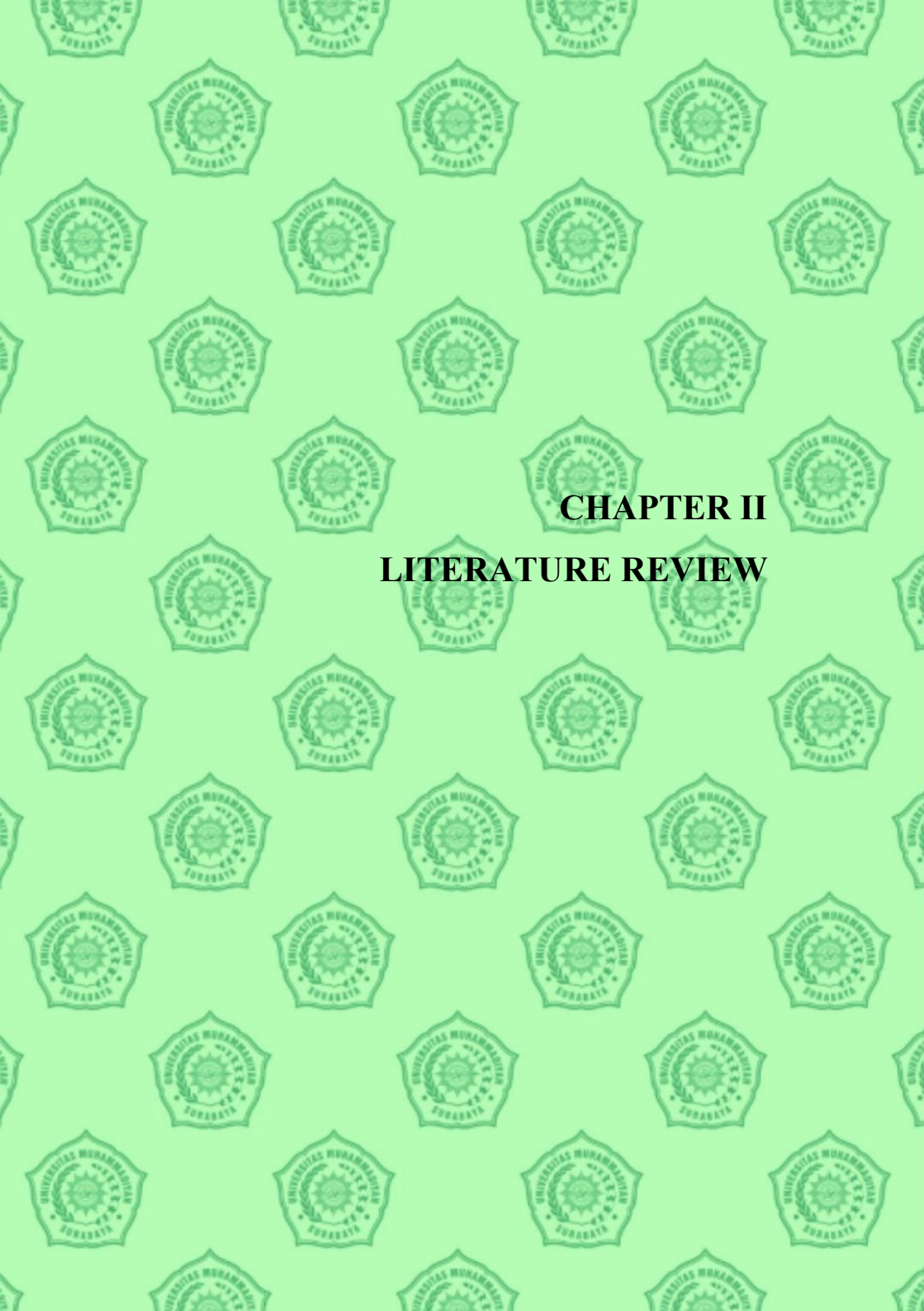




CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

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2.1 Teaching Reading

Teaching reading is a fundamental responsibility of language educators, particularly in EFL contexts where students encounter English primarily within the boundaries of the classroom. Reading is not a passive receptive skill; rather, it demands the active and purposeful engagement of the reader with the text. Ruddle (2019) emphasizes that reading involves the continuous interaction between the reader's existing knowledge schemas and the textual cues encountered on the page, a dynamic process that requires deliberate instructional support to develop effectively. In the EFL context, where students simultaneously manage linguistic decoding and meaning construction in a non-native language, teaching reading becomes an especially complex pedagogical endeavor.

Teachers play a central role not only in selecting appropriate reading materials but also in designing instructional sequences that progressively build students' reading competencies. Grabe et al. (2011) highlight that EFL learners face a dual cognitive burden: allocating processing resources to lower-level word recognition while simultaneously attempting higher-level semantic and pragmatic interpretation. Effective reading instruction must therefore address both dimensions, providing students with explicit guidance on decoding strategies while also developing their capacity for meaning construction and critical interpretation. Research consistently demonstrates that students who receive structured, targeted reading instruction achieve significantly better comprehension outcomes than those who do not (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

In Indonesian junior high school settings, teaching reading under the Merdeka curriculum framework requires teachers to foster not only linguistic competence but also critical thinking and active engagement with texts. However, practical implementation is constrained by factors such as limited access to English reading materials, large class sizes, and the significant variation in students' prior English exposure. These

conditions make it essential for teachers to employ varied, responsive, and scaffolded instructional approaches that accommodate the diverse needs within their classrooms and support students in developing reading as a genuine cognitive and communicative skill.

