

**READING DIFFICULTIES AND STRATEGIES BY THE EIGHT GRADE  
STUDENTS OF SMP NEGERI 08 TULANG BAWANG BARAT:  
A THINK ALOUD TECHNIQUE**

**(A Thesis)**

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**MASTER IN ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM  
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2023**

## ABSTRACT

### **READING DIFFICULTIES AND STRATEGIES BY THE EIGHT GRADE STUDENTS OF SMP NEGERI 08 TULANG BAWANG BARAT: A THINK ALOUD TECHNIQUE**

**By**  
**Ahmad Ad Dairaby**

Reading is one of language skills the junior high school students need to master. In spite the fact that students have learned reading, they find it difficult to understand English texts. The current research was to explore reading difficulties and strategies particularly encountered by the eighth grade students of SMPN 08 Tulang Bawang Barat: Based on Think Aloud Protocol Analysis.'

The current research is the descriptive qualitative research method. It particularly aimed to explore i) the differences of reading difficulties between male and female students, ii) the differences of reading strategies between male and female students. The subjects of the research were the six students, three male and three female students. The data were collected through Think Aloud Protocol and interviews.

The results showed that male and female students had difficulties in reading in terms of using context to determine word meanings. And in term of subcategories both males and females is to tried to first translate the English texts into *Bahasa Indonesia* to help them understand the texts more easily. Overall, the males and females relied more on global reading strategies than problem-solving or support strategies although they used different strategies in subcategories. However, males tended to confirm their guesses of the text, while females preferred to checking their understanding when encountering new information.

**Keywords: Reading Difficulties, Reading Strategies, Think Aloud Protocol**

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A THINK ALOUD TECHNIQUE**

**By**

**AHMAD AD DAIRABY**

**A Thesis**

**Submitted in A Partial Fullfilment of  
The Requirement for S-2 Degree**

**In**

**Language and Arts Education Departement  
Teacher Training and Education Faculty**



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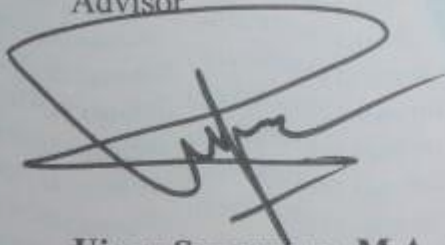
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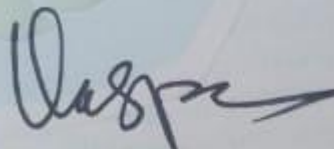
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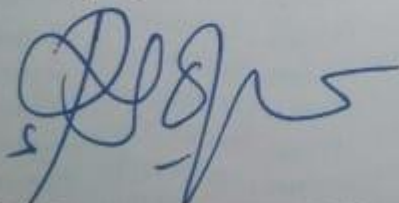
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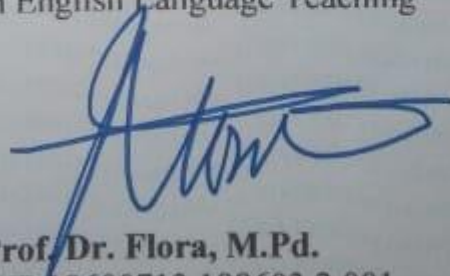
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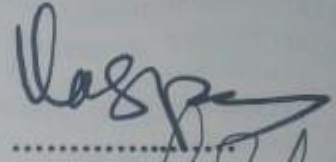
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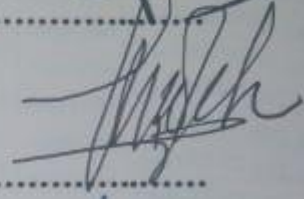
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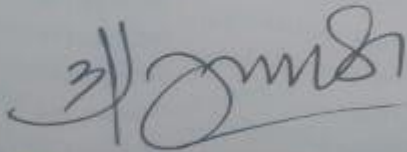
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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that:

1. The thesis entitled **“Reading Difficulties and Strategies by The Eight Grade Students of SMP Negeri 08 Tulang Bawang Barat: A Think Aloud Technique”** is my own work and i do not plagiarize or quote of other author in a way that is incosistent with academic ethics.
2. This intellectual right is entirely left to Lampung University.

Regarding this statement, if it turns out that there is untruth in the future, iam willing to bear the consequences and sanctions based on the prevaolong law.

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## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

Ahmad Ad Dairaby was born in Kalianda on September 19<sup>st</sup> 1997. Addai is the first child of three sons of Mr. Sadjarwo and Khoroni S.Pd. He has also 7-year younger brother namely Putra Munawir Asy Ari and 10-year younger brother namely Misbahul Huda.

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## **DEDICATION**

From the deepest place of my heart, this thesis is dedicated to everyone who cares and loves me. I would like to dedicate this thesis specifically to:

1. Allah SWT who always loves and keeps me everywhere and everytime.
2. My beloved parents: Mr. Sadjarwo and Ms. Khoironi who have bestowed me with loves and affections and pray for my life and success.
3. My beloved brothers: Putra Munawir Asy Ari and Misbahul Huda who always support and suggest my decision in pursuing my success.
4. All of my big families who always give me motivation and suggestion in finishing this thesis.
5. My beloved Almamater University of Lampung.



## **MOTTO**

"Empower your mind through the pages, conquer reading difficulties  
with strategies that amaze."

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Bandar Lampung, 25 May 2023  
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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the introduction of the research. It includes the background of the problem, identification of the problem, formulation of the research question, limitation of the problem, objective of the research, and use of the research.

#### **1.1 Background of the Problem**

Reading is one of the essential language skills that must be learned and developed by all language learners. By reading, students will get much knowledge, information and new ideas. The students can also improve their essential elements of English skills, such as grammar and vocabulary. Moreover, the student learn about how to know the main idea and other information in the text that can help them in their task. In reading, basically there is a process of interaction between the author with his language media and the reader with his knowledge and knowledge of the world (Sutarsyah, 2015).

According to Nunan (2003), reading is a fluent process of readers combining information from the text and their background knowledge to build meaning. It means that in reading, the students should connect the information in the text and background knowledge to get the text's comprehension. Generally, reading is a process of knowing about details in a text that includes readers' background knowledge in analyzing the information to make the reader understand what the writer wants the reader to know.

According to Sutarsyah (2015) reading is a cognitive process where a reader engages in the mental process of knowing, learning, and understanding things. This statement suggests that reading is not just a passive act of looking at the written text but an active process of engaging with and comprehending the meaning of what is being read. It highlights the importance of readers using their cognitive abilities to make sense of the text, such as making connections with prior knowledge, inferring meaning, and critically evaluating the information presented. Also, Grabe (2002) states that reading is the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret the data. From the explanation above, reading means finding the message or data and understanding the writer's importance in the text.

During the reading activity, students are expected to actively engage with the text and understand it easily. However, many students struggle with comprehending the reading material and obtain low scores on reading items because they lack knowledge of the words or sentences presented in the text. In other words, comprehension does not occur automatically but requires effort from the reader. It depends on the successful and appropriate use of several strategies: accessing prior knowledge, creating mental images, making predictions and inferences, monitoring understanding, and utilizing "fix-up" techniques when necessary.

Some reading difficulties align with the findings of the preliminary research conducted among eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 08 Mulya Kencana. The initial study revealed that most students have difficulty constructing or comprehending the meaning of English texts. This conclusion was drawn from the researcher's investigation of students at SMP N 08 Mulya Kencana to identify the challenges they face. The data were obtained through an interview with Mrs. Esti, an English teacher at SMP N 08 Mulya Kencana. The teacher indicated that students encounter problems when learning reading comprehension and appear to lack motivation in this area. Mrs. Esti noted that this could be attributed to the lack of school facilities and limited support from the students' environment. Furthermore, based on the multiple-

choice reading test conducted by the researchers among students of SMP N 8 Mulya Kencana, the average score of the students fell below the minimum passing threshold (KKM), indicating low reading skills among SMP N 08 Mulya Kencana students.

Jasmine (2020) defines reading comprehension as "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language." This definition underscores the interactive nature of reading comprehension, suggesting that readers must actively engage with the text to understand and interpret it. The term "simultaneously" indicates that this process occurs in real-time, with the reader utilizing various cognitive and linguistic skills to comprehend the text as they encounter it. Overall, this definition emphasizes the importance of both extracting and constructing meaning while reading, as well as the reader's active involvement in this process. Similarly, Hogan (2011) states that reading comprehension involves two primary processes: (a) decoding printed text and (b) understanding the language accessed through the decoding process. Hogan's definition underscores the significance of decoding and understanding in reading comprehension, indicating that readers must have a solid foundation in these areas to succeed. Additionally, this definition implies that reading comprehension is a sequential process, with decoding serving as a necessary prerequisite for understanding the language accessed through decoding.

Reading requires the reader to focus their attention on the reading materials and integrate previously acquired knowledge and skills to comprehend what the writer has written (Maibodi, 2008: 42). In brief, the reader is not only scanning the text but also actively reflecting on what they are reading, its personal significance, how it relates to other things they have read, and what they expect to encounter next. This perspective implies that someone becomes a successful reader when they actively engage and interact with the text they are reading, understanding the intended meaning of the writer and experiencing what the writer conveys. Reading is an important

language skill; however, mastering it can be challenging. Many students struggle to comprehend passages in English, reading with limited understanding.

