

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Research

Literacy is a fundamental skill necessary for success in school and lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2006). It includes the ability to read, write, understand, and use written information effectively. In the context of education, literacy has become increasingly important as the world becomes more globally connected. Yet, many students still face difficulties in developing literacy skills due to traditional teaching methods and limited access to interactive resources. One crucial component of literacy is reading comprehension, which allows learners to construct meaning from texts and supports their academic achievement.

Reading comprehension is an essential part of learning English since it helps students gain knowledge, think critically, and understand different kinds of written texts. It allows students to get information, understand meanings, and respond to texts such as messages, instructions, or school materials. If students have poor reading comprehension, they will face difficulties not only in English class but also in other subjects that involve reading. The importance of reading comprehension is supported by many experts (Grabe & Stoller, 2020; Nunan, 1991; Snow, 2002).

Reading comprehension plays a vital role in English learning, yet many students find it particularly challenging. As a key skill, reading

enables learners to understand various types of text, from simple messages to academic passages. However, data show that a large number of students still struggle with reading comprehension. For instance, the *Programme for International Student Assessment 2018* report by the OECD (2019) reported that more than half of 15 year-old students in participating countries failed to reach the minimum proficiency level in reading. Indonesia ranked 74th out of 79 countries in reading literacy, with an average reading score of 371, significantly lower than the OECD average of 487. In Indonesia, data from Kemdikbud (2021) revealed that many students at the junior high school level could only understand literal information and had difficulty interpreting meaning from texts. Snow (2002) also emphasized that reading comprehension is a major concern in education because many students struggle to construct meaning from texts, which affects their overall academic performance. These difficulties are often caused by limited vocabulary, lack of contextual understanding, and ineffective teaching strategies. Traditional, text-heavy lessons can make reading feel monotonous and difficult to grasp. To improve students' reading abilities, educators must adopt interactive and engaging teaching methods that encourage active participation and comprehension.

To address these challenges, technology-based learning media can be an effective solution. One platform that has shown promising results is Wordwall, an gamification learning tool that allows teachers to create engaging learning activities. This platform supports gamification in

education, making learning more enjoyable and helping students actively participate in reading exercises.

Wordwall is an innovative and interactive learning platform that allows educators to create engaging educational activities in the form of games. Initially launched as a desktop application, it transitioned to an online platform in 2016, making it more accessible and versatile for teachers and students alike. The platform was developed to simplify lesson delivery and enhance student participation through gamified learning experiences. By providing customizable templates, Wordwall enables educators to design activities that cater to different learning needs and styles.

Several studies highlight Wordwall's effectiveness in language learning. Mutiarani (2024) found that using Wordwall-based activities significantly improved students' reading comprehension, while Rahmawati & Wijayanti (2022) demonstrated its role in creating an engaging and enjoyable learning environment. Other studies (Aqliyah et al., 2024; Purba et al., 2023; Rahayu et al., 2024; Safitri et al., 2024; Sri Purwanti et al., 2024) also show positive effects on reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and classroom engagement. However, most of these studies focus on general language skills or vocabulary development. Research specifically investigating the use of Wordwall in teaching reading comprehension of short message texts at the junior high school level remains limited. This gap indicates the need for

further research on how Wordwall can support students' reading comprehension of short message text, which are commonly taught at the junior high school level as part of functional text materials.

The use of Wordwall.net media in this research is based on its numerous pedagogical benefits. According to Çil (2021), Wordwall can increase students' motivation and engagement through its interactive and game-like activities. It also helps students improve their vocabulary by providing repeated exposure to key terms in a fun and meaningful way. In addition, Wordwall allows teachers to differentiate instruction based on students' levels, making it easier to adjust materials according to their needs. Similarly, Purba et al. (2023) state that Wordwall supports active learning and increases student participation by making lessons more dynamic and less monotonous. These benefits make Wordwall a useful tool for supporting language learning in the classroom.

