texts they have read before. Meanwhile, in P5 activities, students are given tasks, either in the form of reading text or a literacy project, which is related to the theme of the P5 activity itself. Not only in literacy activities in outside the classroom, literacy activities are also carried out in learning activities inside the classroom, one of them is in English learning activities. In its implementation, both teachers and students implement English reading activities to improve literacy and English language skills. The teacher's efforts to improve literacy and English language skills are focused on providing English reading materials and reading strategies that are suitable for students' abilities. Not only that, English reading activities are also carried out by students by focusing on implementing reading materials and reading strategies that are applied to help them get and understand information from reading texts in depth.

In summary, reading is a crucial skill for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, as it involves understanding and interpreting written symbols and signs. Successful reading activities depend on selecting appropriate materials and implementing engaging strategies. Teachers should consider students' goals and learning needs before developing materials. Reading strategies are

essential for improving comprehension and handling reading effectively. In addition, conducting pre-reading and post-reading activities are also essential to add depth to the learning experience, allowing students to understand the researcher's ideas and contribute to their understanding of the text.

2.1.4. Teachers' and Students' Perspectives of Literacy through Reading Activities

The present research focuses on teachers' and students' perspectives on literacy through reading activities. Therefore, we need to understand the meaning of perspective itself. According to Hughes (2005), perspective refers to the interpretive or behavioral meaning, including "a view or prospect," "a particular way of viewing something," or "an understanding of the relative importance of things." From the students' perspective, reading is a complex and purposeful activity and provides a view that reading is a challenging process for students. It is believed that reading is challenging since it requires students to recognize words in the text, interpret the meaning of the text, and arrange the words they have found to create meaning to become fluent readers (Fitri & Ginting, 2021). Therefore, when we look at the teachers' perspective, it is said that teachers play an important role in supporting students in improving their literacy skills. Teachers, as mentioned by Fajar (2019), play a role in improving student literacy activities. Teachers are expected to present engaging learning materials and media to stimulate student interest. They can also conduct learning activities in the school library, offering various information for individual and group exploration. If students find difficulties, they can ask the teacher.

Looking at the explanation related to students' perspectives, literacy is considered challenging, but it also benefits the nation's generation, especially in students' reading activities. According to Deswinda (2021) in her paper regarding the importance of literacy for the country's generation based on the students' perspective, she explains some of the benefits of reading literacy. Reading literacy offers readers several advantages, including enhanced writing and reading comprehension, confidence, personal growth, academic achievement, and problem-solving abilities. It follows that having reading skills improves people's knowledge

and awareness, which enables us to become change agents in our nation. In addition, Deswinda (2021) also explains that reading is essential for academic achievement as it allows students to understand teacher instructions, written instructions, and school subjects. On the other hand, students who have a good reading background can quickly understand the material by skimming, scanning, or other reading skills. This fast and effective reading helps students get excellent grades in school and college by providing comprehensive insights and knowledge so they can answer assignments or tests accurately. In the end, not only the teaching and learning process but also the reading activity produces good results and qualifies students for literacy mastery.

Students must have faced some difficulties while conducting reading activities. By recognizing students' difficulties during reading activities, teachers can help them by applying appropriate teaching strategies. Miranda and Wahyudin (2023) stated that every teacher uses different types of learning strategies while teaching students. Despite using various types of teaching strategies, Achmad et al. (2016) stated that the efforts that teachers can make to help students overcome difficulties in reading are by teaching and asking students to use several reading strategies. The importance of using reading strategies affects students' ability to understand the material they read, and of course, this can be influenced by the application of appropriate teaching strategies. This is also supported by the statement that teaching strategies for reading comprehension are highly important for the learning process and have the ability to improve students' reading comprehension (Enggar & Wibowo, 2020). Thus, this is also related to the definition of teaching strategies according to Nurhamidah et al. (2018), who said that teaching strategies are learning process plans designed by teachers to achieve learning objectives. Thus, incorporating strategies can help students solve problems and find information in texts more efficiently.

From the explanation above, we can conclude that the present research explores the perspectives of teachers and students on literacy through reading activities. From the students' perspective, reading is a challenging process that requires recognizing words, interpreting meaning, and organizing words to become

fluent readers. Teachers play a crucial role in supporting students in improving their literacy skills by providing engaging materials and activities in the school library. Reading literacy offers benefits such as enhanced writing comprehension, confidence, personal growth, academic achievement, and problem-solving abilities. Teachers can help students overcome difficulties by applying appropriate teaching strategies.

2.1.5. Emancipated Learning

Emancipated learning, also known as *Merdeka Belajar*, is one of the programs implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek). *Merdeka Belajar*'s policy is to give independence to each education unit to innovate (Yandri, 2022). In essence, *Merdeka Belajar* is present to explore the potential of teachers, schools, and students to innovate and improve quality independently. That is why Nugraheny et al. (2023) provide a view that *Merdeka* is a situation where teachers and students have the freedom to innovate and learn independently and creatively in teaching and learning activities.

Based on the above explanations, the Ministry of Education and Culture introduced the *Merdeka Curriculum* on February 11, 2022, as a curriculum innovation to support this *Merdeka Belajar* innovation. Based on that explanation, Rani et al. (2023) state that the *Merdeka Curriculum* was first initiated by the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim. This curriculum is motivated by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) research conducted in 2019 with the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, which shows that 70% of 15-year-old students are below the minimum competency in understanding simple reading or applying basic mathematical concepts. These PISA scores have mostly stayed the same in the last 10-15 years.