Several factors contribute to good reading comprehension, and one of them is the use of reading strategies. According to Kuru-Gonen (2015), reading strategies are crucial in helping readers understand the text while reading. Implementing specific reading strategies allows for more efficient use of time. Additionally, Lien (2011) suggests that employing reading strategies is an effective way to address reading difficulties encountered by students when reading academic materials. This indicates that merely reading the text may not always be sufficient to fully comprehend it. Students may need to actively apply specific strategies to enhance their understanding. These strategies may include previewing the text before reading, asking questions, making predictions, and summarizing the main ideas. By employing these strategies, students can actively engage with the text, improve their comprehension, and retain the information they read. Lien's statement underscores the importance of developing and utilizing reading comprehension strategies to overcome difficulties and enhance overall reading proficiency.

This is further supported by Brantmeier (2002), who defines reading strategies as the comprehension processes that readers employ to make sense of what they read. These strategies are categorized as approaches, actions, and procedures used to improve reading comprehension. "Approaches" refer to the overall mindset or attitude a reader brings to reading, such as active engagement with the text or openness to new ideas. "Actions" refer to specific behaviors exhibited while reading, such as highlighting important information or taking notes. "Procedures" refer to systematic techniques used to comprehend and remember information, such as summarizing or synthesizing the main ideas of a text. Brantmeier's definition highlights the essential role of reading strategies in effective reading comprehension, emphasizing that readers must be intentional and

purposeful in their approach to fully understand and retain the information presented.

The role of strategy use in reading comprehension has been extensively discussed in the literature on second/foreign language reading. Gonen (2015) suggests that reading strategies are crucial in assisting learners in overcoming reading difficulties, such as inferring underlying messages in texts or dealing with unfamiliar terms and cultural references. This implies that being a strategic reader helps individuals comprehend the text and navigate reading challenges. Practical strategies yield effective results. Furthermore, according to Chan and Lau (2003), skilled readers possess the knowledge of how to use effective strategies to facilitate various cognitive processes and construct meaningful understanding of the text. In contrast, poor readers tend to read word by word without utilizing any strategies. According to the authors, skilled readers can employ effective strategies to enhance cognitive processes and develop a meaningful understanding of the text. These strategies may include making predictions, activating prior knowledge, monitoring comprehension, and adjusting reading speed based on the text's difficulty. On the other hand, poor readers may struggle with reading comprehension because they read word by word without employing any strategies. This indicates that reading strategies play a critical role in how readers approach and comprehend text, and effective strategies can significantly contribute to successful reading comprehension.

Many readers encounter comprehension problems while reading a text, but proficient readers consciously apply effective reading strategies to solve these challenges. Zhang (1992) reported that using reading strategies appropriately can greatly help non-native readers overcome language deficiencies and achieve better results on language proficiency tests. As EFL educators, it is crucial to explore how students learn to read in English and understand the problems they face in using reading strategies, in order to assist them in acquiring better strategies.

Regarding reading comprehension, according to Grabe and Stoller (2011), it is the ability to understand and appropriately interpret the information in a text. This means that reading comprehension involves reading a text, processing it, and comprehending its meaning. An individual's ability to understand text is influenced by their nature and skills, including the ability to make inferences.

Reading comprehension also contributes to the improvement of vocabulary and writing skills. Nuttal (1982) mentioned five aspects of reading comprehension that students should understand in order to comprehend a text well: determining the main idea, finding specific information, making inferences, identifying references, and understanding the meaning of words or detailed information. These aspects are considered difficulties that students encounter in comprehending texts. Overall, Nuttal's framework emphasizes the multiple cognitive processes involved in reading comprehension, suggesting that students need to be proficient in each area to comprehend a text effectively.

Additionally, Hornby and Crowther (1995) define difficulty as the state or quality of being hard to do or understand. Difficulty arises when students are confused or do not know or understand the material explained by the teacher. In this case, the difficulty lies in the students' inability to comprehend English reading texts.

To gain access to a reader's sophisticated process of reading strategy use and difficulties, thinking aloud provides a powerful means of obtaining mental and verbal data. Verbal protocol analysis can offer new insights into reading strategies, such as relating text information to prior knowledge, making predictions based on prior knowledge, experience, and text cues, questioning and rereading to clarify confusion and create mental images, and seeking further clarification from external sources regarding unknown words, facts, or understanding (Smith, 2006).

The technique of thinking aloud while reading requires readers to express their thoughts at specific intervals, making covert mental processing overt and providing direct evidence of the internal reading process performed by readers. Although the use of think-aloud protocols and verbal protocol analysis in reading research has faced criticism for potential limitations and challenges to the validity of verbal report data, researchers and instructors interested in examining and supporting learners' reading comprehension process generally agree that, when used appropriately and with care, the think-aloud technique can be one of the best means to elicit sufficient and reliable data for studying readers' metacognitive awareness and mental strategy use (Jahandar, Khodabandehlou, and Seyedi, 2012; Kucan & Beck, 1997).

Sufficient reading strategies are considered important factors contributing to successful language learning. This also includes the obstacles that students have to overcome. In this regard, many researchers have explored the differences in students' reading strategies based on their gender or reading comprehension. However, there is still a lack of research that simultaneously explores reading strategies and difficulties. Therefore, the researcher conducted a study using think-aloud protocol analysis to identify both aspects. So, based on the explanation above the researcher is intended to research “Reading Difficulties and Strategies by The Eight Grade Students of SMP Negeri 08 Tulang Bawang Barat: A Think Aloud Technique”.

## **1.2 Identification of the Problems**

Based on the background of the problem the researcher found several problems as:

- a. Students are still lack reading ability
- b. Students are still lack vocabulary
- c. Students are still lack motivation in reading
- d. Students are still lack reading practice

- e. The Teacher does not use engaging media in teaching English to improve student's motivation.

### **1.3 Limitation of the Problems**

Based on the explanation of the identification of the problem above, the limitation of this research is determined as follow:

- a. The researcher focuses on students' reading strategies
- b. The researcher focuses on students' reading ability
- c. The researcher focuses on students' reading difficulty
- d. The researcher focuses on students' gender.

### **1.4 Formulation of the Research Questions**

Based on the background of the problem the researcher found several research questions:

1. What is the difference of reading difficulites encountered by males and females?
2. What is the difference of reading strategies used by males and females?

### **1.5 Objectives of the Research**

In relation to the statement of the research question above, the objective of this research are determined as follow :

1. To investigate whether there is any difference of reading difficulites encountered by males and females
2. To investigate whether there is any difference of reading strategies used by males and females.

### **1.6 Uses of the Research**

This research be formulated as an effort of finding some uses. The used of this research are:



1. Theoretically

The result of this study can contribute useful information about reading difficulties and strategies in reading comprehension.

2. Practically

- a. Teacher

The result of this study is hoped to broaden the teacher's horizon about their knowledge in teaching English reading text. Both of these two components are important to prepare especially for reading comprehension as an essential component of second language proficiency. It is also hoped that this study may broaden the teachers' horizon about the students' individual differences, especially in their reading strategies and the alternative to solve reading problems because each student has different characteristics and problems.

- b. Students

The result of this study will be able to inform the students about the existence of reading strategies. The information is hoped to help them understand themselves by being able to recognize and develop their strategies in reading to improve their reading comprehension achievement.

3. The researcher himself

The result of this study is hoped to give valuable information and knowledge to the researcher himself in his capacity as an English teacher, a student, and also a part of society. It is also hoped that the results of this study's results may contribute to other researchers as the basis for them to do further studies.

4. Future researcher

This study gives much information about the relationship between reading strategies and reading proficiency, and how much it influences learners' reading strategies. Therefore, this study can be used a reference for future studies with similar problems or variables.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This chapter presents the theories related to the research, covering several aspects including previous research and a review of related literature. The chapter provides a review of the related literature on the concept of reading comprehension, the concept of reading difficulties, and the concept of reading strategies.

#### **2.1 Previous Related Research Findings**

Reading is the most important of the four skills that support communicative competence. Rossenbalt (1988) stated that the act of reading is an event, a transaction involving a specific reader and a particular configuration of marks on a page, occurring in a specific context and time. This transaction stimulates certain organismic states, specific emotional ranges, and verbal or symbolic connections in the linguistic reservoir. From these activated areas, selective attention, conditioned by various personal and social factors, identifies elements that synthesize or blend into what constitutes "meaning." The "meaning" does not exist ready-made in the text or the reader but emerges during the transaction between reader and text. Reading skill is crucial for success as it enables individuals to acquire new knowledge, gather information from texts, enhance their abilities, enjoy literature, and broaden their experiences.

The difference between a teacher of a target language and a native reader of that language lies in the fact that the teacher knows how the language works and can teach these rules to students within a specific timeframe. Without introducing these rules, a teacher will not have an advantage over a native

speaker of the language. Numerous strategies can help students improve their reading comprehension. One such strategy is guiding students to become active readers, allowing them to easily understand the text. Previous studies serve as important guides for the researcher in conducting this study.

For instance, in the research conducted by Habók & Magyar (2019), the results revealed that young language learners reported using reading strategies more frequently. The researchers tested their hypothesized model and confirmed its validity for each year. The findings indicated a significant effect of variables and demonstrated that attitude towards English primarily influences EFL reading strategies. Proficiency indirectly influences the use of mental processes. This statement suggests that a positive attitude towards English may be a key factor in encouraging effective reading strategies, and learners who are more proficient in the language are more likely to employ effective reading strategies. Overall, Habók and Magyar's research underscores the importance of developing and utilizing effective reading strategies to enhance reading comprehension in young language learners.

