CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the research background, research questions, research purpose, research scope, research significance, conceptual framework, hypothesis, and previous studies.

A. Background of the Study

Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process that extends beyond mere word recognition (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). It involves the active interpretation of written language and the construction of meaning through interaction between a reader's existing knowledge and new information (Klingner, Vaughn, & Boardman, 2015). This process requires readers to decode text, apply vocabulary knowledge, and connect concepts to their existing mental frameworks while drawing appropriate inferences. This fundamental skill is crucial for learning and everyday functioning across all educational levels, serving as the foundation for academic achievement and lifelong learning in our increasingly text-dependent world.

Preliminary observations at a high school in the West Java region of Indonesia reveal significant challenges in English reading comprehension. Despite educators' efforts, many students struggle to understand and interpret English texts, which form a critical component of their curriculum. Traditional teaching methods have proven ineffective in fostering student engagement with English reading materials, leading to disinterest and hindering progress in language acquisition. As Guthrie and Klauda (2022) note, this lack of engagement directly impacts reading comprehension outcomes, creating a significant obstacle to overall language development. Students demonstrate limited motivation to read English texts, possess insufficient vocabulary knowledge, and struggle with basic comprehension skills when attempting to process written information. These interconnected challenges highlight an urgent need for more dynamic and interactive teaching strategies that can effectively boost students' engagement and, consequently, improve their reading comprehension abilities in the English language classroom.

Gamification presents a promising solution to these challenges. As an interactive, student-centered strategy, gamification incorporates game elements, such as points, badges, levels, and leaderboards, into educational contexts, transforming traditional classrooms into dynamic learning environments (Deterding et al., 2011). Specifically in language learning, gamified tools provide customizable resources that facilitate personalized instruction, immediate feedback, and progress tracking, potentially enhancing students' critical analysis and comprehension of texts while improving overall language proficiency (Almeida & Simoes, 2019).

Several recent studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of gamification in enhancing reading comprehension. Abusa'aleek and Baniabdelrahman (2020) studied the effect of gamification on Jordanian EFL sixth graders' reading comprehension. Results showed significantly higher scores in the experimental group (taught with gamification) compared to the control group across all comprehension levels. Thiagarajah et al. (2022) investigated the views of students in a home school centre from Setia Alam towards the effectiveness of using gamification tools in teaching vocabulary. The findings report that Kahoot! is proven to be useful and effective for students in the ESL classroom. Matyakhan et al. (2024) highlighted the effects of gamification on enhancing reading engagement and comprehension, as well as perceptions of gamification among Thai EFL university students. The results showed that the experimental group significantly improved reading comprehension and had higher reading engagement after the implementation of gamification compared to the control group that studied traditionally.

Although previous research has highlighted the effectiveness of gamification in improving reading comprehension, there are several gaps that have not been widely explored. Studies by Abusa'aleek and Baniabdelrahman (2020) examined the impact of gamification on elementary school students in Jordan, while Matyakhan et al. (2024) focused on university students in Thailand, resulting in limited research discussing the effectiveness of gamification in reading comprehension at the secondary school level in Indonesia, particularly in West Java. Additionally, research by Thiagarajah et al. (2022) only explored the use of Kahoot! in vocabulary

learning, whereas this study will investigate how the use of Educaplay can influence students' reading comprehension. Furthermore, previous research generally measured reading comprehension broadly without focusing on specific text types, while this study will specifically examine the effectiveness of gamification in comprehending recount texts, which is one of the important text types in English language learning at the secondary school level. Therefore, this research aims to fill these gaps by providing new insights regarding the application of gamification in teaching reading comprehension at the secondary education level in Indonesia.

Therefore, the researcher conducted a study titled "The Use of Educaplay Gamification Tools on Students' Reading Comprehension: A Quantitative Study". This research aims to explore the extent to which gamification tools can enhance students' reading comprehension of recount texts. This focus was chosen to provide a more specific contribution to existing literature while investigating the potential of gamification as an innovative learning approach in the context of education in Indonesia.

B. Research Questions

From the background of the research, the researcher formulates the problem by making research questions as follows:

1. How is the students' reading comprehension in recount texts before using gamification tools?
2. How is the students' reading comprehension in recount texts after using gamification tools?
3. How are the significant differences in students' reading comprehension in recount text between before and after using gamification tools?

C. Research Purposes

According to the research question above, the purposes of the research are:

1. To analyze the students' reading comprehension in recount texts before implementing Educaplay gamification tools.
2. To investigate the students' reading comprehension in recount texts after implementing Educaplay gamification tools.

