CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, there are six part that describe the introduction of this thesis. They are the research background, research problem, and research objective, benefits of research and development, research scope and limitation and definition of key terms.

1.1 Research Context

In the current era of globalization, mastery of English is an essential need in the fields of education, technology, economics, and cross-cultural communication. English is widely recognized as an international language or lingua franca, which is a language used by speakers from various backgrounds to communicate globally. The role of English has grown not only as a foreign language, but also as a major tool in international and professional education. This is in line with (Crystal, D.a-Marchena, 2003)view which states that *English has achieved a genuinely global status by becoming the most widely taught and studied language around the world* (Harmer, 2015)

Among the four main skills in English-listening, speaking, reading, and writing-reading is considered the main foundation in the development of students' academic literacy. (Grabe, 2009) asserts that "reading is the most important skill for second language learners in academic contexts, as it provides access to written knowledge and facilitates vocabulary development." This confirms that through reading skills, students can develop cross-disciplinary knowledge, improve critical thinking skills, and expand global horizons.

In the context of Indonesian education, English is taught as a compulsory subject from junior high to senior high school. The learning objectives are not only to be able to communicate, but also to understand sources of information, broaden global horizons, and support academic skills. In line with that, Permendikbud No. 37/2018 emphasizes that English learning at the senior high school level is designed to equip students to be able to understand and use language in various contexts, including reading informative and argumentative texts.

However, a number of studies show that the reading skills of high school students in Indonesia are still relatively low. Stated that the lack of varied learning strategies and the lack of student involvement in the reading process are the causes of low reading comprehension (Indrayadi et al., 2020). Another study showed that the use of contextual approaches such as Contextual Teaching and Learning can significantly increase students' interest and understanding of reading texts. These findings reinforce the view that reading is an essential skill in secondary education and needs special attention in its teaching strategies (Sinaga, M., Riyantika, M., & Puteri, 2023) These findings are reinforced by the confession of the English teacher at SMA Negeri 1 Srengat, who stated:

> *"Vocabulary: Many students have difficulty understanding the meaning of words in the text, comprehension: students often do not understand the content of the text thoroughly..."* (Thursday, 17-04-2025)

Although reading skills play an important role in English language learning, the practice of teaching them in secondary schools is not easy. Teachers are often faced with various challenges both from the internal side of the classroom and from the education system in general. These challenges include low student motivation,

time constraints, lack of authentic teaching materials, differences in students' ability to understand texts, and lack of innovative and contextualized teaching strategies. According to (Richards, J. C., & Farrell, 2005) challenges in teaching reading skills can come from three main sources: an overcrowded curriculum, limited teacher pedagogy, and low student reading competence. Lack of student engagement in the learning process is also a major contributing factor to low learning outcomes. This is reinforced by the findings of (Yunita, L., & Fauziah, 2022) who stated that many high school students have difficulty understanding English texts due to lack of vocabulary, limited reading strategies, and passivity during the learning process. In addition, the teacher said that:

> *"Student interest is still low in general. Students tend to be passive and only read when instructed. Only about 10 students showed high competence."* (Thursday, 17-04-2025)

On the other hand, teachers often face difficulties in choosing approaches and methods that are suitable for students' characteristics. (Sari, N. L., & Wardani, 2019) showed that most teachers tend to use conventional methods such as grammar translation method or teacher-centered instruction, which is less able to encourage students' active involvement in understanding texts. Teachers are also often limited by short learning time and administrative demands, so they do not have the flexibility to apply more interactive methods.

In addition, (Afzal., 2020) emphasizes that effective reading instruction requires careful strategic planning and selection of reading materials that are appropriate to the needs and ability levels of students. In the context of learning in Indonesia, the gap between the availability of contextualized learning resources and students' needs is also a significant obstacle. Teachers are not only required to

master the material, but also to be creative and adaptive in choosing strategies that can overcome these obstacles.

Thus, it is important to explore more deeply the challenges teachers face in teaching reading skills in high school, in order to find more effective and contextualized learning strategies. This research attempts to explore these challenges in real terms based on the direct experience of English teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Srengat.

Facing various challenges in teaching reading, teachers are required to have strategies that are not only theoretical, but also practical and contextualized according to students' needs. Effective teaching strategies play an important role in helping students understand texts, increase their interest in reading, and build their confidence in using English. (Harmer, 2015)states that reading teaching strategies should include active student engagement, adjustments to the difficulty level of the text, and exercises that encourage literal and inferential comprehension.