2.2 Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process involving the active construction of meaning through continuous interaction between the reader and the text. As Ruddle (2019) explains, comprehension is not passive reception but an active process in which readers combine textual cues with their existing knowledge schemas. It demands sustained cognitive engagement: readers must decode symbols, integrate information with prior knowledge, draw inferences, and critically evaluate the author's message (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Students who have not developed strong comprehension strategies often remain at the surface level of decoding, unable to derive deeper meaning or benefit fully from reading as a learning tool.

In the EFL context, reading comprehension is especially demanding because students must simultaneously manage linguistic processing and meaning-making in a non-native language. Grabe et al. (2011) note that EFL readers face a dual burden: allocating cognitive resources to lower-level word recognition while also attempting higher-level meaning construction, a combination that can easily exceed available processing capacity. In many Indonesian school settings, students further struggle with limited vocabulary, unfamiliarity with English text structures, and low motivation to engage with foreign-language materials (Grabe et al., 2011). Research consistently demonstrates that students who receive structured, targeted reading instruction achieve significantly better comprehension outcomes than those who do not (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

At the sub-skill level, reading comprehension encompasses several interconnected abilities: identifying keywords, locating main sentences, recognizing supporting details, and drawing appropriate

inferences from the text (Duke & Pearson, 2002). For junior high school EFL students, difficulty in any one area can impede overall comprehension. Particularly challenging are inductively structured paragraphs, where the main idea appears at the end, and texts requiring substantial background knowledge (Fuqaha' & Wartim, 2023). These challenges reinforce the need for teachers to treat reading comprehension not as a single skill but as a constellation of interrelated cognitive abilities, each requiring targeted instructional attention.

2.3 Reading Strategies

Teaching reading strategies are deliberate instructional approaches that educators employ to facilitate students' comprehension of texts, stimulate critical thinking, and promote active engagement with written language. Duke & Pearson (2002) define reading strategies as intentional, goal-directed attempts to control and modify the reader's efforts to decode text, understand words, and construct meaning. Because learners possess varied cognitive strengths, as established by Gardner (2011) through the theory of multiple intelligences, diversified instructional approaches are essential to address diverse learning styles within a single classroom.