3. To examine the significant differences in students' reading comprehension of recount texts between before and after using Educaplay gamification tools.

D. The Significances of the Research

1. Theoretical Significances

From a theoretical perspective, this study has the potential to enrich the understanding of second language acquisition theory, particularly in the context of reading comprehension of recount texts. The research findings could provide new insights into the interaction between gamification elements and cognitive processes in reading comprehension, as well as contribute to the development of theoretical models for integrating technology into language learning.

2. Practical Significances

a. For Teachers

Teachers can benefit by adopting gamification strategies that transform reading instruction into a more engaging, interactive, and meaningful learning experience. The study offers educators a pathway to design innovative teaching methods that leverage technology and game elements to motivate students, ultimately making reading comprehension more accessible and enjoyable for learners.

b. For Other Researchers

The study contributes empirical evidence to the growing body of research on gamification in education, specifically in language teaching and reading instruction. By highlighting the potential of gamification in improving academic skills, the research opens new avenues for academic inquiry, encouraging other researchers to delve deeper into understanding how game-based learning strategies can be effectively implemented across various educational contexts and disciplines.

E. Research Scope

In this study, the research scope focuses on examining the impact of gamification tools, specifically Educaplay on students' reading comprehension of recount texts at one of the high schools located in the West Java region. The

research investigates how specific digital gamification strategies and tools can enhance students' ability to understand, analyze, and interpret recount texts.

The study is limited to analyzing reading comprehension of recount texts through standardized pre-test and post-test assessments, with a specific focus on selected gamification tools designed to enhance text understanding. External factors such as individual student learning backgrounds, prior reading experiences, or non-gamified reading instruction methods are not the primary focus of this research.

F. Conceptual Framework

Reading comprehension is the main goal in the reading process for students learning English, including students learning English as a foreign language (EFL). With improved reading comprehension abilities, students can easily gather information and understand the messages conveyed by writers in a text. This ability also helps students in remembering, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating reading content comprehensively (Alzuhair & Alkhuzaim, 2022). Given the importance of reading comprehension skills for EFL students, innovative learning strategies that align with current technological developments are needed. These learning strategies are expected to make students more active and motivated in improving their reading comprehension abilities (Abusa & Baniabdelrahman, 2020). One approach that can be implemented to achieve this goal is the use of gamification tools in the learning process.

Gamification tools refer to digital platforms, applications, and software that incorporate game elements such as points, badges, leaderboards, challenges, and rewards into educational contexts to enhance engagement and learning outcomes (Zainuddin et al., 2020). In the context of reading comprehension, gamification tools provide an interactive and dynamic learning experience that can make the process more engaging and effective. Yang et al. (2021) found that gamified reading comprehension activities encourage students to interact actively with the text rather than passively reading. Through elements like challenges, quizzes, and interactive storytelling, students are required to make decisions, answer questions, and engage with the material in a meaningful way.

In this study, gamification tools, specifically Educaplay, are used as independent variables, while students' comprehension of Recount texts serves as the dependent variable, measured through pre-tests and post-tests. The research design uses a pre-experimental method, with a one-group pretest-posttest design. This means the study involves only one student group given an initial test (pre-test) before using gamification tools and a final test (post-test) after intervention. Test results data will be analyzed using inferential statistics, such as t-tests, to measure changes in students' reading comprehension following the use of gamification. This conceptual framework is also visualized in a diagram to clarify the relationship between gamification, student engagement, and improved reading comprehension.

