

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides information about the background of the study, research questions, objective of the study, significance of study, and definition of key terms.

#### **A. Background of Study**

In Indonesia, students are encouraged to learn English from elementary to senior high school (Wardani, 2021). English is learned as a foreign language by the majority of Indonesians. Learners are expected to do four abilities (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) correctly. To become proficient in each of these abilities, one must overcome various difficulties and challenges.

The twenty-first century has changed the needs of EFL students, and mastery of a conventional set of language skills is no longer sufficient (Harste, 2003). According to Alwasilah (2002), this typical method of English language instruction has two flaws. Due to the excessive use of grammar instruction in the classroom, students have few opportunities to communicate effectively. Second, it does not encourage students' growth in critical thinking. They need to acquire critical reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in English, as well as the ability to assess information from a variety of print and digital media sources.

Reading is one of the four most important skills that should be mastered (Wardani, 2021). As a result of reading, students might expand their vocabulary and depth of knowledge by better comprehending the text or what they have



read. Students of a foreign language need to learn and develop a wide variety of linguistic aspects. While listening and speaking are also important, reading is the primary skill in English and must be acquired by students for easy task understanding. If you don't understand it, it means nothing.

In Islam, Allah's first revelation to the Prophet Muhammad SAW and Muslims concerned the acquisition of knowledge and how to acquire it. The first revelation also reminds us that God has glorified human dignity through reading. This means that through the teaching and learning process, humans can master science and with these sciences humans can know the secrets of the universe, which are very beneficial for their welfare (Qutub, 2011). In Surah Al-Alaq verses 1-5, Allah says:

أَقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ۝ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ۝ اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ۝ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ۝ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ۝

Surah Al-Alaq verses 1-5 contains the command to read, reading means regularly or systematically in studying the word and His creation, thinking by correlating between the qauliah verse and qauniah, human will find the concepts of science and knowledge (Sarwar, 1994). The word iqra' or the command to read of verses above is repeated twice, they are in verses 1 and 3. According to Quraish Shihab (1997), the first commandment is intended as an order to learn about something that is not yet known, while the second is an order to teach knowledge to others. This indicates that in the learning and learning process,



maximum effort is required by enabling all components in the form of potential tools that exist in humans (Hamzah, 2009).

In short, these verses contain about when someone wants to learn something, it can be started by learning to read and continued by understanding deeply and critically what has been known. Reading requires more than just word and grammar comprehension. When reading, the students are expected to draw rational connections between the various thoughts and pieces of information that they receive (Kaya, 2015). As a result, it is important for college students to have excellent text comprehension skills that will allow them to easily read any reading material, construct meaning, and understand the writer's message.

Various methods can be taken to encourage students with their reading and to support the development of their reading comprehension. Students in today's schools and colleges are expected to interact with various information sources. Hence, it is important to question the content as they read it. In order to comprehend with a critical edge, as suggested by Pearson (2001), students need to be aware of the author's purpose and the role of sociocultural factors. Although a more critical approach to English language instruction has been known in the Indonesian setting, critical literacy has not been incorporated into the curriculum (Alwasilah C. A., 2001; Gustine, 2013).

The information presented above showed that a critical literacy approach can assist to train students, especially college students, to think critically and transform their ideas into practical action to build a better society.



Literacy is defined as the ability to utilize all aspects of language arts, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening, practically, as stated by Cooper in (Mmela, 2006). It means that literacy is a beneficial and effective way to teach English. As described by Priyatni (2012), critical literacy is connected to critical thinking and self-awareness. Critical thinking also improves an individual's creative problem-solving abilities and their ability to analyze and evaluate information presented in the form of cause-and-effect relationships, viewpoints, facts, options, and arguments (Halimah et al., 2020).

Vasquez (2000) argued that in critical literacy, criticizing a text does not always simply make negative statements about the text but rather goes beyond the text's literal form and examines the topic from several views and suggesting changes and improvement. Besides being available in print and digital form, critical literacy texts can also be found in audio, visual media, toys, video games, comics, advertisements, television programs, and various other forms (Gee, 2010).