Among the strategies most extensively documented in EFL reading research, scaffolding, Think Aloud, QAR, SQ3R, and brainstorming stand out for their theoretical grounding and practical effectiveness. Vygotsky et al. (1978) sociocultural theory underpins several of these strategies, holding that learners can exceed their independent capacity when supported by a more knowledgeable other, and that as competence develops, support is gradually withdrawn to promote learner autonomy.

2.3.1 Scaffolding

Scaffolding is a form of graduated instructional support that constitutes one of the most theoretically substantiated and practically effective strategies in EFL reading instruction. Its conceptual foundation lies in Vygotsky et al. (1978) notion of the Zone of Proximal

Development (ZPD), defined as the distance between what a learner can accomplish independently and what they can accomplish with the guidance of a more knowledgeable other. This theoretical premise establishes scaffolding as an inherently relational and developmental process: it is not merely about providing answers, but about temporarily extending a learner's capacity until they can perform independently. Wood et al. (1976) coined the term 'scaffolding' to describe the contingent support an adult provides to enable a child to accomplish a task beyond their unaided competence, identifying key scaffolding functions such as recruiting the learner's interest, reducing task complexity, maintaining goal orientation, marking critical features, controlling frustration, and demonstrating idealized solutions.

In the EFL reading classroom, scaffolding takes many forms depending on the nature of the task and the needs of the learners. Gibbons (2015) provides a comprehensive account of scaffolding in EFL contexts, arguing that effective scaffolding must be responsive to the learner's current level of competence, contextually appropriate, and systematically reduced as the learner develops greater independence. She identifies several practical scaffolding mechanisms applicable to reading instruction: activating prior knowledge before reading, pre-teaching key vocabulary, providing graphic organizers or visual representations of text structure, using guiding questions to direct attention to central ideas, and modeling comprehension processes explicitly before releasing responsibility to the student. Critically, Gibbons (2015) draws a distinction between scaffolding and simplification: scaffolding does not reduce the cognitive demand of the task, but rather provides structured support that enables the learner to engage with texts at an appropriately challenging level.

Beyond these general mechanisms, scaffolding in reading instruction can be organized into a more specific set of identifiable strategy types. Walqui's (2006) taxonomy, as applied by Arlinda (2020) to a classroom scaffolding study, distinguishes six such strategy types. Modeling refers to the teacher demonstrating a reading process, such as thinking aloud while identifying a main idea or making an inference,

before asking students to attempt it themselves. Bridging connects the text to what students already know, by eliciting prior experience, linking new vocabulary or concepts to familiar or cultural contexts, or using preview activities such as a KWL (Know, Want to know, Learned) chart. Contextualizing supplies the background students need to access the text, through visual aids, pre-taught vocabulary with contextual examples, or brief background information about the topic. Schema Building helps students organize textual information using structured tools such as concept maps, T-charts, or story maps, and through explicit teaching of text structure and brainstorming. Re-presenting Text makes the text more accessible without reducing task difficulty, for instance by rephrasing complex sentences, using gestures or realia, or briefly translating a difficult passage. Developing Metacognition asks students to reflect on and explain the strategy they used to reach an answer, encourages self-monitoring, and gives feedback on the reasoning process rather than only the correctness of the answer.

A complementary way of describing scaffolding activity comes from van de Pol et al. (2010), who distinguish the strategy types above (scaffolding intentions, what aspect of student activity is being supported) from scaffolding means, the concrete tools through which support is delivered: feeding back, hinting, instructing, explaining, modeling, and questioning. Ahmadi Safa & Rozati (2017) operationalize several of these means as observable classroom behaviors, including extracting information by asking questions, providing clues and directions, waiting for the learner to respond, co-constructing meaning, and confirming correct answers. Taken together, the six Walqui (2006) strategy types and these scaffolding means provide a concrete, observable vocabulary for describing how a teacher enacts scaffolding in a reading lesson, and they form the basis of the observation checklist used in the present study.