Zare and Othman (2013) found that Malaysian ESL learners can be classified as high-strategy users. The study also revealed significant differences between male and female language learners in their use of reading strategies. This study highlights the importance of identifying and addressing individual learning needs, particularly in terms of strategy use, to facilitate effective language learning. Furthermore, the use of reading strategies demonstrated a strong correlation with reading comprehension achievement. Madhumathi and Ghosh's (2012) study demonstrated that students who used problem-solving methods more frequently preferred global strategies less. The difference in strategy use was statistically significant, except for the supporting system. High-proficiency students displayed more proficient strategy use compared to middle and low-proficiency students. Overall, there was a moderate correlation between reading strategy use and reading comprehension achievement among Indian students. Gender also played a significant role, with female students

reporting higher usage of strategies compared to male students. The educational implications of these findings are discussed in terms of classroom practices in Indian society. Thus, the study identifies the reading strategy preferences of Indian ESL students and suggests remedial measures for classroom teaching.

Chung (2012) conducted a study titled "A Study of Reading Comprehension Problems in English Encountered by First-Year Students of Faculty of Vietnamese Studies at HNUE." The aim of this study was to identify the main reading comprehension problems faced by the students. The results showed that the two most significant problems encountered by the students were a limited vocabulary and the need to reread the text.

Shepherd and Selden (2009) conducted a study titled "Difficulties first-year University students have in reading their mathematics textbook." This study focused on students who struggled with correctly interpreting information from histograms and identifying the meaning of the horizontal and vertical scales. The researchers discussed the importance of being able to read and interpret histograms accurately and provided suggestions for developing this type of reasoning. While this research differed from the previous study, it also focused on students' difficulties in reading comprehension. It specifically addressed the challenges of inferring implicit information, connecting ideas in a text, and deducing word meanings from context. The study aimed to help students overcome these reading problems by addressing both metacognitive and cognitive aspects.

Finally, Mahdiah Naseri and Elaheh Zaferanieh (Corresponding author) (2012) conducted a study using the Spearman correlation coefficient, descriptive statistics, and canonical correlation analysis. The results indicated that there was a significant strong positive correlation between reading self-efficacy beliefs and reading comprehension, as well as between reading self-efficacy beliefs and the use of reading strategies. The study also found that the most frequently used reading strategy was cognitive strategy, followed by testing strategy, meta-cognitive strategy, and compensatory

strategy. Furthermore, the relationship between reading self-efficacy and reading strategies used did not differ based on gender among Iranian EFL senior and junior students.

Based on the previous research explained above, the researcher assumed that while many studies have explored differences in students' reading strategies based on gender and reading comprehension, there has been a lack of research focusing on students with reading difficulties. Therefore, the researcher took the initiative to explore students' reading strategies and difficulties, specifically examining gender differences.

## **2.2 Review of Related Literature**

In this section, the researcher aimed to elaborate on the theories related to the research. It was important for both the researcher and the reader to understand and analyze the problem deeply by recognizing the definition or meaning of the research title. The following theories were discussed in a global context.

### **2.2.1 The Concept of Reading**

In general, reading can be defined in many ways. According to Grabe and Stoller (2002), reading was a way to draw information from the printed page and interpret the data appropriately. The authors suggested that reading involved more than just decoding words and phrases but also required understanding how to extract relevant information, make connections, and draw inferences based on the text. In essence, reading was a complex process that involved both linguistic and cognitive skills, which allowed readers to comprehend and interpret the information presented in written texts. In line with the statement, Urquhart and Weir in Grabe (2009) proposed that reading was receiving and interpreting information encoded in language via print. The authors emphasized that reading involved more than just decoding words but also required the reader to engage in higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, to understand the meaning of the text fully. In other words, reading was not just a passive

activity of extracting information from the printed page but an active process that required cognitive engagement to make sense of the data presented.

In another study, Grabe (2008) pointed out that reading could also be defined as the process in which readers learned something from what they read and involved it in an academic context as a part of education. This definition emphasized that reading was not simply a mechanical process of decoding written language but rather a way to acquire new information and knowledge that could be used to enhance one's understanding of a subject or discipline. In this sense, reading was not only a tool for acquiring information but also a means of developing critical thinking skills and advancing one's education. Grabe added that reading required efficient knowledge of the world, given the topic, and an efficient knowledge of the language. He emphasized that readers needed to possess relevant background knowledge and vocabulary to understand and interpret the information presented in a text. This was particularly important in academic reading, where texts often contained specialized terminology and concepts that may be unfamiliar to the reader. In addition to linguistic and content knowledge, compelling reading also involved using reading strategies, such as skimming, scanning, and inference-making, to help readers comprehend and retain the information presented in a text. By combining knowledge of the world, language proficiency, and reading strategies, readers could develop a deep and meaningful understanding of what they read.

Additionally, Connor Trados (2014) stated, "Reading was the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among (1) the reader's existing knowledge; (2) the information suggested by the text being read; and (3) the context of the reading situation." This definition emphasized that reading was not a passive process of decoding written language but an active process involving the reader's background knowledge, experiences, and expectations. When reading, the reader had to draw on their prior knowledge and experiences to make sense of the text

while also using clues provided in the text and the situational context to construct meaning. This interaction process between the reader, text, and context was ongoing and dynamic, with the reader continually adjusting and revising their understanding of the text as they read. Overall, Trados' definition highlighted the complex and dynamic nature and the importance of situating reading within a broader social and cultural context.

Based on the definitions above, it could be assumed that first, reading was a process in which interaction between a reader and a text occurred to extract information from the printed page. Second, in extracting information, the reader needed to use their prior knowledge and relate it to the content of the text to create meaning.

According to Nuttall (1982), there were five aspects of reading comprehension that students should understand in order to comprehend a text effectively. These aspects included determining the main idea, finding specific information, making inferences, identifying references, and understanding the meaning of words. These aspects were considered as challenges that students often faced when trying to comprehend a text.

#### 1) Determining the Main Idea

The main idea is a statement that expresses the author's point about the topic of the text. It is usually found in the first sentence, but it can also be located in the middle or at the end of the passage. However, this variability in placement can make it challenging for students to identify the main idea. Students may become confused about what the main idea of a passage is and where it is located.

#### 2) Finding Specific Information (Scanning)

Finding specific information requires students to locate detailed information or ideas mentioned in the text. Sometimes, it can be difficult for students to discern between important and unimportant information within the text, especially when searching for specific details such as names, dates, words or phrases, and references.

### 3) Making Inference

Making inferences involves understanding the text and drawing conclusions based on the information provided. Students are expected to comprehend the text in order to determine the implied meaning or reach a conclusion based on the given statements.

### 4) Identifying Reference

References refer to the relationship between a pronoun and another grammatical unit, typically a noun or noun phrase. In identifying references, students need to understand pronouns used in sentences to represent people, places, or situations. For example, in a text with the sentence "The boys in class 7 go outside to play football. They play in the school hall," if the question asks "What does 'they' refer to?", students should identify the noun or noun phrase that 'they' is referring to.

### 5) Understanding the Meaning of the Word

Understanding the meaning of words requires students to interpret the meanings of unfamiliar or difficult words in the context of the text. By comprehending the overall meaning of the sentence or passage, students can determine the appropriate meaning of the word. It is beneficial for students to be taught unfamiliar vocabulary related to the text before reading it, as it helps them better understand the material.

## **2.2.2 The Concept of Reading Difficulties**

To Lovett (2000), reading difficulties are characterized by an individual's inability to develop rapid, context-free word identification skills. The causes of reading difficulties in today's adolescents and adults can be traced back to issues that may have been neglected or avoided during their childhood. Reading habits and the use of digital equipment can also impact reading abilities.



According to Joseph (2001), when students struggle to understand and derive meaning from text, explicit instruction on comprehension must be provided. Difficulties in understanding text can arise from a lack of knowledge regarding word meanings or concepts, failure to capture factual information, inability to make inferences about content, and difficulty in establishing relationships among the information presented in the text. Consequently, students may encounter challenges in understanding the meanings of words or concepts and inferring information.

Joseph (2001) further states that less-skilled comprehenders often struggle with making inferences from the text. These difficulties encompass various aspects, including:

- a) Difficulty in identifying implicit information: This challenge is closely tied to students' ability to comprehend and interpret figurative language, such as metaphors, similes, and symbolism. It also requires a solid understanding of language nuances, including connotations, tone, and mood.
- b) Difficulty in making connections between ideas: This difficulty often stems from students' understanding of text structure and organization, including how different parts of a text are interconnected and how information is presented. It also necessitates the ability to identify and analyze relationships between ideas, such as cause-and-effect or compare-and-contrast relationships.
- c) Difficulty in using context to determine word meanings: This challenge relates to students' vocabulary knowledge and their ability to utilize contextual clues to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words. It also requires an understanding of how words can have multiple meanings and how word choice impacts the overall meaning of a text. These difficulties can impede overall comprehension and make it more challenging for readers to fully understand and engage with the text.

Joseph's work emphasizes the importance of developing strong inference-making skills for adequate reading comprehension. These studies shed light on the difficulties encountered in reading comprehension.

Wilawan (2012) found that determining the explicit main idea is not a problematic reading task for many people since they can locate the main points of a text at specific locations within paragraphs (such as the first, second, or last sentence). However, determining the implied main idea, which requires readers to infer the underlying structure of the text, can be a difficult task for students. Comprehending the implied main idea is much more complex and can pose challenges for most readers. As noted earlier, main idea comprehension is a difficult task that involves the simultaneous application of bottom-up and top-down processing.