One strategy that has proven effective is scaffolding, which the gradual provision of support to students is according to their needs. According to (Vygotsky, 1978) scaffolding helps students build understanding through teacher guidance until they are able to learn independently. In the context of reading learning, this can be in the form of using pre-reading activities, trigger questions, or visual aids such as pictures and graphs. These strategies encourage students to relate their prior knowledge to the text to be read.

In addition, the use of contextual approaches such as Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) is also an alternative that is increasingly being implemented in various schools. CTL allows students to relate reading material to their real life,

thus increasing motivation and engagement. Research by (Sinaga, M., Riyantika, M., & Puteri, 2023) showed that the contextual approach significantly improved students' reading comprehension because the learning process became more relevant and meaningful.

On the other hand, reciprocal teaching and interactive reading strategies are also widely recommended to improve critical thinking skills in reading. According to (Palincsar, A. S., & Brown, 1984) , reciprocal teaching includes summarizing, predicting, clarifying, and questioning activities that are done collaboratively between teachers and students. This strategy has proven effective in improving reading comprehension and strengthening discussion skills.

Finally, it is important for teachers to adapt learning strategies to students' levels and interests. (Puspitasari, D., & Suryati, 2021)emphasize the importance of student-centered learning, where students are given the space to choose the reading topics they like and actively engage in the learning process. With a more flexible approach, teachers can build a classroom atmosphere that is more inclusive, adaptive, and encourages active student participation.

With these various approaches, teachers are expected to be able to design reading lessons that are more meaningful and have a positive impact on students' literacy development. This study aims to explore what strategies are applied by teachers in overcoming the challenges of teaching reading at SMA Negeri 1 Srengat.

Various previous studies have addressed the teaching of reading in the context of English language learning in secondary schools. For example, Rahmah and Nurweni (2019) in their study found that the use of reciprocal teaching strategy

was able to improve students' reading comprehension because students were actively involved in the process of summarizing, questioning, and predicting the content of the text. Another study by (Setiawan, B., & Apsari, 2020) showed that the use of scaffolding techniques significantly helped students understand complex reading with gradual support from the teacher.

Then, (Syahroni, M., Mardiana, H., & Wulan, 2021) examined teachers' challenges in teaching reading and concluded that time constraints, low student motivation, and students' low basic literacy skills were the main obstacles in the learning process. Meanwhile, (Vina et al., 2022) highlighted more strategies used by teachers, such as the use of visual media, grouping students based on ability levels, and implementing pre-reading and post-reading activities to increase student engagement.

From these studies, it can be seen that many studies focus on the effectiveness of certain strategies in improving students' reading skills or on common obstacles in reading learning. However, there is a gap in research that takes an in-depth look at teachers' direct experiences in facing challenges and developing contextualized reading learning strategies, especially at the public high school level with diverse cultural and academic backgrounds.

More specifically, there are not many studies that examine holistically the challenges and strategies of teachers in a specific context such as SMA Negeri 1 Srengat, which has student characteristics with diverse academic backgrounds, learning motivation, and access to learning resources. Therefore, this study has an urgency to explore the challenges faced by teachers and the strategies they use in the real reading learning process.

This study also aims to enrich insights into teaching reading from the perspective of teachers in the field, as well as filling the void of studies that not only focus on student outcomes, but also on the pedagogical processes carried out by teachers. Thus, the results of this study are expected to make a practical contribution to the development of reading learning strategies that are relevant, contextual, and applicable.

SMA Negeri 1 Srengat is one of the public high schools in Blitar Regency that has a good reputation in academic and non-academic fields. The school is implementing Merdeka Curriculum and 2013 Curriculum in stages, with the aim of improving students' competencies in critical, creative and collaborative thinking, including in English language learning. Reading learning is an important part of developing students' literacy skills in this school, especially because students are required to be able to understand various types of texts, both narrative, descriptive, explanatory, and argumentative in English.

However, based on initial observations and informal discussions with teachers, it was found that the reading teaching process at SMA Negeri 1 Srengat still faces several obstacles. These challenges include students' lack of interest in reading English texts, different levels of reading ability among students, and limited time to explore diverse learning strategies. Teachers are required to complete the curriculum materials in a limited time, while at the same time having to face a heterogeneous class in terms of ability and motivation. In supporting this process, the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Srengat said that:

> *"The ideal learning is fun for students, but the learning objectives are also achieved... Our support includes providing facilities, training, and learning communities so that teachers can continue to grow."*

This statement shows that the school is committed to creating a learning environment that supports the continuous development of teachers' learning strategies.