The theoretical principle of contingency is central to effective scaffolding. Gibbons (2015) emphasizes that scaffolding must be calibrated to the learner's actual performance, neither too directive nor too withdrawn, and must shift dynamically as the learner's competence develops. This contingent quality distinguishes scaffolding from routine

instruction and makes it a particularly powerful response to the specific and varied difficulties that junior high school EFL students encounter in reading. Vygotsky et al. (1978) sociocultural framework further holds that learning is fundamentally social and mediated through interaction; scaffolding, by design, creates the structured dialogic space within which such mediation occurs, allowing the teacher to guide the student through the reading process in real time.

From an implementation perspective, scaffolding in reading instruction typically proceeds in stages that mirror the gradual release of responsibility model. In the initial stage, the teacher assumes primary responsibility for demonstrating comprehension processes, modeling how to activate prior knowledge, identify text structure, and extract main ideas. In the guided practice stage, the teacher and students share responsibility, with the teacher providing targeted support through questioning, prompting, and feedback as students attempt the task. In the independent practice stage, students take full ownership of the reading process while the teacher monitors and provides corrective scaffolding only when necessary (Duke & Pearson, 2002). This staged progression reflects the fundamental goal of scaffolding as articulated by Vygotsky et al. (1978) and Wood et al. (1976): to develop learner competence to the point where external support is no longer required.

The relevance of scaffolding is especially pronounced in junior high school EFL classrooms in semi-rural Indonesian settings, where students face compounded challenges including limited vocabulary, slow learning pace, restricted out-of-school English exposure, and varying motivation levels (Fuqaha' & Wartim, 2023). In such contexts, unscaffolded reading tasks frequently exceed students' ZPD, resulting in disengagement and comprehension failure. Systematic scaffolding, by contrast, provides the structured bridge between students' current abilities and the demands of the reading task, enabling meaningful engagement and incremental skill development (Gibbons, 2015).

Building on this, van de Pol et al., (2010) offer a rigorous conceptual synthesis of scaffolding in teacher–student interaction derived

from a decade of research, identifying three key characteristics that must be present for an interaction to qualify as genuine scaffolding: contingency (support adapted to the learner's current level), fading (gradual reduction of support over time), and transfer of responsibility (increasing learner autonomy as competence grows). Their review further distinguishes between scaffolding means, the tools by which scaffolding is delivered, including feeding back, hinting, instructing, explaining, modeling, and questioning, and scaffolding intentions, which concern what aspect of student activity (metacognitive, cognitive, or affective) is being supported. This framework is particularly valuable for reading comprehension research as it enables a more precise and systematic analysis of how teachers enact scaffolding in real classroom interactions, moving beyond broad descriptions of strategy use toward a structured account of the conditions under which scaffolding genuinely promotes learner development. Empirical reinforcement for the effectiveness of scaffolding in EFL settings is provided by

Ahmadi Safa & Rozati, (2017), whose experimental study with Iranian intermediate EFL learners demonstrated that both expert-peer scaffolding and coequal scaffolding produced significantly greater gains in listening comprehension than a non-scaffolded, individualistic note-taking condition. The study also revealed that expert peers predominantly employed implicit scaffolding strategies, such as questioning to extract information and providing directional clue, while coequals relied more on explicit strategies such as confirming the correct answer and rejecting incorrect attempts. Although that study focused on listening rather than reading, its findings affirm the broader principle that scaffolded, interactive instruction is more effective than individual cognitive strategies alone, a finding directly applicable to the reading comprehension context examined in the present study (Gibbons, 2015).

