CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background

English proficiency has become a fundamental requirement in higher education institutions, serving not only as a global means of communication but also as an academic standard for graduation. At Universitas Diponegoro (UNDIP), this requirement is formally institutionalized, with undergraduate students mandated to demonstrate English proficiency as a condition for completing their studies. This mandate is explicitly stated in *Peraturan Rektor Universitas Diponegoro Nomor 7 Tahun 2024 tentang Peraturan Akademik Program Sarjana*, Article 16 paragraph (1), which requires students to present an official English proficiency certificate, such as TOEFL, issued by institutions recognized by the university (Universitas Diponegoro, 2024a).

The same requirement is reaffirmed in *Peraturan Rektor Universitas Diponegoro Nomor 4 Tahun 2020 tentang Peraturan Akademik Bidang Pendidikan Program Sarjana*, particularly in Chapter VI Article 20. This regulation stipulates that undergraduate students must obtain a minimum TOEFL score of 400 and the certificate must be issued by an institution officially recognized by the university (Universitas Diponegoro, 2020). Furthermore, Chapter XX Article 51 paragraph (3) point (g) of the same regulation emphasizes English proficiency as one of the essential graduation requirements. A similar policy is also applied to vocational students, as outlined in *Peraturan Rektor Universitas Diponegoro Nomor 22 Tahun 2024* Chapter VII Article 13, which mandates students of the applied undergraduate program to demonstrate English proficiency through TOEFL or an equivalent test, with the minimum score determined by the Rector (Universitas Diponegoro, 2024b).

Such a policy highlights that English is not merely a tool for communication but a core academic skill that students are expected to master before graduation. In response to this mandate, the availability of appropriate and accessible learning

resources becomes increasingly important, especially for non-English majors who may not receive structured English instruction during their studies. Among the essential skills to be developed, reading comprehension plays a particularly vital role in achieving the expected proficiency level. Therefore, focused efforts to improve reading comprehension through targeted and level-appropriate learning media are necessary.

Despite this, learning English remains a challenge for many students. For some, English is still unfamiliar and perceived as difficult, and even viewed as less important. Additionally, learning a new language requires mastering foundational knowledge, which can be overwhelming, especially when learning methods are monotonous. Many students lose interest when exposed to repetitive and uninspiring materials. According to Cameron (2001), the lack of engaging learning content contributes significantly to students' disinterest in learning English. To address this issue, Uzer (2019) emphasizes the need for innovative and enjoyable learning strategies that can help spark student motivation.

Based on the 2024 English Proficiency Index published by English First, English proficiency in Asia has shown a notable decline. This condition highlights the growing importance of accessible and structured English learning resources, particularly in reading comprehension for beginner level learners. Therefore, developing a website focused on reading comprehension using TOEFL ITP based content is considered relevant and timely. This trend underscores the urgency and relevance of developing accessible, structured, and skill-focused English learning media that support A2-level learners in improving their reading skills, especially in countries like Indonesia where TOEFL ITP is widely used as a proficiency benchmark.
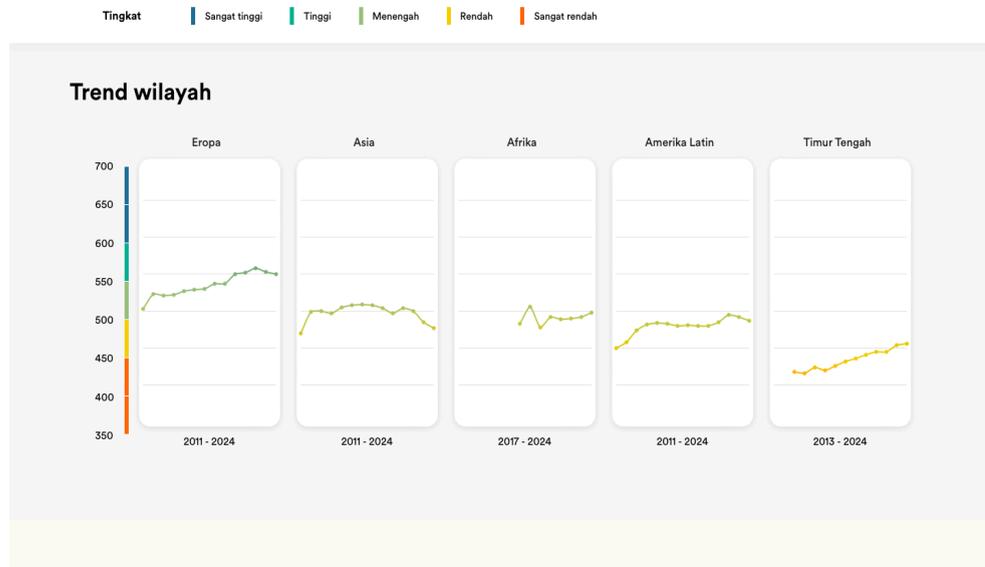
Figure 1.1 Diagram of World English Proficiency Score (Source: EF English First, 2024)