Determining the main idea of a text is widely recognized as one of the most challenging tasks in reading comprehension. It is a complex process that requires the application of various reading strategies. Asya supports this notion by highlighting that students often face difficulties in comprehension, particularly when it comes to identifying main ideas and essential details. Typically, the main idea is conveyed through topic sentences, often found at the beginning of paragraphs. It is relatively easier to identify the main idea when it is presented in the first or last sentence of a paragraph, while it becomes more challenging when it is placed in the middle or when it is inferred rather than explicitly stated.

According to Kate (2004), making inferences is an integral part of understanding language. In order to grasp the intended message beyond what is explicitly stated in the text or discourse, readers often need to draw assumptions and make inferences. Even seemingly straightforward texts require readers to draw these inferences to fully comprehend the content. Therefore, readers must first consider the main idea of the text, as it is crucial, and then proceed to make inferences based on the information presented.

Spivey (2011) demonstrates that most texts have a sentence within a paragraph or passage that explicitly states the author's message or main idea. The main idea can appear at the beginning, middle, or end of a paragraph or passage. As students progress to higher grades, identifying the main idea becomes more challenging, as it may be explicitly stated or implied through an evaluation of the details provided. Sometimes, the sentences in the text may contain excessive details, making it difficult to pinpoint a single main idea, while in other cases, there may be insufficient information to establish a clear message. The main idea serves to help readers recall important details and better understand the points the writer intends to convey. Recognizing the relationship between the main idea and the supporting details enhances comprehension.

The researcher believes that understanding the main idea of a paragraph or section of text is crucial for comprehension, as it provides vital information about the overall concept being communicated. Typically, a paragraph will have a main idea that is either explicitly stated in general sentences or hinted at through several specific sentences. When students struggle with comprehension, it is often because they face challenges in making inferences based on the main idea. Therefore, if students fail to grasp the implicit information, including the main idea, they may encounter difficulties in reading various books, especially those involving reading comprehension.

### **2.2.3 The Concept of Reading Strategies**

Different researchers hold different opinions on the definitions of reading strategies. According to Li (2010), reading strategies refer to deliberate, conscious techniques that readers employ to enhance their comprehension or retention of textual information. According to Li, reading strategies encompass a set of cognitive skills and behaviors that enable readers to actively engage with a text, monitor their understanding, and make necessary adjustments. These strategies can include a wide range of techniques, such as previewing, predicting, questioning, summarizing, and

visualizing. By utilizing these strategies, readers can improve their comprehension and retention of the text, as well as their ability to apply what they have learned in other contexts. Overall, the use of reading strategies is an essential component of effective reading, especially in academic or complex reading contexts.

Brantmeier (2002) also asserts that reading strategies encompass the comprehension processes that readers employ to understand what they read. In summary, Brantmeier emphasizes the crucial role of reading strategies in comprehending written material. Readers utilize these strategies to make sense of the text, thereby enhancing their ability to understand and retain information. Effective reading strategies include making connections between the text and one's prior knowledge, visualizing information, asking questions, and summarizing the main points. By employing these strategies, readers can understand and retain information more efficiently and effectively.

Additionally, according to Amirian (2013), reading strategies demonstrate how readers approach a task, make sense of what they read, and respond when faced with difficulties. Amirian highlights that reading strategies are not only essential for comprehension but also reveal readers' cognitive processes in interpreting the text and overcoming comprehension obstacles. When readers utilize reading strategies, they can monitor their understanding and adjust their approach accordingly. Effective reading strategies include predicting, questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and evaluating. By employing these strategies, readers can enhance their comprehension and develop a deeper understanding of the material. In essence, reading strategies serve as a roadmap for readers to navigate the text and extract meaning from it.

Even though the definitions of reading strategies may vary, it can be assumed that reading strategies are actions readers employ to comprehend the text. Reading strategies play a crucial role in improving reading comprehension and overcoming difficulties. Lien (2011) states that learners

who struggle with reading comprehension may experience frustration and lack motivation for further learning. Reading strategies are essential in helping learners overcome difficulties such as understanding the underlying messages in texts, dealing with unfamiliar terms, and unfamiliar cultural content. Being a strategic reader enables readers to comprehend the text and address reading challenges. Boonkongaen (2014) also asserts that EFL instructors have the responsibility to provide reading strategy instruction to help learners become more strategic readers. In order to assist learners in effective reading, EFL instructors need to identify learners' existing reading strategies and areas where they may require further development. Bolukbas (2013) emphasizes the importance of knowing when and how to use reading strategies effectively. Readers should have a clear understanding of their reading purpose, the demands of the reading task, and their strengths and weaknesses as readers. This allows them to select and employ appropriate strategies that align with the text and their individual needs. The effective use of reading strategies requires flexibility, adaptability, and constant monitoring of understanding. In essence, successful utilization of reading strategies combines knowledge, metacognitive awareness, and strategic flexibility.

The strong relationship between learners' reading strategies and reading comprehension underscores the critical role of strategies in language learning, particularly in reading skills. Research suggests that learners who frequently use reading strategies demonstrate better comprehension. This implies that the use of reading strategies is a factor that can enhance reading comprehension. Therefore, it is essential to train learners to use appropriate strategies and encourage their frequent application. Chen and Intaraprasert (2014) further note that students may employ different reading strategies when dealing with content reading. Utilizing a variety of reading strategies helps learners address reading difficulties. For example, they may use multiple strategies when encountering challenging texts to overcome difficulties.

Bolukbas (2013) provides helpful tips on improving reading comprehension. These strategies include reading the first sentence of each paragraph, using a dictionary for unfamiliar words, taking notes, highlighting important parts, looking for clues such as bold or italicized words, and using context to deduce the meaning of unknown words. Based on his theory and examples, the researcher suggests specific reading strategies that readers can employ to enhance comprehension. For instance, scanning the first sentence of each paragraph, as it often summarizes the main idea or topic, can be an effective strategy. Using dictionaries for unfamiliar words that cannot be inferred from context is another recommended approach. Taking notes while reading helps readers remember important information and identify key points. Highlighting keywords or phrases, searching for other clues like bold or italicized words, and using context to guess the meaning of unknown words are also effective strategies. Ultimately, readers should utilize a variety of techniques that work best for them and the material they are reading, while remaining flexible in their approach.

In this regard, Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) have stated that there is a difference between proficient readers and struggling readers in terms of their reported reading strategies, use of strategies, and awareness of strategies. It has been found that proficient readers are conscious of what they are reading and why they are reading it. They employ plans and strategies to monitor their understanding and overcome reading challenges. Based on this, it can be inferred that there is a significant disparity between proficient and struggling readers in their utilization of reading strategies. Proficient readers have a heightened awareness of the strategies they employ while reading, as well as a deeper understanding of the content and purpose of their reading. They are more likely to utilize plans and strategies to monitor their comprehension and address difficulties. This highlights the importance of teaching and promoting effective reading strategies, as they can greatly enhance readers' comprehension and retention abilities. Additionally, this research underscores the need for educators to assess and

address their students' reading strategies, as it can have a substantial impact on their academic success and future endeavors.

According to Nezami's research in 2012, skilled readers are capable of employing useful techniques to enhance their cognitive processes and make sense of the text. These techniques include determining word meanings in context, skimming or scanning the text, making predictions, summarizing, evaluating information, self-questioning, making connections between ideas, creating mental images, and monitoring their understanding as they read. On the other hand, poor readers tend to read word by word without utilizing any strategies. From this statement, it can be inferred that the researcher highlights how skilled readers possess a repertoire of effective strategies that enable them to construct a meaningful understanding of the text. These strategies encompass understanding vocabulary in context, skimming, scanning, predicting, summarizing, evaluating, self-questioning, making connections, visualizing, and monitoring. Conversely, poor readers tend to read word by word without employing these strategies. The research emphasizes the importance of teaching and promoting effective reading strategies, as they can significantly improve readers' comprehension and retention abilities. By utilizing a range of strategies, readers can become more efficient and effective in understanding and retaining information, thus positively impacting their academic success and beyond.

Meanwhile, Chan and Lau (2003) investigated the differences in reading strategies between struggling readers and proficient readers. The findings indicated that struggling readers were less proficient than proficient readers in various areas, such as identifying main ideas, decoding unfamiliar words, recognizing text structures, summarizing main ideas, detecting errors, and inferring implicit meanings in Chinese texts. From this observation, it is evident that struggling readers exhibit lower proficiency compared to proficient readers in different aspects, including identifying important information, understanding new words, recognizing text organization, summarizing main points, identifying errors, and comprehending implicit

meanings in Chinese texts. This underscores the importance of teaching and promoting effective reading strategies, particularly for those who face difficulties in reading. Educators can support students in developing the skills and strategies necessary to become proficient readers by providing explicit instruction and guidance in these areas. The research also emphasizes the significance of early intervention and support for struggling readers, as this can prevent reading difficulties from escalating over time and having a more pervasive impact.

Furthermore, Tzu-Ching and Chia-Li (2015) have also noted that males and females are believed to employ different reading strategies. Several researchers investigating the use of reading strategies with regard to gender have supported this assumption, indicating a distinction between males and females. The findings of these studies have shown that female EFL learners tend to be more active in their utilization of reading strategies compared to their male counterparts.

The types of reading strategies examined in this study are classified within the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS), as proposed by Mohktary and Sheory (2002). The SORS categorizes reading strategies into three types: global reading strategies (GRS), problem-solving strategies (PSS), and support reading strategies (SRS). The SORS was chosen for the present study as it aims to investigate readers' perceived use of reading strategies when reading English text.

