CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

According to OECD (2019), PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) Indonesia students' reading skills are below the international average. PISA measures the abilities of 15-year-old students worldwide in reading, mathematics, and science. This is inline with Surapranata and Haryanto (2010), they argue that the low reading ability among Indonesian students is heavily influenced by factors such as the limited access to quality reading materials, monotonous teaching methods, and a lack of motivation from the students themselves. The indicate a significant weakness of in understanding more English complex texts.

It is important for teachers and educators to implement teaching strategies that are more interesting and relevant to students for improving literacy skills of the students. However, there are some challenges in learning English such as the complexity of vocabulary, language structure, interest and motivation. Fisher and Frey (2014) emphasize the importance of developing critical thinking through reading instruction. According to them, effective reading instruction should engage students in analysis, prompting them to think critically about the texts they read.

Take for one example, the similar issue happened in SMPN 10 Kupang, where eight grade students continue to facing various difficulties in understanding narrative texts. From the author's preliminary study, the observation on March 9, 2025, showed that students face

difficulties in understanding narrative texts. These difficulties are primarily caused by limited vocabulary and a lack of interest in the material presented. During the observation, it was evident that many students were unable to answer comprehension questions related to narrative texts and appeared disengaged during reading activities. Teachers acknowledged that students often feel bored when studying texts that are not relevant to their daily lives. This lack of engagement not only affects students' academic achievement but also hinders the development of critical and analytical thinking skills.

For the survival English level such as literacy, English teachers can think of one effective approach such as the use of narrative texts, because they are close to their lives. Fables, though are short, but the stories featuring animal characters with human characteristics, are easy to grasp. They also have simple plot and carry daily moral message, which can improve the students' reading comprehension. Fables are widely recognized as an effective type of narrative text for teaching moral values and improving reading comprehension skills. According to Zainuddin and Keumala (2019), fables help students understand the basic structure of narrative stories while simultaneously conveying important moral lessons. As narrative texts, fables offer several advantages in English language teaching. The themes presented—such as honesty, hard work, and friendship—are universal, making them easily relatable to students' real-life experiences. Their generally simple structure, with straightforward plots and clearly defined characters, supports students—particularly beginners—in grasping core narrative elements like character introduction, conflict, and resolution. Furthermore, engaging with fables can foster analytical thinking, as students are encouraged to evaluate characters' actions and reflect on the resulting consequences.

In addition, empirical evidence supports the pedagogical value of fables. Sumarni (2010) finds that students taught using fables as teaching materials experienced significant improvements in reading comprehension. This improvement is attributed to the engaging and accessible nature of fables, which motivates students to read and better understand the texts. In the context of SMPN 10 Kupang, incorporating fables into English instruction is expected to address students' low reading proficiency while simultaneously developing their critical thinking skills.

Through the use of fables, students are encouraged to analyze characters' actions, predict story outcomes, and draw conclusions from the moral messages conveyed. These critical thinking skills are crucial in equipping students to face real-world challenges, where they should evaluate information objectively and make informed decisions based on their analyses. According to UNESCO (2020), this theory, effective learning occurs when students can relate the material being studied to their own lives.

 In addition to enhancing critical thinking skills, the use of fables can also boost students' motivation to learn. Herman, Sibarani, and Pardede (2020) find that students taught with engaging materials, such as fables, showed significant increases in motivation. Motivated students are more likely to actively participate in learning and strive to understand the material being taught. At SMP N 10 Kupang, the use of fables is expected to help eighth-grade students who still struggle with more complex narrative texts. Second, fables offer engaging stories with relevant moral messages, which can enhance students' reading interest. With increased reading interest, students are expected to be more motivated

to improve their overall reading skills. In Indonesia, students' reading interest remains relatively low.

Therefore, serious efforts are needed from schools and the government to enhance students' interest in reading. One approach that can be taken is to provide engaging and relevant reading materials, such as fables, which can help students become more interested in reading and understanding English texts. The use of fables also aligns with constructivist learning theory, where students are encouraged to build their understanding based on prior knowledge and personal experiences.

In the context of fables, students can connect the stories they read with their daily experiences, making learning more meaningful and relevant. This can increase student engagement in the learning process and facilitate their understanding of narrative texts. Therefore, the use of fables as a learning medium is expected to be an effective strategy in developing students' reading skills.

In this study, the use of fables as a learning medium will be examined to determine its impact on the reading comprehension abilities of eighth-grade students at SMP N 10 Kupang. This research aims to discover more effective and engaging teaching methods for students, as well as to provide recommendations to English teachers in Indonesia regarding instructional strategies that can improve students' reading skills. Through this approach, it is expected that students will not only improve their literal reading skills but also enhance their critical and analytical thinking abilities.

Overall, this problem background highlights the importance of finding more effective learning strategies for teaching reading skills to students in Indonesia, particularly at SMP N 10 Kupang. ith this approach, it is hoped that students can develop better reading skills while also increasing their interest and motivation in learning English.

1.2 Research Problems

What aspects can influence the improvement of students' reading comprehension of narrative texts through the use of fables in the eighth grade of SMPN 10 Kupang?

1.3 Aims of Study

1. To identify the aspects that influence the improvement of students' reading comprehension of narrative texts through the use of fables

2. To analyze students' responses the uses of fables compared to traditional narrative texts in English learning

1.4 Significance of Study

1.4.1 Impplication

Schema Theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984) explains that reading comprehension is influenced by the reader's prior knowledge and experiences. Readers construct meaning by connecting new information from the text to schemas, or knowledge structures, already stored in their memory.

In the context of learning narrative texts, the use of fables can enhance students' comprehension because the stories in fables typically carry universal themes, such as honesty, hard work, or friendship, which are easily related to students' daily experiences. This facilitates the activation of relevant schemas, enabling students to more quickly understand the plot, characters, and moral messages.

Furthermore, the simple structure of fables (beginning–conflict–resolution) helps students organize information systematically in their minds. According to this theory, the easier the schema is activated, the higher the reading comprehension that can be achieved. Therefore, the differences in students' responses to learning with fables and traditional narrative texts can be explained by the extent to which their existing schemas are connected to the text they are reading.

1.5 Application

The findings of this study can be implemented in various aspects of educational practice, particularly in enhancing students' reading comprehension through more contextual and engaging approaches. The potential applications are as follows:

a. Development of Fable-Based Teaching Materials

Teachers can design learning modules that use fables as the main text. The selected fables can be adapted to the local cultural context, students' language proficiency levels, and relevant moral values. This approach can enhance the appeal of the material and increase student engagement during the learning process.

b. HOTS-Based Learning Activities

Through fables, teachers can create learning activities that train Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) such as character analysis, story prediction, drawing conclusions, and evaluating moral values. This strategy encourages students to engage in deeper thinking and critical reflection on the content of the texts.

c. Improving Reading Interest and Motivation

Interesting stories found in fables can be used to foster a school-wide reading culture. This

can be implemented through morning reading programs, fable corners in the school library, or storytelling competitions. Such activities can motivate students to read more actively and independently.

d. Narrative-Based Teacher Training

The results of this study can serve as material for teacher training programs focused on using narrative texts as effective teaching tools. Teachers can be trained to explore text structures, formulate reflective questions, and connect reading content to students' real-life experiences.

5. Curriculum and School Policy Recommendations

Schools and education authorities can use the findings of this study as a basis for designing literacy improvement policies, such as integrating fables into local content curriculum or including them in extracurricular activities that support students' reading development.