2.3.2 Scaffolding Implementation

Scaffolding implementation refers to the practical, in-classroom enactment of scaffolding strategies, how a teacher actually carries out modeling, bridging, contextualizing, and the other strategy types in real

lessons, rather than to the strategies as abstract concepts. Duke & Pearson (2002) describe this enactment as proceeding through a Gradual Release of Responsibility model, often summarized as “I do, we do, you do.” In the initial stage, the teacher assumes primary responsibility for demonstrating comprehension processes, modeling how to activate prior knowledge, identify text structure, and extract main ideas. In the guided practice stage, the teacher and students share responsibility, with the teacher providing targeted support through questioning, prompting, and feedback as students attempt the task. In the independent practice stage, students take full ownership of the reading process while the teacher monitors and provides corrective scaffolding only when necessary. This staged progression reflects the fundamental goal of scaffolding as articulated by Vygotsky et al. (1978) and Wood et al. (1976): to develop learner competence to the point where external support is no longer required.

For this staged enactment to count as genuine scaffolding implementation rather than routine teaching, van de Pol et al. (2010) argue that it must display three interrelated characteristics throughout the process: contingency, the teacher adapting the type and amount of support to the learner’s current level of performance; fading, a gradual reduction of that support as the learner’s competence increases; and transfer of responsibility, an increasing share of task ownership being handed to the learner as support fades. Gibbons (2015) adds that implementation must remain responsive and contextually appropriate at each step, calibrated neither too directive nor too withdrawn, and systematically reduced only as the learner demonstrates readiness. In the junior high school EFL reading classroom, scaffolding implementation is therefore best understood not as a fixed set of techniques applied uniformly, but as a dynamic, teacher-adapted process, unfolding across a sequence of lessons, through which the teacher adjusts the type, amount, and timing of support so that students move from guided understanding toward independent reading comprehension.

2.4 Previous Studies

Several previous studies have examined teachers' reading strategies and the use of scaffolding across a range of educational levels and learning environments, from face-to-face EFL classrooms to fully online, technology-mediated settings. Reviewing this range of studies clarifies both what is already known about scaffolding and where the present study adds something new. To make the comparison easier to follow, each study below is summarized by its design and key findings and is then explicitly compared with the present study.

Erni (2021) employs a case study design to investigate reading strategies used by Indonesian learners in academic contexts, comparing high- and low-proficiency readers through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and open-ended questions. Findings reveal that cognitive strategies predominate, with high-proficiency readers employing a broader and more critical range of approaches than low-proficiency readers, and the study recommends systematic learner support through strategy instruction to develop critical thinking and comprehension skills. Similarity to the present study is both studies use a qualitative case study design with interviews and questionnaires to explore reading strategy use among Indonesian EFL learners. Difference from the present study is Erni (2021) examines learners' self-reported reading strategies at the higher-education level, whereas the present study investigates teacher-enacted scaffolding strategies for junior high school students through direct classroom observation.

Ahmadi Safa & Rozati (2017) conduct an experimental study with Iranian intermediate EFL learners, comparing expert-peer scaffolding, coequal peer scaffolding, and a non-scaffolded, individualistic condition. Both scaffolded groups significantly outperformed the non-scaffolded group in listening comprehension gains, with expert peers relying more on implicit strategies such as questioning and providing clues, and coequals relying more on explicit strategies such as confirming or rejecting answers. Similarity to the present study is both studies are grounded in the same scaffolding framework and examine how scaffolding behaviors such as questioning, hinting, and confirming support learners' comprehension. Difference from the present study is

Ahmadi Safa & Rozati (2017) use a quantitative experimental design focused on listening comprehension and peer-to-peer scaffolding, whereas the present study uses a qualitative case study design focused on teacher-to-student scaffolding in reading comprehension.

Arlinda (2020) contributes an observational classroom study of scaffolding in an Early Years Learning (EYL) context, applying Walqui's (2006) taxonomy to identify six scaffolding strategy types, modeling, bridging, contextualizing, schema building, re-presenting text, and developing metacognition, as enacted by a teacher in real classroom interaction. Similarity to the present study is both studies observe an English teacher's scaffolding strategies directly in the classroom and draw on the same strategy taxonomy. Difference from the present study is Arlinda (2020) is situated in an early years (young learner) EFL classroom, whereas the present study is situated in a junior high school reading comprehension classroom and adds interview and student-questionnaire data to the observational data.