English teachers in this school have sufficient experience and educational background. However, they still need to adjust the learning strategies to the students' characteristics and classroom dynamics. In this context, it becomes important to explore in depth how the challenges faced by teachers in teaching reading and what strategies are used to overcome these challenges. This was explained by the Vice Principal for Curriculum who stated that:

> *"Many children do not realize the importance of achievement... we motivate them through homeroom teachers, counseling teachers, and subject teachers, including English.."*

In addition, he also added that:

> *"For children who are lacking, yes we give reinforcement in learning."*

This statement shows that the school management is aware of the challenges faced by teachers and supports improvement through a collaborative approach.

By placing the research at SMA Negeri 1 Srengat as the focus of the case study, the researcher hopes to obtain a concrete, contextual, and applicable picture of the real practice of teaching reading.

The selection of SMA Negeri 1 Srengat as the location of this study was based on several academically and contextually relevant considerations. Based on the results of preliminary studies that researchers conducted in several high schools in Blitar Regency - namely SMA Negeri 1 Srengat, SMA Negeri Garum, and SMA

Negeri 1 Ponggok - it was found that SMA Negeri 1 Srengat showed the dynamics of reading learning which were quite complex and interesting to be studied further.

First, SMA Negeri 1 Srengat has diverse student characteristics in terms of academic ability, learning motivation, and socio-economic background. This provides its own challenges for teachers in designing appropriate and contextualized reading teaching strategies, so it becomes a representative location to explore the challenges and strategies of teaching reading in depth.

Second, this school implemented Curriculum 2013 and Merdeka Curriculum in stages, which allowed researchers to see how teachers adjusted their reading teaching approaches to changes in curriculum policies. This dual curriculum implementation makes teaching practices more diverse and contextualized, which can enrich research data.

Third, SMA Negeri 1 Srengat has an institutional commitment to teacher professional development and improving the quality of learning, as evidenced by the principal and vice-principal's support for teacher training and learning communities. This support is an important factor in the sustainability of innovative and reflective reading teaching practices.

In addition, compared to the other schools reviewed in the preliminary study, SMA Negeri 1 Srengat demonstrated more varied, contextualized, and student-centered strategies for teaching reading skills. Teachers in this school do not only rely on conventional methods, but also apply approaches such as group discussions, utilization of texts relevant to students' daily lives, and project-based reading assignments that encourage deep understanding. These strategies seem to be in line with students' learning needs and show teachers' efforts in developing

active and meaningful reading skills - something that has not been found in many comparison schools such as SMA Negeri Garum and SMA Negeri 1 Ponggok. The researcher mention the phenomenom in the school in the table below:

Table 1.1 Phenomenom in school

Phenomena
1. Students' reading skills vary widely.
2. Students' interest in reading activities is low.
3. Teacher strategies vary in teaching.
4. Learning support facilities are still lacking.

Furthermore, there is also a strategy that is quite unique at SMA Negeri 1 Srengat, which is the integration of formative assessment consistently in reading activities. Teachers use student self-reflection, peer evaluation, and reading journals to monitor students' comprehension progress. This reflective and student-centered approach is not found in other comparison schools. This combination of adaptive and innovative strategies demonstrates a progressive teaching culture at SMA Negeri 1 Srengat, making it highly relevant to research in the context of reading teaching challenges, strategies and outcomes.

By considering these factors, SMA Negeri 1 Srengat was chosen as the research location because it is considered capable of providing a concrete, contextual, and relevant picture of teachers' challenges and strategies in teaching reading skills in English language learning at the high school level.

Based on the above, the main focus of this study is to explore the challenges teachers face in teaching reading skills and the strategies they apply to overcome these challenges in the context of English language learning at SMA Negeri 1 Srengat. This research is qualitative in nature with a case study approach, thus

enabling the researcher to understand the teaching experience deeply and thoroughly from the teachers' perspective.

The urgency of this research lies in the importance of identifying the real obstacles teachers face in teaching reading, as well as uncovering learning strategies that are not only effective in theory, but also contextualized and can be applied directly in the classroom. In the midst of evolving educational policies, teachers are required to be more adaptive and innovative in structuring learning, especially in reading skills which are crucial for students' academic success. However, not all teachers have access to sufficient training, resources or time to reflectively evaluate and develop their strategies.

