CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by presenting the study's description to provide comprehension of the research. It includes a background of the study, formulation of the problem, operational definition, research aim, and significance of the study.

A. Background of the Study

Reading is crucial in shaping individuals' knowledge, perspectives, and intellectual growth in this modern era. As technology and access to information continue to develop, comprehending texts becomes increasingly essential in academic and real-life contexts. Reading is one of the core language skills that supports students in achieving success across all subjects.

In English Language Teaching (ELT), reading plays a crucial role in supporting language development and helping learners build vocabulary, increase grammatical awareness, and improve their overall language proficiency. Furthermore, international research has emphasized the significance of reading skills. Based on the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2022 report, Indonesian students achieved an average reading score of 359, significantly below the OECD average of 476.

Moreover, reading interest is a motivational factor that drives students to read more frequently, which may influence their comprehension performance. According to Musta'aliyah et al. (2022), reading interest is a motivational attitude in EFL learners that significantly correlates with reading comprehension performance in a moderate positive manner.

To facilitate the identification of this study, the writer reviews several previous studies related to the current research topic. This study is relevant to the study by Andaresta (2020), which found a positive relationship between reading interest and the reading comprehension ability of 4th-semester students from the English Education study program at IAIN Palangka Raya. The research

instrument used to collect data is a questionnaire with multiple-choice options. Another study was conducted by Aprilianti (2022). A correlation was found between students' reading interest and reading comprehension at SMKN 1 Jenangan Ponorogo. The research instruments used for data collection are questionnaires and recount texts. Fadiyah (2023) found a positive correlation between reading interest and reading comprehension scores among first-grade students at SMK Farmasi Kesuma Bangsa, Bandar Lampung. The research instruments used to collect data include questionnaires and multiple-choice tests. Krismayanti (2020) found a low but statistically significant correlation between students' reading interest and their reading comprehension in the English Department of IAIN Kediri. The research instruments used to collect data include questionnaires and multiple-choice tests. In addition, Lestari (2022) found a significant positive correlation between students' reading interest and their reading comprehension of narrative texts at the tenth grade level of State Senior High School 1, Kubu. The researcher collected the data with a questionnaire and a narrative text test. Sandika (2022) found a significant correlation between reading interest and reading comprehension among the eighth-grade students of SMPN 1 Sukawati. The researcher then collected the data using a questionnaire and multiple-choice questions. Wilda (2020) found a significant correlation between reading interest and reading comprehension among undergraduate EFL students at Tridinanti University, Palembang. The research instruments used to collect data include questionnaires and multiple-choice tests. Yardila (2023) found a positive and significant correlation between students' reading interest and their reading comprehension achievement at SMA YWKA Palembang. The research instruments used to collect data include questionnaires and multiple-choice tests. Yusuf (2023) found a positive correlation between reading interest and reading comprehension among eleventh-grade students at MAN 1 Ponorogo. The research instruments used to collect data include questionnaires and multiple-choice tests.

To fill this gap, this study focuses on a specific sample of eighth-grade students in a *Cerdas Istimewa* (gifted) class at a junior high school in

Tasikmalaya. This group is rarely studied, yet it holds the potential to provide new insights into how reading interest correlates with reading comprehension in higher-ability students. By doing so, the findings of this research are expected to contribute valuable perspectives for educators and future researchers in designing more effective and targeted reading programs.

B. Formulation of the Problem

Based on the study's background, a problem arises. To clarify the issue that was analyzed, the problem statement is formulated as follows.

"Is there any significant correlation between the students' reading interest and their reading comprehension ability at the eighth grade of one of the junior high schools in Tasikmalaya?"

C. Operational Definitions

Defining key terms helps readers avoid misunderstandings regarding the terms used. Then, the writer provides some of the purposes of the critical terms related to the topic as follows:

1. Reading Interest

Reading interest in this study refers to students' emotional and behavioral responses toward reading activities. The students' reading interest is measured using a questionnaire consisting of 40 items that cover four aspects: pleasure, willingness, consciousness, and attention.

2. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension in this study refers to students' ability to understand written texts. The instrument applies five components: main idea, specific information, references, inference, and understanding vocabulary. It is measured through a multiple-choice reading test of 30 items, using recount texts based on the school's curriculum. Each item provides four options (A, B, C, or D) for students to choose from.

3. Correlation

Correlation in this study refers to the statistical relationship between students' reading interest and their reading comprehension ability. The correlation is analyzed using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation formula, which measures the strength and direction of the association between two ranked variables: X (reading interest) and Y (reading comprehension).

D. Aim of the Research

This study investigates the correlation between students' reading interest and reading comprehension ability.

E. Significances of the Study

The results of this study are expected to provide educators, particularly English teachers, with beneficial information for implementing effective learning methods in English language activities.

1. Theoretical Use

This study contributes to the existing knowledge about the relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension. It may support or strengthen the findings of previous studies related to reading skills in language learning.

2. Practical Use

The findings of this study are expected to provide practical benefits for English teachers and students. For teachers, the results can be used as a reference to understand how students' reading interests may influence their reading comprehension abilities, and thus help in designing more effective reading activities. For students, the result can raise awareness of the importance of reading and increase their interest in improving their comprehension ability, making them more motivated to read actively. Additionally, this study may serve as a valuable reference for future researchers interested in exploring the relationship between reading interest and their reading comprehension or

conducting similar studies with different variables, methods, or participant groups.

3. Empirical Use

Thus, research provides empirical evidence from eighth-grade students in the *Cerdas Istimewa* (gifted) class at a junior high school in Tasikmalaya regarding the relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension ability. The data were collected through direct observation using a questionnaire and a multiple-choice test, enabling this study to provide real-world insights into how reading interest affects students' reading outcomes.