Muhammad et al. (2025) investigate scaffolding implementation in Indonesian primary schools, documenting practical barriers to effective scaffolding such as mixed proficiency levels, large class sizes, and limited instructional resources, and highlighting the gap between theoretical scaffolding principles and their actual classroom enactment. Similarity to the present study is both studies examine real classroom scaffolding practice in the Indonesian EFL context and the practical challenges teachers face in implementing it. Difference from the present study is Muhammad et al. (2025) focus on primary school teachers using interviews only, whereas the present study focuses on junior high school reading comprehension and triangulates observation, interview, and student questionnaire data.

Taken together, these four studies show that scaffolding has been examined from markedly different angles: general reading-strategy use among Indonesian learners in higher education (Erni, 2021), the comparative effectiveness of scaffolded versus non-scaffolded instruction (Ahmadi Safa & Rozati, 2017), teacher-enacted scaffolding strategies

observed directly in the classroom using Walqui's (2006) strategy taxonomy (Arlinda, 2020), and the practical barriers to scaffolding implementation in Indonesian schools (Muhammad et al., 2025). None of these studies, however, examine how a junior high school English teacher scaffolds reading comprehension in a face-to-face classroom in a semi-rural Indonesian setting, using observation, interview, and student questionnaire data together. The present study addresses this gap by combining the scaffolding framework of van de Pol et al. (2010), the strategy taxonomy applied by Arlinda (2020), and the contextual sensitivity demonstrated by Muhammad et al. (2025), extending this line of work into an under-researched junior high school EFL setting in Bojonegoro, East Java.

2.5 Research Gap

Despite the substantial body of research on reading strategies in EFL settings, a significant gap remains in the literature. Most existing studies focus on the types of strategies used by learners or teachers, often through surveys or literature reviews, yet very few examine how a teacher actually implements scaffolding strategies in real, observed classroom interactions, particularly at the junior high school level in Indonesian public schools situated in semi-rural regional contexts.

The four studies reviewed in the preceding section leave this gap only partly addressed. Erni (2021) is situated in higher education and examines learners' self-reported strategy use rather than teacher-enacted scaffolding. Ahmadi Safa & Rozati (2017) provide strong experimental evidence that scaffolding outperforms non-scaffolded instruction, but their study concerns listening comprehension among Iranian intermediate learners rather than reading comprehension in an Indonesian junior high school. Arlinda (2020) offers observational data on scaffolding strategy types using Walqui's (2006) taxonomy, the same taxonomy adopted in the present study, but is situated in an Early Years Learning classroom rather than a junior high school. Muhammad et al. (2025) document practical barriers to scaffolding implementation in Indonesian schools, closely paralleling the contextual concerns of the present study, but their

data come from primary school teachers using interviews only, without classroom observation or student data. None of the four studies, therefore, examines how a single junior high school English teacher understands, selects, and enacts scaffolding strategies for reading comprehension in a face-to-face classroom, triangulated through observation, interview, and student questionnaire data, within the specific contextual constraints of a semi-rural Indonesian public school such as MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Banjarnegara, Banjarnegara.

The present study addresses this gap by adopting a qualitative case study design with classroom observation, an in-depth interview, and a student questionnaire to investigate how the English teacher at MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Banjarnegara, Banjarnegara understands, selects, and implements scaffolding strategies in her reading comprehension instruction. By building on the scaffolding strategy taxonomy applied by Arlinda (2020) and the contextual constraints identified by Muhammad et al. (2025), and by situating these findings alongside the theoretically grounded, experimentally demonstrated effectiveness of scaffolding reported by Ahmadi Safa & Rozati (2017), this study extends existing work into a junior high school, face-to-face EFL setting in an under-researched semi-rural region of East Java. This focus on a single teacher's scaffolding decision-making within a specific, under-researched school context contributes a necessary and empirically grounded perspective to the existing EFL reading instruction literature in Indonesia.