#### 1) Global Reading Strategies (GRS)

Global strategies encompass the techniques learners employ to manage their reading and comprehension. These strategies are purposeful and well-planned. They include establishing a specific purpose for reading, previewing the text to grasp its length and organization, and utilizing aids like tables and figures to enhance comprehension. The Global Reading Strategies (GRS) framework consists of 13 specific strategies that assist readers in analyzing the text as a whole. These strategies involve



intentional reading approaches aimed at setting the foundation for effective reading.

## 2) Problem-solving Reading Strategies (PSS)

Problem-solving strategies involve employing specific techniques when encountering complex sections of a text. PSS entail readers' actions and procedures while directly engaging with the text. These strategies are employed in localized and focused ways to address difficulties in understanding textual information. The PSS framework comprises eight items that offer strategies for resolving problems that arise when reading becomes challenging. These strategies provide readers with action plans to navigate through difficulties skillfully.

## 3) Support Reading Strategies (SRS)

Support strategies involve utilizing devices and techniques to comprehend a text. SRS consists of nine items and primarily revolves around employing external reference materials (such as dictionaries), taking notes, underlining or highlighting information, and other practical strategies. These strategies serve as support mechanisms aimed at enhancing reading comprehension and response.

### **2.2.4 Think-Aloud Protocol Analysis**

According to Ericsson and Simon (1998), Think-Aloud Protocol Analysis is defined as "the act of identifying circumstances where individuals can verbalize their thoughts without any, or minimal, reactive influences on their thinking." It is a process aimed at understanding problem-solving and is particularly relevant in studying the qualitative thought processes involved in reading comprehension. While the quantitative measurement of reading comprehension, such as counting the number of comprehension questions answered correctly, is straightforward, understanding the qualitative thought processes requires a qualitative approach.

Reading comprehension success, often considered a word-solving success (Hosenfeld, 1977), involves the wandering and rapid thoughts that occur in readers' minds, as well as the search for meaning (Block, 1986:463). While aspects like the frequency of strategy use can be quantitatively measured, understanding which methods are used and how they are employed necessitates a qualitative examination of the complex comprehension processes.

Additionally, Guss (2018) highlights that verbalizations obtained through think-aloud tasks can be valuable in assessing sensitive topics prone to bias and social desirability. By encouraging participants to verbalize their thought processes during tasks, researchers can gain insights into information processing, decision-making, and potential sources of bias or cultural influence. This approach is particularly valuable in social psychology research involving sensitive topics like race, gender, and sexuality.

Based on expert explanations, the think-aloud protocol analysis involves asking participants to verbalize their thoughts and actions while engaging in a reading task. This method allows researchers to examine the cognitive processes underlying the reading task and identify the strategies students employ to comprehend the text. One of the main advantages of using the think-aloud protocol analysis to investigate students' reading strategies and difficulties is its ability to provide real-time insight into the specific cognitive processes involved in reading comprehension. Researchers can use this information to identify reading strategies and difficulties encountered by students.

Furthermore, think-aloud protocol analysis offers a more comprehensive understanding of the reading process compared to self-report or observation. By capturing participants' thoughts and actions in real time, researchers can gather rich data on their thought processes and actions during reading, enabling identification of specific reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, and inference-making. It also allows researchers to identify

difficulties students face, such as vocabulary, syntax, or discourse coherence issues.

Overall, think-aloud protocol analysis is an effective method for investigating students' reading strategies and difficulties. It provides rich data on the cognitive processes underlying reading comprehension, which can be used to develop interventions and instructional strategies tailored to individual students' needs and improve our understanding of the reading process as a whole.

As a researcher who conducted a thesis on identifying students' reading difficulties and strategies, think-aloud protocol analysis proved to be a powerful tool for gaining insights into students' reading processes. This approach involved asking students to read a text aloud and verbalize their thoughts while they read, without any interruption or assistance from the researcher. To effectively utilize think-aloud protocol analysis, I followed previous expert explanations.

Firstly, I selected a text that was appropriate for the students' reading level and aligned with their interests. Next, I explained the process to the students, emphasizing the importance of verbalizing their thoughts and reactions while reading. This step was crucial for uncovering the students' mental strategies and identifying areas of difficulty.

After the reading sessions, I carefully analyzed the recorded protocols, paying attention to any patterns in the students' verbalizations. These patterns revealed struggles with specific vocabulary or sentence structures, providing valuable insights into areas where students encountered difficulties. Based on these insights, I developed targeted interventions aimed at improving the students' reading skills.

Overall, think-aloud protocol analysis offered a comprehensive understanding of the students' reading processes, enabling me to identify areas of difficulty and design effective interventions to enhance their reading skills.

### **2.3 Theoretical Assumption**

Based on the literature review and the researcher's predictions, it was theoretically plausible to assume that there were gender-based differences in how individuals engaged in reading strategies and encountered difficulties. These differences could have been rooted in various factors such as socialization, culture, and biology. The think-aloud protocol analysis could have provided valuable insights into how these differences manifested in the cognitive processes of male and female readers. Males and females may have approached reading tasks differently, utilizing unique strategies and tactics to overcome challenges in comprehension and retention. Additionally, it was conceivable that the gender-based differences in reading may have extended beyond the individual level to influence broader social and cultural literacy development and attainment patterns. Understanding these differences could have had implications for educational policy and practice and could have informed interventions to promote more equitable access to literacy skills and opportunities. Overall, this research had the potential to contribute significantly to our understanding of gender-based differences in reading and could have provided valuable insights into how to support more effective literacy instruction for all learners.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

This chapter presented the method used in this study, including the research design, subject of research, screening the sample, data source, instrument, trustworthiness, procedure, data collecting technique, and data analysis.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study aimed to probe and distinguish the reading process carried out by students. It examined what happened to compendiums or reading learners of different genders when they understood an English textbook. Specifically, it looked at the reading difficulties students faced and explained the factors that made students fail to understand English textbooks. This study also aimed to describe the strategies they used when facing challenges. Some hypotheses suggested that researchers anticipated difficulties in certain areas, as expressed in previous chapters. Former studies and the foreknowledge of researchers supported this notion. Thus, this research was descriptive qualitative because it wasn't aimed to have treatment or manipulation of the subject under investigation. This looked close to the intensity of the problems mentioned. The researcher's part was restricted to taking notations from supposing through protocol analysis and interviews and forming some interpretations. This approach could be seen from the research's main objects and data collection techniques.

Based on the nature of descriptive research, this study didn't use hypotheses as impermanent answers to research questions as applied in the quantitative approach. The theories in this study weren't used to construct verified hypotheses based on empirical data. They were applied as a base used by

researchers to approach and help understand reading problems and student strategies. They were also used to explain several methodologies of analyzing language learning phenomena and explain the analysis results.

The way of data interpretation characterized research to get meaning from phenomena and eventually reached conclusions. This was done inductively, meaning that conclusions were drawn based on the data from students and educators. The researcher did not look for data or validation to prove or discredit the thesis he held before entering the study. Rather, abstractions were constructed as specific things that had been gathered and grouped (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). From different pieces of substantiation, the researcher built some abstractions of reading problems and strategies that did in the subject.

Likewise, the nature of this research was also in line with the characteristics of qualitative research portrayed by Bogdan and Biklen (2007). There were five characteristics of qualitative research: (1) Qualitative research had a factual setting as a direct data source, and the researcher was the crucial instrument, (2) Qualitative research was descriptive, (3) Qualitative researchers were more concerned with process than process, only with results or products, (4) qualitative researchers tended to analyze their data inductively, and (5) "meaning" was an essential concern in qualitative approaches.

Researchers used this type of descriptive research because this research was suitable to give a clear and comprehensive picture of one social situation to another or from one time to another or could find patterns of connections between certain parts and other aspects. Moreover, it could discover hypotheses and theories. Thus, this approach used a qualitative approach by using a descriptive method to match the empirical reality with the applied theory.

With this approach, researchers conducted research with a natural background or in agreement with the context. A qualitative approach was used to reveal the descriptive and instructional power of what they did and what endured toward the study's focus. Moleong (2008) identified several characteristics of qualitative research. These included the scientific and human aspects of the research process, the use of qualitative methods, inductive data analysis, and a focus on description rather than results. Additionally, qualitative research involved establishing criteria for data validity, employing an interim research design, and negotiating and mutually agreeing upon research results. In the researcher's assumption, he highlighted the key characteristics of qualitative research. Qualitative research was considered scientific, but it relied on human beings as instruments for data collection and analysis. It used qualitative methods, which focused on inductive data analysis to generate new insights and understanding of a particular phenomenon. Descriptive in nature, qualitative research was often more concerned with the research process rather than the results. It was focused, with clearly defined research questions and objectives. Qualitative research also had criteria for data validity, which ensured the reliability and credibility of the research findings. Interim research design allowed research process flexibility to adjust the research approach as needed during the study. Finally, the research results were negotiated and mutually agreed upon, acknowledging the subjective nature of qualitative research and the importance of multiple perspectives. These characteristics distinguished qualitative research from other research methodologies and provided a framework for conducting rigorous and meaningful research.

### **3.2 Subject of Research**

There was one class in the subjects of this study. The class was in the eighth grade during the second semester. The research used one class as the sample for the research, which was VIII D. This was because, based on the interviews conducted during the preliminary investigation, it was found that

most students in this class were still confused about reading strategies and had low scores in reading. In short, the subjects of the research were the students in VIII D, consisting of 38 students.

### **3.3 Screening the Sample**

Since the research was aimed at understanding the students' thoughts through verbalizing their thoughts, the researcher needed participants who were expressive and able to verbalize their opinions during the reading comprehension activity. This meant that only expressive students could be used as the participants of the study. The researcher conducted a trial run by using think-aloud protocol analysis for the VIII D class students. Then the researcher selected students who were categorized as expressive individuals. They served as the samples for this research.