This research targets 8th grade students of SMPN 10 Padang since students at this level are generally at an A1 level of English proficiency. At this stage, many students often experience difficulties in understanding various types of English texts like short message text, announcement texts, and greeting cards, as supported by national assessment results and existing literature. Therefore, interactive learning tools such as Wordwall may provide meaningful support in helping students improve their reading comprehension and classroom engagement.

This thesis aims to investigate the effect of Wordwall media on students' reading comprehension, specifically in understanding short message texts at the junior high school level. By integrating Wordwall into the teaching process, this research seeks to determine whether interactive and gamified activities can enhance students' ability to comprehend English texts more effectively. The results of this research are expected to provide useful insights for teachers in choosing appropriate digital media to support reading instruction at the junior high school level.

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background above, the problems identified in this research include:

1. The lack of students' reading comprehension abilities in learning English, especially in understanding English text.
2. The learning methods that are less interactive and engaging, making it difficult for students to actively participate in the learning process.

C. Limitation of the Problem

To ensure that this research remains focused and systematically directed, several limitations are established. First, the research is limited to 8th grade students at SMPN 10 Padang, excluding other grade levels or institutions. Second, the research has been implemented in three main stages: the pretest, the implementation, and the posttest. These stages are

intended to measure the effectiveness of the intervention comprehensively. Third, the scope of the learning material is limited to *Short Message* texts, aligning the instruction and assessment strictly with this genre to maintain consistency. Lastly, the learning media utilized in this research is Wordwall.net, a digital platform chosen to see its impact on students' reading comprehension within the specific material.

D. Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background and identification of the problems that have been explained, the formulation of the problem in this research is: Is there a significant effect of using Wordwall media on students' reading comprehension in Short Message text for eighth grade students at SMPN 10 Padang?

E. Purpose of the Research

This research aims to investigate whether the use of Wordwall has a significant effect on the reading comprehension of Short Message texts for eighth-grade students at SMPN 10 Padang.

F. Significant of the Research

This research is expected to provide benefits in various aspects, both for students, teachers, and the world of education in general. For students, the use of Wordwall as gamification learning media can improve their understanding of English text in a more fun and interesting way. This method can also help students be more active in the learning process, so

that their reading skills develop better. Apart from that, Wordwall can create a more dynamic learning environment and reduce the feeling of boredom that often occurs in conventional learning methods.

For teachers, this research can be a reference in developing more effective and technology-based teaching methods. Wordwall can be used as a tool to evaluate student understanding in real-time, so teachers can adjust their teaching strategies based on student needs. In addition, this research can provide insight into how technology can be applied in English language learning to increase student engagement and learning outcomes.

Generally, this research can contribute to the world of education by providing empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of digital learning media in improving students' reading skills. The results of this research can be a basis for schools and educational institutions in adopting technology as part of their learning strategy. Thus, it is hope that this research can help create learning methods that are more innovative, interactive, and in line with technological developments in the digital era.

G. Definition of Key Terms

To ensure that this research has clear and well-defined boundaries, the following are the operational definitions of the key terms use in this research.

1. Teaching Media

Teaching media, also referred to as instructional media are essential tools that facilitate the transmission of learning materials and make the teaching process more systematic and effective. In the context of reading comprehension, instructional media are defined as resources that help teachers present written texts in ways that are engaging and accessible to learners.

2. Wordwall

Wordwall is a game-based digital learning platform that allows teachers to create interactive activities such as quizzes, word matching, crossword puzzles, and other exercises. According to Fitria (2023), “Wordwall is a web-based educational game that is used to create fun quiz-based games.” (p. 122). In this research, Wordwall is use as a learning aid to improve students’ reading comprehension of English texts.

3. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension refers to a student's ability to understand the content, meaning and purpose of a written text. Moreover, Snow (2002) defines reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. In this research, reading comprehension is measured through tests that

focus on students' ability to identify main information, understand details of the English text, and interpret implied meaning.