By exploring direct practice in the field, the results of this study are expected to make a real contribution to improving the quality of English language learning, especially in terms of teaching reading. In addition, the findings of this study can also be a reference for other teachers, educational practitioners, and curriculum developers in designing teacher training or learning models that are more relevant to the needs of students and dynamic classroom conditions.

Furthermore, since there are not many studies that examine in depth the experiences of teachers in a local context such as SMA Negeri 1 Srengat, this study has novelty value and provides space for teachers' voices to be raised in academic discourse. Thus, this study not only contributes to the scientific development in the field of teaching reading, but also serves as a documentation of good practices that can be replicated and developed in other schools with similar characteristics.

1.2 Research Focus

1) How do teacher challenges manage challenges of strategies teaching reading at SMAN 1 Srengat?

2) How do teacher implement reading instructional strategies at SMAN 1 Srengat?

3) How do teacher evaluate reading instructional strategies and obtain results at SMAN 1 Srengat?

1.3 Research Objectives

1) Describe the challenges faced by teachers in teaching reading skills at SMAN 1 Srengat.

2) Describe the strategies used by teachers to overcome challenges in teach reading skills effectively at SMAN 1 Srengat.

3) Describe the evaluation methods applied by teachers in assessing students' reading skills at SMAN 1 Srengat.

1.4 Research Significance

This study has theoretical and practical significance in the field of English language teaching, especially reading skills at the secondary school level. Theoretically, this study enriches the scientific study of teaching reading in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) by revealing the challenges, strategies, and evaluations that teachers actually apply in the classroom. Practically, the results of this study show that English teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Srengat face various challenges, such as time constraints, students' low interest in reading, and lack of appropriate teaching media; however, teachers are able to respond to these challenges through adaptive and contextualized learning strategies, such as

variations in teaching methods, selection of relevant texts, and implementation of evaluations that suit students' needs. The findings provide direct benefits for teachers as reflection and reference materials in developing more effective strategies and evaluations, for schools as a basis for strengthening literacy programs and teacher training, and for policy makers as input in designing policies to improve the quality of reading instruction. In addition, this study can also serve as a foothold for future researchers to explore reading teaching practices in different contexts and approaches.

1.5 Research Scope & Limitation

This research has a certain scope and boundaries in order to stay focused on the main objectives to be achieved. The scope of this research covers the practice of teaching reading skills in English language learning at the senior high school level. The main focus of this research is to explore the challenges faced by teachers, the learning strategies used to overcome these challenges, and the evaluation methods applied in the reading teaching process.

This research was conducted on a limited basis at SMA Negeri 1 Srengat, located in Blitar Regency, East Java. The research subjects consisted of an English teacher who taught grade X and several students as additional data sources. The implementation time of this research was in the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year.

In terms of material, this study only focuses on reading skills and does not cover other English skills such as listening, speaking, or writing. In addition, the learning strategies studied in this study are limited to the strategies used by teachers in the context of classroom learning, so they do not include training outside the

classroom or extracurricular activities. This, this study is contextual and is not intended to be generalized to all schools, but rather to provide an in-depth understanding of the practice of teaching reading in the school environment that is the object of study.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

1.6.1 Teaching Reading

In this study, teaching reading refers to the process of teaching reading skills in English by teachers to students at the senior high school level. This teaching includes planning, implementing, and evaluating lessons that aim to help students understand various types of English texts in literal and inferential ways, as described by Grabe & Stoller (2011).

1.6.2 Teacher Challenge's

Teacher's challenges refer to various obstacles or constraints faced by teachers in teaching reading skills. These challenges can be both internal (such as limited strategies, student motivation, learning time) and external (such as curriculum policies and availability of learning resources), as (Harmer, 2007) and (Richards, J. C., & Farrell, 2005) suggest.

1.6.3 Teaching Strategies

Teaching strategies in the context of this study are approaches, methods, or techniques used by teachers to overcome challenges in teaching reading skills. These strategies include lesson planning, interactive reading activities, the use of scaffolding, contextual approaches, and evaluation methods, as described by (Brown, 2001) and (Palincsar, A. S., & Brown, 1984)

1.6.4 Evaluation in Teaching Reading

Evaluation in teaching reading refers to the methods or ways that teachers use to assess the extent to which students understand English reading texts. This evaluation can take the form of written tests, observations of reading activities, oral questions, or other literacy tasks, which aim to measure students' literal and critical skills, in accordance