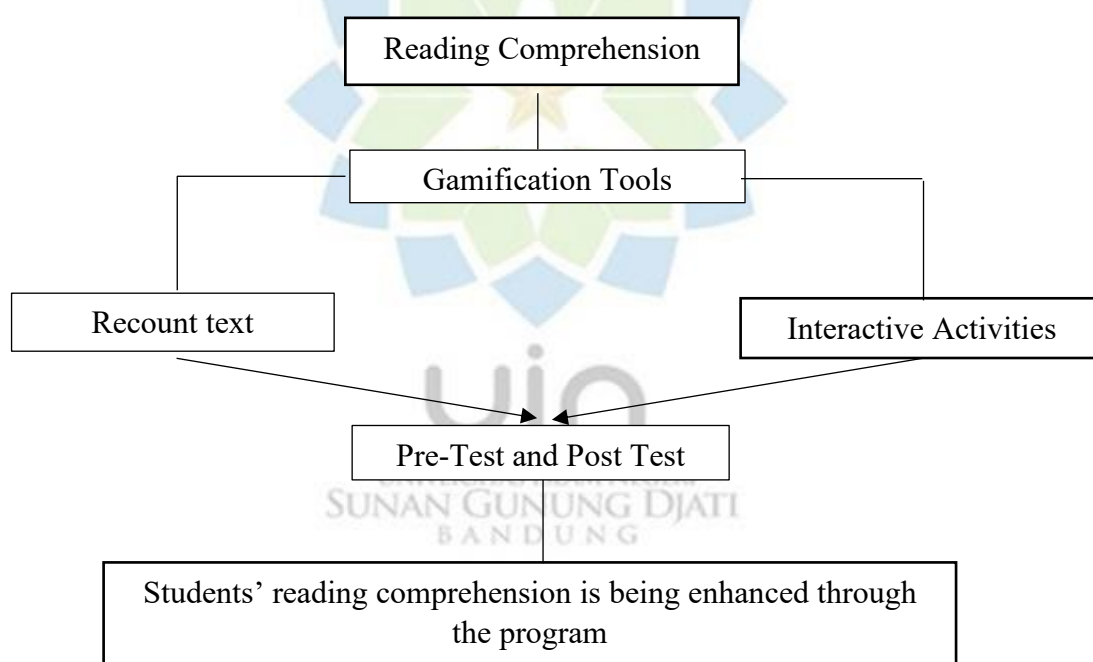The conceptual framework is visually represented in the following diagram:

Figure 1. 1 **Conceptual framework**

G. Hypothesis

Variables in research refer to elements determined by the researcher for study to obtain information and draw conclusions (Sugiyono, 2017). This study involves two types of variables: the independent variable and the dependent variable. The independent variable is the use of gamification tools, aimed at enhancing student engagement in learning. The dependent variable is students' reading comprehension

of Recount texts, which refers to their ability to understand the content, structure, and meaning of the text.

Based on these variables, the hypotheses are formulated to analyze the effect of gamification tools on students' reading comprehension of Recount texts, as follows:

1. Null Hypothesis (H_0): The use of gamification tools does not have a significant effect on students' reading comprehension of Recount texts
2. Alternative Hypothesis (H_a): The use of gamification tools has a significant effect on students' reading comprehension of Recount texts.

H. Previous Study

Several studies have been conducted on similar topics—for instance, Sari Et Al. (2022) researched the impact of gamification on reading comprehension among eighth-grade students at SMP Pancasila Bengkulu, Indonesia. Utilizing a quasi-experimental quantitative method, the research involved 32 students who participated in pre-tests and post-tests over four sessions. The results demonstrated a significant improvement in reading comprehension, with average scores increasing from 7.55 (pre-test) to 8.96 (post-test) due to the gamification approach, particularly through the use of Kahoot! Games. The findings suggest that gamification effectively enhances student motivation and comprehension in English learning.

Additionally, Qureshi and Khatoon (2023) conducted a mixed-methods study examining the effectiveness of gamification technologies (Kahoot!, Quizizz, and Bamboozle) in improving reading comprehension skills among students in the ACCESS Microscholarship Program at The Cowasjee School, Karachi. Data collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews revealed that Kahoot! was perceived as the most engaging and effective tool, with 40% of students strongly agreeing on its motivational impact. The study concludes that gamification tools significantly enhance reading comprehension skills, emphasizing the need for further research on optimal usage strategies and long-term effects.

Furthermore, research by Julita (2023) discusses innovative educational approaches, particularly the use of gamification in enhancing reading comprehension among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The research highlights various gamified platforms, such as Quizizz and Raz-Kids, which incorporate game elements like progress bars, leaderboards, and immediate feedback. The findings suggest that gamification fosters self-regulated learning, increases motivation, and enhances reading performance across different educational levels. The study emphasizes the importance of integrating gamification elements into EFL classrooms and encourages further research on their long-term effects.

Despite previous studies, a gap exists in the focus on high school students, a demographic often overlooked in gamification research, which has typically concentrated on middle school or specific scholarship programs. Unlike prior research that generally addressed reading comprehension in general, this study specifically examines the comprehension of recount texts, which require students to understand narrative accounts of past events, including personal experiences, historical events, or biographical information. By employing Educaplay as a targeted gamification tool for recount text comprehension among high school students, this research bridges critical gaps in existing literature, offering novel insights into how digital gamification strategies can be effectively leveraged to enhance reading skills in this underexplored educational context.