### **3.4 Data Source**

According to Lofland and Lofland (1984), the primary data source in qualitative research was words and actions, and other things were considered additional data. So basically, in the researcher's assumption, they stated that the primary data source in qualitative research was words and actions. Qualitative research was concerned with understanding human behavior, beliefs, and experiences and therefore relied on data that captured the richness and complexity of human communication and action. While other forms of data, such as physical artifacts, images, or quantitative data, could provide additional insights and context, they were considered secondary to the words and actions of the studied individuals. By focusing on words and actions, qualitative researchers could gain a deeper understanding of individuals' subjective experiences and perspectives, and explore the nuances and complexities of human behavior in context. In this study, the data source was students of VIII D in the eighth grade of SMP Negeri 8 Mulya Kencana.



### **3.5 Research Instrument**

In the research instrument, the researcher used three techniques: think-aloud protocol analysis, testing, and interviewing. The most important activities in conducting this research were to obtain and collect the necessary data. The researcher applied some appropriate research instruments for this purpose. These were ways to collect the data, including questionnaires, tests, and interviews. In this study, the researcher collected the data by employing several instruments, namely think-aloud protocol analysis, interviews, and reading tests.

#### **3.5.1 Think-aloud protocol analysis**

To determine whether male participants or their female counterparts used more reading strategies and encountered more difficulties, the think-aloud technique was chosen as another instrument for this study. A Think-aloud protocol known as verbal protocol analysis was employed as a qualitative research method to explore the subjects' mental processes, particularly the sequence of their cognitive events (Hannu & Pallab, 2002). This protocol is based on the assumption that when individuals verbalize their thoughts while performing specific tasks under investigation, it does not interfere with the sequence of their ideas and therefore can be considered valid data on their thinking (Ericsson & Simon, 1984).

Based on previous explanations from experts, several strong points of the Think Aloud Protocol analysis emerged. First, the Think Aloud Protocol analysis provided direct access to participants' thought processes, allowing researchers to gain insight into their cognitive processes by directly observing and analyzing their verbalizations. Second, the analysis allowed for an in-depth examination of cognitive processes, enabling researchers to understand the cognitive strategies used to complete a task and identify patterns or commonalities in how individuals approached a task.

Third, Think Aloud Protocol analysis could uncover unanticipated cognitive processes that other methods would not have identified, leading to new

insights and discoveries about how individuals approach tasks. Fourth, the technique could evaluate user experiences with products or services, such as websites or software applications, by observing how users interacted with these products and analyzing their verbalizations. This could help researchers identify usability issues and areas for improvement.

Furthermore, the researcher analyzed the students' reading ability based on the accuracy of their answers. The researcher requested the students to determine the main idea from the story they had read. In assessing the students' performance, the author defined the scoring criteria in the transcribed think-aloud protocol analysis. The writer employed the Likert scale for score ratings. According to Sugiyono (2008), the Likert scale measures attitudes, opinions, community or group perceptions about social phenomena. The scoring scale for students' reading ability was as follows:

**Table 3.1**

**Scale of Students' Reading Ability**

No	Category	Score
1	Very high Accuracy	4
2	High Accuracy	3
3	Moderate Accuracy	2
4	Low Accuracy	1
5	Very Low Accuracy	0

In this study, think-aloud was measured from students to obtain numerical data of their reading ability. In this research, a Likert scale measured the accuracy of the main idea students answered, and each answer had a five-score scale ranging from 0 to 4. The students were expected to determine the main idea of the story as accurately as possible. The Likert score had five categories: 'Very high accuracy (VHA)', which indicated an almost accurate representation of the main idea by students, 'High accuracy (HA)', which indicated a mostly accurate representation, 'Moderate accuracy (MA)', which indicated a representation that was half accurate, 'Low

accuracy (LA)', which indicated a mostly inaccurate representation, and 'Very low accuracy (VLA)', which indicated an almost entirely inaccurate representation.

### **3.5.2 Interview**

According to Sugiyono, the interview was a data collection technique when researchers wanted to conduct a study to find the problem that needed to be researched. It was also used when the researcher wanted to learn more in-depth information from the respondents, despite having a small number of participants. Semi-structured interviews were utilized by the researcher to gather data from eighth-grade students at SMP N 08 Mulya Kencana regarding their reading strategies and difficulties. They aimed to investigate the reading strategies employed by the students and the difficulties they encountered. Moreover, interviews were used to supplement the analysis of the think-aloud protocol results.

The interviews were conducted to evaluate the students' reading strategies and difficulties. The questionnaire for reading strategies comprised thirteen items related to Global Reading Strategies (GRS), eight items related to Problem-solving Reading Strategies (PSS), and nine items related to Support Reading Strategies (SRS). Students' responses were scored using a Likert scale. A score of "1" indicated that the student never or almost never used the strategy, while a score of "5" indicated that the student always or almost always utilized it.

Six students from SMP N 08 Mulya Kencana were interviewed using a semi-structured approach to assist them in understanding the questions. The interviews' transcript can be found in the appendix. The researchers subsequently entered the results into a table for analysis. Additionally, the interview included questions about the students' reading difficulties. The questionnaire consisted of five items related to identifying implicit information (IMT), five items associated with making connections between ideas (MIT), and five items associated with using context to determine word

meanings (IMC). Once again, a Likert scale was employed to score the students' responses, where a score of "1" indicated that the task was very difficult, and a score of "5" indicated that it was very easy.

### **3.5.3 Test**

According to Fraenkel, the device researchers used to collect data, such as a pencil and paper test, a questionnaire, or a rating scale, was called an instrument. He believed that a test was a useful tool for teachers to evaluate student levels and indicate their performance level. So, that test was beneficial to the teacher's understanding of the students' levels. However, in this study, researchers did not see the level of students. The tests given to students aimed to assess their understanding of the most challenging aspect.

## **3.6 Data Collecting Technique**

The most important activity in conducting this research was to obtain and gather the necessary data. To achieve this, the researcher applied appropriate research instruments. Those were ways to collect the data; they were a questionnaire, test, and interview. In this study, the researcher collected the data using several instruments, namely think aloud protocol analysis, interview, and reading test.

### **3.6.1 Think-aloud protocols analysis**

After the test was given to the student, the researcher used think-aloud protocol analysis to determine the student's reading strategies, difficulties, and abilities. The research instrument involving think-aloud tasks required the researcher to understand the exact nature of the think-aloud technique and its limitations. There were steps the researchers had to go through in the data collection.

First, before giving students the actual think-aloud protocol analysis, the researcher gave students directions about what they had to do in the think-aloud protocol analysis. In this step, the researcher showed the students the narrative text that they had to read. There were a few narrative texts that the

researcher gave to the students. The reason the researcher did this was to introduce the students to these narrative texts.

Second, the researcher instructed the participants to report their thoughts while reading, providing "concurrent" or "on-line" verbal reports. They were explicitly instructed to verbalize all thoughts that occurred to them after completing a given task, such as reading a text, repeatedly until they fully understood the text. The directions given before the practice run were repeated for the actual think-aloud task. The researcher should have asked whether the rules were clear to the participants before the solid think-aloud process started. The goal was to reduce disruptions that could have distorted the research process, whether caused by the researcher or the participants themselves. This direction was repeated in their first language to ensure the students understood what they should do in this research.

Third, the students did a few think-aloud practice runs using a few narrative texts. The students did not have to finish reading the entire passage; some only needed to rehearse three or four paragraphs, while others required more to achieve an appropriate level of think-aloud performance. The students had to verbalize all the thoughts they got from the text, including determining the main idea, finding specific information (scanning), making inferences, identifying references, and understanding the meaning of words while reading. Afterward, the students discussed their difficulties in reading comprehension and how they overcame them.

Fourth, after completing the practice run, the students performed the actual think-aloud protocol analysis. The researcher provided the students with different narrative texts from the practice run. This step was almost the same as the few think-aloud practice runs. The researcher gave the students ten minutes to read the narrative text, and they ensured that the narrative text was suitable for the students beforehand.

Finally, after the student read and understood the narrative text, the researcher asked the student to explain verbally while the researcher

recorded their voice. During the data collection process, if a participant's think-alouds or responses did not provide insight into their thought processes, the researcher asked for clarification to encourage the participant to provide more detailed reports. The researcher demonstrated their attentiveness by using appropriate expressions. When the participant was ready, they started talking into the tape or thinking aloud about the thoughts entering their mind. To ensure that the tape recorder worked properly, the researcher had to test the recording machine before the data collection started.

### 3.6.2 Interview

After conducting think-aloud protocol analysis with the students, the researcher administered interviews to the students. The researcher conducted two interviews to assess their reading strategies and difficulties. Firstly, in order to gather information about the students' reading strategies, a survey of reading strategy interviews for adolescents and adults by Mohktari and Sheorey (2002) was distributed. The interview consisted of 30 items, with 3 items for each group of reading strategies: (1) Global reading strategies, (2) Problem-Solving reading strategies, and (3) Support reading strategies. Each item of the interview was translated into Bahasa Indonesia.

**Table 3.2**  
**Reading Strategy Interview Blue Print.**

Reading Strategy	Numbers of item	Description
<b>Global reading strategies</b>	1.3.4.6.8.12.15.17 .20.21.23.24.27.	Global reading strategies involved planning how to read and managing comprehension.
<b>Problem solving strategies</b>	7.9.11.14.16.19.2 5.28	Problem-solving reading strategies involved using strategies when reading difficult part of the text.
<b>Support reading strategies</b>	2.5.10.13.18.22.2 6.29.30.	Support reading strategies involved using devices and technique to under standar text.