Considering the problems related to low competence in understanding simple reading or applying basic math concepts, the *Merdeka curriculum* integrates several important abilities that students must acquire, including literacy skills. In his article, Simbolon (2023) explained that one of the main focuses of implementing the *Merdeka belajar curriculum* is the implementation of literacy activities in every

school in Indonesia. He also mentioned that implementing literacy in the *Merdeka belajar* curriculum aims to provide a holistic education, focusing on developing students' reading, writing, speaking, and listening abilities. As a result, by Ministerial Regulation Number 23 of 2013, the Ministry of Education and Culture established the GLS or *Gerakan Literasi Sekolah* (School Literacy Movement) to develop higher values in children through language (Hardini et al., 2022). This activity is related to Hopeman et al. (2023) explanation, which said that school literacy is defined as the ability to access, comprehend, and use information effectively through a variety of activities, including reading, viewing, listening, writing, and speaking. The explanation is also in line with what was stated by Idhartono (2023), which explains that literacy in the *Merdeka belajar* curriculum is a person's ability to use skills and potential in managing and understanding information when doing reading, writing, counting, and solving problems in everyday life. Therefore, it can be said that literacy plays an important role in education as it enables students to access information, understand complex concepts, and develop critical thinking skills. Finally, by having good literacy skills, students can achieve better academic success.

Briefly to conclude, the Merdeka Curriculum, introduced by the Ministry of Education and Culture in February 2022, aims to address the low literacy skills of 15-year-old students in Indonesia. The curriculum, initiated by Minister Nadiem Makarim, focuses on developing literacy skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The program aims to provide a holistic education, enabling students to access information, understand complex concepts, and develop critical thinking skills. The Merdeka Curriculum aims to improve students' academic success by addressing the challenges students face in understanding basic mathematical concepts and reading.

2.2. Study of the Relevant Research

Previous studies have examined the implementation of literacy in student reading activities. Cahya et al. (2020), Noveliana and Ghani (2022), and Khofiyya et al. (2023) show the results of implementing literacy, both in reading and writing activities at school, on improving students' literacy and learning outcomes. Most of

them also mentioned that teachers have a responsibility to help students comprehend what they acquire from reading and writing activities. Thus, teachers are expected to provide appropriate learning methods to conduct meaningful and enjoyable activities that enhance students' literacy. Therefore, focusing on the perspectives of teachers and students can help to enrich understanding and insights related to literacy in reading activities, especially its implementation in emancipated learning (*Merdeka Belajar*).

The first research conducted by Cahya et al. (2020) aimed to clarify how English literacy skills are affected by independent reading literacy activities. The study was carried out at SMAN Bali Mandara, and the participants were two English teachers and two classes of twelfth-grade students. To obtain the research data, this research used three techniques: observation, interview, and document analysis. The observation allowed for richer data, interviews provided a deeper understanding, and document analysis provided additional information on the implementation process and its impacts on students' English literacy skills. The study reveals that five independent reading literacy activities were implemented in a school, including silent reading, storybook writing, cooperative literacy program, news reading, and book review. These activities promote students' English literacy skills and improve their academic achievement. Silent reading fosters lifelong reading habits, making it easier for schools to run programs and form students' character. Policymakers should consider the sequence of implementing these activities to boost students' English literacy skills, critical thinking, and reading habits. These research findings also stated that teachers can use meaningful and joyful activities to empower students' English literacy. The findings can be used as a model for implementing school literacy programs.

The second research conducted by Khofiyya et al. (2023) aimed to analyze the independent curriculum's implementation on literacy in Indonesian language skills. The study involved students from four elementary schools, teachers, and principals of SD Muhammadiyah 19 Surabaya. Triangulation of data (observation and interview) was used to execute data collecting methods (mixed). The research revealed that out of 18 grade 4 primary school students could read fluently, with 15

out of 18 students already fluent. Two students read moderately fluently, and one student had limitations due to special needs. The same results were also found for writing comprehension, with 15 out of 18 students already fluent. Two students wrote quite well, and one student had limitations due to special needs. The researchers observed the students' reading and writing skills by having each student read and write at their seats. However, not all students were able to retell what the teacher said due to vocabulary limitations, with three students out of 18 unable to do so due to lack of vocabulary. It is necessary to implement a school program to overcome students who need to be more fluent in reading. This is because the school program will have an attachment between one party and another. After that, when the principal organizes a school program, teachers must be able to implement it, both in and outside the classroom.

The third study conducted by Noveliana and Ghani (2022) aimed to analyze the implementation of reading literacy and its influence on the results of students' language learning ability in grade 4 (four). The study involved a vice principal, a fourth-grade teacher, and two fourth-grade students at SDN Susukan 04 Pagi East Jakarta, using observation sheets, interviews, and documentation as data collection techniques. The results found in this study are in the form of explanations and stories from students' experiences in implementing reading literacy through learning Tema 5 about "Pahlawanku" and also explanations related to the implementation of reading literacy through several activities carried out by teachers and the fulfillment of literacy facilities for students by schools in the form of libraries and Pojok Baca. From the results of this study, the vice principal also intended for the future of reading literacy. The school will also provide facilities that can help children understand more about literacy and utilize this reading literacy for the better, especially emphasizing to the teacher that literacy is very important for teaching and learning activities for student understanding.