Furthermore, other researchers have already published similar investigations. First, Ko (2013) discussed critical literacy practices in the context of EFL and English competency. The results showed that the four focal students had different levels of critical literacy. Furthermore, it demonstrated that critical awareness of gender and class could be increased through conversation. For this reason, critical literacy-based curriculum would be more appealing to students who have a high level of proficiency in English. Second, Hikmat (2017) discussed how lecturers increase critical literacy by using



various texts, raising students' interest, asking critical questions, discussing questions, and writing a brief description and response, but students' responses are low in confidence due to their low critical literacy, low English proficiency, and dependence on guidance. Next, Nabila Khan's (2019) research emphasized the significance of promoting critical literacy in students in order to create a democratic classroom setting. The results demonstrated that many students struggle to understand the material and critical literacy is generally not emphasized in most classroom teaching.

The previous research about the critical literacy approach practiced on EFL students has different results. Two of the three previous studies above showed that the subject had difficulty in following the critical literacy approach to comprehend the text. This increases writer's curiosity on the process how critical literacy approach influence the students in understanding reading comprehension, from the way they use critical literacy approach and how they perceived when they use critical literacy approach in understanding reading comprehension. The writer would like to conduct a research about Critical Literacy Approach in Understanding Reading Comprehension. This study attempts to investigate critical literacy approach that used by students and their perceived of critical literacy approach in understanding reading comprehension.

## **B. Research Questions**

The following research questions will be investigated in this study:

1. How do the students use critical literacy approach in understanding reading comprehension?



2. How do the students perceive critical literacy approach in understanding reading comprehension?

### **C. Objective of Study**

The following are the goals of this study, which are based on the research questions above:

1. To investigate how the students use critical literacy approach to develop their understanding of reading comprehension.
2. To find out how do the students perceive critical literacy approach in understanding reading comprehension.

### **D. Significance of Study**

The researcher hopes that the findings of this study will be useful to the researcher, teacher, students, and future researchers for the following purposes:

1. Specifically for this research, the researcher wants to offer additional knowledge about critical literacy approaches and learning strategies that can be used to encourage students to read more. Therefore, the researcher can also gain insight into how to improve reading comprehension through a critical literacy lens.
2. For students, it help students to develop reading ability and as a guidance when the critical literacy approach is impelented in reading class especially using four resources of critical literacy approach adopted from Luke and Freebody (1997).



3. For the teacher, the finding from this study can be useful for teachers to better aid their students' development of critical literacy skills through increased reading comprehension.
4. For the next researcher, this study's findings provide a foundation for further explorations of critical literacy approaches, and can be used as an example and additional reference for other researchers to conduct the same topic.

#### **E. Definition of Key Terms**

To avoid misunderstanding, some crucial terms used in this writing are explained below:

##### **1. Critical Literacy Approach**

Critical literacy is the ability to stand back from texts and analyze them as part of a larger social and literary context. Having these skills requires being fully aware of the surface of conversation, seeing hidden ideas and objectives, thinking and communicating for oneself, comprehending the impact of social settings on text construction and interpretation, and valuing the unique qualities that come from linguistic and cultural diversity (Warnick, 2002).

The critical literacy approach is necessary for education because it emphasizes the development of cognitive skills at the core of the educational sector. This method examines global concerns like power sources, injustice, and inequity from a broader perspective to improve the world by reducing social suffering (Sluys, Lewison, & Flint, 2006). The idea of critical literacy expanded from word reading to world reading as it emphasized challenging



the status quo and critically examining knowledge and social structures. It is important for this approach to comprehend how discourse and texts may be formed, deconstructed, and reconstructed to represent challenge, and modify social and semiotic relations (Freire, 1970; Luke & Dooley, 2011, p. 856).

## 2. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension, as defined by Sweet and Snow (2003), includes a two-step procedure of meaning extraction and construction. In other words, readers know that they have to figure out how book represents words and translate text to sound efficiently and accurately (extracting). At the same time, they have to figure out how to represent the information being given, which means building new meanings and combining new and old information (constructing meaning).