Next, the researcher identified students' reading difficulties by conducting interviews with the students using a set of fifteen items designed to assess their reading challenges. The students were given interviews to answer all of the statements and questions. It was clear, as shown in the following table.

**Table 3.3**  
**Reading Difficulties Interview Blue Print.**

<b>Difficulties</b>	<b>Item Numbers</b>	<b>Total</b>
Using Context to Determine Word Meanings	1, 2, 3, 4,5	5
Identifying Implicit Information	6,7,8,9,10	5
Making Connections Between Ideas	11,12,13,14,15	5

Furthermore, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the students. Semi-structured interviews were often open-ended, allowing flexibility. Asking set questions in a set order facilitated easy comparison between students, but it could be limiting. Having less structure helped in observing patterns while still allowing for comparison between students. To ensure the validity of the research questions, the researcher sought assistance from their advisor and examined them together.

### **3.6.3 Test**

Before analyzing the think-aloud protocol, the researcher gave the student a test. The form of the student test answered the multiple-choice questions provided by the researcher. The test of this research was adapted from the reading aspect by Nuttal (1986). In this research, the researcher used the test only to elicit the data, not to measure the student's level. Researchers assessed the skills of students by analyzing how many of them could answer the most difficult questions related to the existing skillset.

The researcher created a blueprint according to the reading comprehension material that students learned in class. The test questions contained five skills that were included in the reading comprehension section and were

completed by the respondent. Below, the researcher provided a blueprint table.

**Table 3.5**  
**Blue Print of Reading Test**

No	Indicator	Questions	items
1	Students get difficulties in determining main idea	1, 20	2
2	Students get difficulties in finding the specific information.	3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14	8
3	Students get difficulties in making inference.	10, 11, 16,	3
4	Students get difficulties in identifying reference	18	1
5	Students get difficulties in understanding the meaning of word.	2, 5, 9, 15, 17, 19	6
<b>Total</b>			20

### 3.7 Technique of Data Analysis

In this study, data analysis meant systematically searching and compiling interview transcripts and thinking hard protocol analysis with students and other data collected during data collection. This data analysis was carried out to understand the data and enable the researcher to present the research results to the readers. The analysis involved, as Bogdan and Biklen (2007) explained, working with data, organizing it, breaking it down into manageable units, coding it, synthesizing it, and looking for patterns. Interpretation involved explaining and framing ideas in terms of theory, other scholarship, and action, as well as showing why findings were significant and making them understandable.

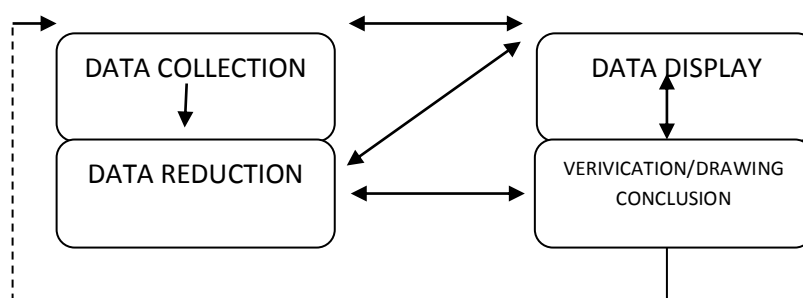
As with the nature of the study, data analysis was carried out using the procedure suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984). The procedure included three stages: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions/data verification. This analysis procedure took place interactively and was carried out simultaneously with data collection or after



data had been collected. That is, data analysis took place simultaneously for the three procedures from data collection to writing research reports.

In this study, as already mentioned, data was collected through the analysis of thinking protocols, interviews, and tests. The data generated from these instruments was initially called the raw data collection process. This raw data was analyzed through the three procedures described by Miles and Huberman (1984), and the procedures are illustrated in Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2.

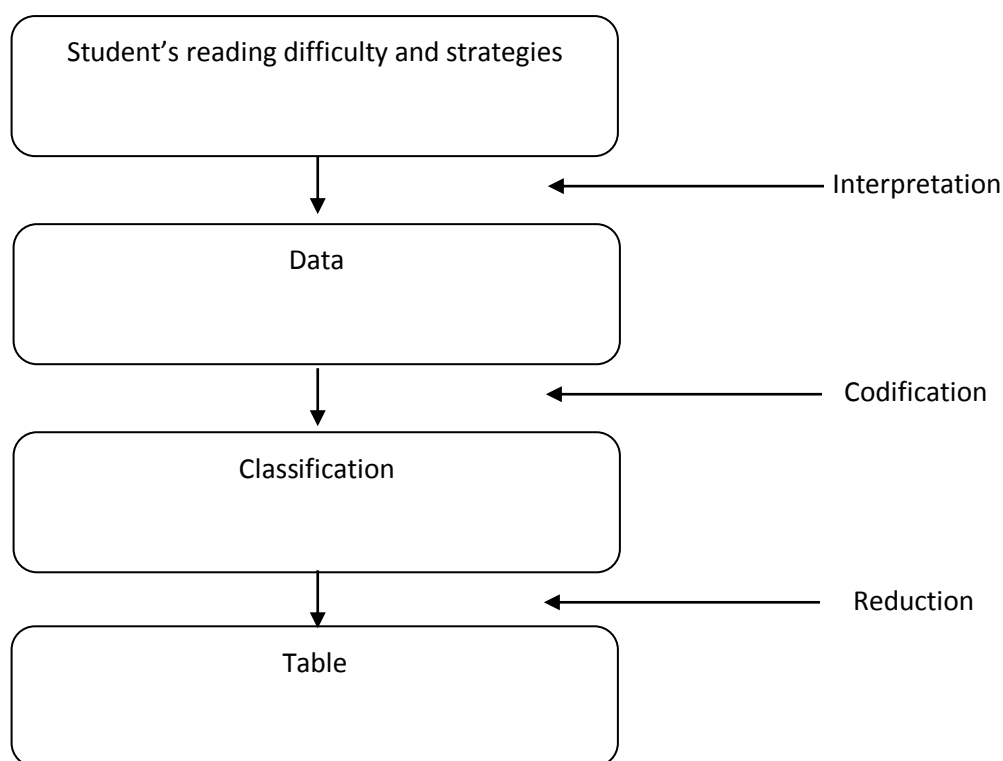
Data reduction involved selecting, simplifying, and transforming data into field notes. Sugiyono stated that data reduction involved summarizing, choosing the essential things, focusing on the essential stuff, and looking for themes and patterns. It can be concluded that data reduction involved choosing and simplifying themes to focus on significant things. At this stage, the data selected from the analysis of the think-aloud protocol and interviews with students about reading strategies and difficulties in knowing the core of the research.



**Figure 3.1 The process of data analysis**

Not all information was considered data on students' reading difficulties and strategies. Data that did not fall into this category was excluded. After excluding unnecessary data, the selected data was classified, coded, and archived. The same was done with other data from other instruments. The data reduction resulted in a number of selected data about students' reading problems and strategies that were ready to be displayed based on their classification and research problems.

According to Miles and Huberman (1984), several collections of unorganized information that were condensed and agreed upon to take actions and draw conclusions were called data displays. Sugiyono also stated that the presence of organized data arranged in a relationship pattern would be easier to understand. The presentation of data could be done in the form of abbreviations, descriptions, charts, category relationships, flow charts, etc. After reducing the data, the important points of the research were obtained at this stage so that the data could be easily understood and described in the table. The purpose was to bring a systematic organization of data showing corresponding data flows, thus enabling the researcher to draw tentative conclusions that were consulted and examined.



**Figure 3.2 The Process of Data Reduction**

Before drawing conclusions, there was a process of forming a hypothesis in the researcher's mind when analyzing the data. This process guided the researcher in carrying out data reduction to reach the conclusion. The data that had been displayed directed the researcher to verify whether the hypothesis was true. This data display ultimately turned the hypothesis into

a thesis and was called a conclusion. However, if verification failed, a new hypothesis appeared with a new data display or maybe even started with data reduction. It was the process of presenting data to have another stage in drawing conclusions in data analysis.

The last step was to make conclusions and suggestions based on the data analysis. Clarifying the actual meaning of the data, the findings of this study became a complete conclusion by the research data, and verification explained the importance of data configuration in facts. Verification was always carried out as long as necessary using triangulation and consultation with several experts until a conclusion could be reached. After being verified, the hypothesis became a thesis and was ready to be concluded through general problem statements and reading strategies. Thus, these three stages of analysis were interactive with each other.

### 3.8 The Validation

The next stage was the validation stage. In this research, the validation stage was a very important part of the study. This step was carried out before the instrument was implemented to students. Instrument validation was done by distributing questionnaires. The validation in this study involved three validators, such as:

**Table 3.6**  
**Validators Data**

No	Names	Validator Institution	Job Title	Validator Code
1	Drs. Sadjarwo	SMP N 08 Tulang Bawang Barat	English Teacher	Validator 1 (V1)
2	Khoironi S.Pd	SMP N 08 Tulang Bawang Barat	English Teacher	Validator 2 (V2)
3	Esti Novitasari, S.Pd	SMP N 08 Tulang Bawang Barat	English Teacher	Validator 3 (V3)

The validation was carried out by practice teachers who were experts in their fields. An English teacher who taught at the SMP N 08 Tulang Bawang Barat was among them. The validators were asked to assess the content of the material and the suitability of the material with the existing curriculum by filling out the provided questionnaire. The purpose of the validation was to obtain input and suggestions from the validators. This was done to maximize instrument development in an effort to achieve products that were suitable for use by students. The following is a validation table from material experts.

**Table 3.7**  
**Validation of TAP by Expert**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
1.	Accuracy of the information presented in the material.	80%	F
2.	Relevance of the material to the intended audience.	80%	F
3.	Clarity and coherence of the material.	80%	F
4.	Consistency of the material with the intended purpose.	80%	F
5.	Adequacy of the supporting material, such as images, diagrams, and tables.	80%	F
6.	Appropriateness of the language and style used in the material.	80%	F
7.	Completeness of the material in covering the necessary topics.	80%	F
8.	Suitability of the material for the intended mode of delivery.	80%	F
9.	Effectiveness of the material in achieving the desired learning outcomes.	80%	F
10.	Compatibility of the material with existing standards and guidelines in the relevant field.	80%	F
<b>Average</b>		<b>80%</b>	<b>F</b>

The table above was the result of a test validation conducted by a teacher who was an expert in their field. Statement indicators totaling 10 items were given to determine the feasibility of the think aloud protocol analysis. Based

on Table 3.7, it could be seen that in the material expert test, a total percentage result of 80% was obtained with the criteria of being feasible.

### **3.9 Trustworthiness**

In analyzing the data, the researcher also needed to examine the validity of the data sources to obtain valid data. To prove and check the data validation scientifically and responsibly, qualitative research had to use the relevant data analysis technique. To ensure that all researchers were not misinformed, the searcher used the triangulation technique in research. Moleong stated that triangulation was a technical analysis of data which benefited something out of the data itself to check the study of data or as a data comparison. There were four kinds of triangulation, namely triangulation data source, which meant the data was gained from different groups, times, and locations, triangulation method in which researchers had to use more than one method in research, triangulation investigator which referred to using more than one researcher, and triangulation theoretical in which a comparison between data findings and perspective theory was carried out by researchers. In this study, researchers employed two triangulations to ensure data validity: triangulation method and triangulation data source.

#### **1) Triangulation Method**

By comparing information/data in various ways, the triangulation approach used interviews, think aloud protocol analysis, and test were employed in this study to get accurate information on the data collected at SMPN 8 Mulya Kencana.

#### **2) Triangulation of Data Sources**

The study at SMPN 8 Mulya Kencana utilized the triangulation method, which involved the integration of multiple data sources for obtaining precise and reliable information. In order to ensure accuracy, a combination of interviews, think aloud protocol analysis, and tests were employed. This

triangulation approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the data collected at SMPN 8 Mulya Kencana.

In this case, the researcher utilized a variety of methods and data sources to investigate the information. In addition to interviews and think aloud protocol analysis, researchers employed reading difficulty tests in this study. These diverse methods created distinct data, which offered different insights in the SMPN 8 Mulya Kencana and provided diverse insights into the phenomenon under study. As a result of these numerous points of view, information was obtained to achieve reliable truth.

### **3.10 Research Procedure**

The research on reading difficulties and strategies began with preliminary research in the first semester of the academic year of the subjects (2022/2023). The researcher met the teacher (Drs. Sadjarwo) and the students from VIII D grade several times to observe the situation and explore possibilities for conducting the research. Interviews and Think Aloud Protocol Analysis were mostly conducted with the students outside the classroom. The researcher also administered a reading test to assess the students' reading capabilities.

The results of this preliminary research were discussed between the researcher and the advisor to determine the research topic and how to approach the students. Based on the permission granted by the Dean of FKIP on October 18, 2022, the research was carried out at the beginning of the second semester of the 2022/2023 academic year. The research was conducted with the VIII D Grade. The first meeting day involved introductions, with the researcher being introduced to all the students in VIII D Grade. This activity was crucial for the students to understand the purpose of the researcher's presence in their class and what activities would be conducted, such as analysis and other research-related tasks outside the classroom. It was important for them to know why these activities were being done with them. To become familiar with the subjects, the researcher

was allowed to teach them, substituting their teacher for approximately three days. This meeting was unrelated to the data collection program and served as an opportunity for the researcher to interact with the students.

Before commencing the analysis and investigation of reading difficulties and strategies, a reading test was prepared for the VIII D Grade students. This test aimed to gather data about the students, particularly regarding their reading difficulties. During the test, some students experienced difficulty or were unable to answer certain questions. The researcher made notes and identified the specific difficulties encountered by these students. If the problems were clearly identified, the students' names were recorded for future interviews.

Through this test, the researcher identified common problems faced by most students, not limited to those with low scores. Item analysis was conducted to determine which questions were most frequently answered incorrectly, thus indicating the students' reading difficulties. However, it was not easy to conclude that the items alone demonstrated the students' reading difficulties. It was possible that some items were flawed, lacking acceptable discrimination or difficulty indices. To validate and ensure the reliability of the data, similar information obtained from the test was confirmed through interviews conducted outside the classroom. These measures were taken to acquire more data and, importantly, to obtain valid and reliable information (triangulation). The interviews focused on students who had experienced significant difficulties, as described earlier.

After the test was collected, the next step was to begin collecting data, which was the main purpose of the study. The first step in doing this was to choose a few students with suitable criteria and capability with the instrument. Think-aloud protocol analysis required students who were talkative and capable of expressing their thoughts aloud. The researcher, with the teacher's advice, finally chose 6 students, 3 boys, and 3 girls as a sample from VIII D Grade. The researcher taught each student how to use the instrument's procedure.

Each student was given time to read a text to familiarize themselves with the content. Three texts were given to each of them. They were given varying amounts of time to comprehend the text depending on the students. Students typically needed thirty minutes to one hour for each text. Afterward, the students informed the researcher about the main idea of the text, the difficulties they faced, and how they solved them, while the researcher recorded their discussions. During the recording, the researcher did not interfere with the students except when students were silent for more than fifteen seconds because the nature of the research required the researcher to be a passive participant. On the other hand, the researcher's presence in the recording was expected not to disturb the students. This could be avoided because the students and the teacher had already known the purpose of the research. The research focused not on the teacher but on the students, looking at their reading difficulties and strategies.

However, sometimes this was done to obtain reliable data or to have methodological triangulation. Other students might produce the same data that could support the triangulation of other data. Before the interview was conducted, the subjects were informed about it. They were told about the questions that would be asked so that they could be prepared. All six students who had undergone the think-aloud process were interviewed. Many of them were reluctant, but the researcher managed to persuade them to understand the importance of this interview.

At the very beginning of the think-aloud protocol analysis and interview, they felt nervous, but it took only a few minutes for it to feel natural between the researcher and the students. The researcher believed that there was no distortion in the students' answers as they answered freely and spoke about whatever they knew, felt, and experienced. In addition to interviewing the students, a teacher, Drs Sadjarwo, who was the English teacher where the research was conducted, was also interviewed. This was deliberately done to obtain additional data (secondary data) to support the primary data



from the students. These data were also used for data triangulation. The interview with him was conducted on November 1, 2022.

The think-aloud protocol analysis and the interview were recorded and transcribed for analysis. In the process of transcribing, some meaningless sounds and unclear utterances were excluded. This transcription is referred to as the data from think-aloud and the interview. Each data from different sources, such as think-aloud protocol analysis, interviews, and tests, was directly analyzed. The process of data analysis involved reduction, display, and conclusion, which were made simultaneously. After enough data had been accumulated, the research report and its discussion were presented in the following chapters.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

This chapter presents conclusions and suggestions based on the results of the research. The conclusions provide a summary of the analysis of reading difficulties and strategies, taking gender into account. The suggestions aim to contribute both theoretically and practically to a better understanding of reading difficulties and strategies based on gender, for English teachers and for further research on students' diverse challenges and how to overcome them.

#### **5.1 Conclusion**

After analyzing the results of the students' difficulties and the strategies they used to overcome difficulties in comprehending English reading texts among eighth-grade students of SMPN 08 Mulya Kencana in Academic Year 2022/2023, the researcher draws the following conclusions.

1) In conclusion, three difficulties were identified in reading comprehension, including using context to determine word meanings, identifying implicit information, and making connections between ideas. It was found that male students faced more challenges in reading comprehension compared to their female counterparts. Specifically, both male and female students predominantly encountered difficulties in using context to determine word meanings. Within this category, the most significant challenge mentioned by students of both genders was translating the entire reading text into specific words to interpret the contextual meaning.

2) In conclusion, three strategies were identified to help overcome students' difficulties in reading comprehension: global reading strategies, problem-solving strategies, and support reading strategies. It was observed that female students utilized reading strategies more frequently than their male counterparts. While both male and female students primarily employed global reading strategies, it can be concluded that these strategies were more prevalent than problem-solving strategies and support reading strategies. However, there were notable differences in the subcategories of strategies preferred by each gender. Male students tended to focus on checking the accuracy of their assumptions about the text, while female students prioritized checking their understanding when encountering new information.

## **5.2 Suggestion**

Based on the conclusion above, the researcher would like to make the following suggestions:

- 1) Due to the weaknesses identified in this research, it is recommended that teachers identify difficulties related to reading comprehension before the students begin reading the text. This will enable students to understand the text more easily and help them overcome any comprehension problems. In short, teachers should be more creative in applying techniques for teaching reading skills.
- 2) Based on the weaknesses identified in this research, it is suggested that students increase and deepen their knowledge by reading various texts. When facing difficulties while reading different kinds of texts, they should practice using the strategies they have learned.
- 3) Based on the weaknesses identified in this research, it is recommended that future researchers continue this study by conducting further investigations and exploring the relationship between students' background knowledge of the content of the text and their ability to understand and solve reading problems.

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