This learning media was developed by referring to the structure and purpose of the TOEFL ITP (Institutional Testing Program), which is widely recognized as a formal assessment tool to measure English proficiency for academic purposes. The TOEFL ITP assesses students' ability in three main sections: Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension. The section that becomes the main focus of this learning media is Reading Comprehension, as it aligns with the goal of helping students improve their ability to understand academic texts in English.

The Reading Comprehension section in the TOEFL ITP test aims to evaluate the ability to read and understand short academic passages, locate main ideas, recognize stated and implied information, understand vocabulary in context, and identify the author's purpose or tone. This is in line with the skills needed by students to successfully navigate English academic materials. According to ETS, this section contains multiple short passages, each followed by several multiple-choice questions designed to test specific comprehension skills (ETS, 2024).

Reading comprehension was chosen as the main focus of this study because it plays a central role in academic language use. As highlighted by Auta et al. (2023), reading comprehension serves as the foundation for all learning activities and is

essential for academic achievement across disciplines. Without adequate reading skills, students may struggle not only in language courses but also in other subjects that require understanding of written materials. Among the skills tested in the TOEFL ITP, reading is often considered a foundation for accessing knowledge, especially in higher education where most learning resources are in written English. For many students, particularly those from non-English majors, reading becomes both a challenge and a key to success in meeting English proficiency requirements. Strengthening reading skills allows learners to better understand texts, follow academic arguments, and apply information critically. Therefore, creating a platform that specifically supports reading at the A2 level can directly help students build a strong foundation for further language development.

Although the TOEFL ITP itself is not designed specifically for A2 learners, selected reading materials from the test can be adapted to suit this level. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) categorizes English proficiency into six levels, from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient). The A2 level, often referred to as elementary, is a transitional stage where learners begin developing more independent reading skills. According to an ETS standard-setting study, the minimum total TOEFL ITP cut score for CEFR A2 is 343, with section cut scores of Reading = 33, Listening = 38, and Structure = 32 (ETS, 2024). Other source also confirm that TOEFL ITP scores ranging from 337–459 can generally be mapped to CEFR level A2 (GlobalExam, 2024). This mapping shows that although the A2 level does not fully meet the TOEFL ITP minimum score of 400, it remains a relevant and effective starting point for developing the reading skills needed to eventually reach that score. Therefore, by aligning adapted TOEFL ITP based reading content with A2-level descriptors, this learning website seeks to provide structured and familiar practice materials while maintaining accessibility for non-English major students. Research shows that A2 learners benefit from exposure to simplified academic texts as they gradually build confidence in processing English information (Sudaryanto & Widodo, 2020; North, 2014).

The decision to focus on the A2 level is based on several considerations. Firstly, learners at this level already have foundational English knowledge but still require reinforcement in understanding short, factual texts. Secondly, A2 serves as a

bridge between A1 and B1, meaning progress at this stage significantly influences overall English development. Finally, studies such as Cameron (2001) highlight that A2 learners may become disengaged if exposed to monotonous or non-interactive materials. Therefore, designing an engaging and level-appropriate digital platform can enhance both motivation and reading comprehension skills in this crucial phase of language acquisition.

According to Diponegoro University's academic regulations, all students must demonstrate English proficiency through official certificates such as TOEFL ITP. This policy shows the university's commitment to preparing graduates with both academic and international communication skills. However, many non-English major students struggle to meet the required standards due to limited access to structured and engaging learning materials. To address this issue, the author developed a web-based reading comprehension platform tailored to A2-level learners.

This website contains English reading practice materials focused on the A2 level, designed to help Diponegoro University students improve their reading comprehension skills. According to Hanum (2013) dan Kusmana (2017) Web-based learning is learning that utilises internet technology to enhance the learning environment with rich content and broad coverage. Websites as learning media have been proven effective in increasing learner engagement and motivation, especially in the context of language learning. Warschauer (1996) emphasized that web-based learning offers a flexible and interactive environment, allowing learners to access materials anytime and anywhere. Similarly, Blake (2013) noted that technology use in language learning can reduce boredom and make the experience more dynamic and enjoyable. In addition, websites also allow learners to learn independently at their own pace, which is an important factor in language learning (Godwin-Jones, 2011).

In the context of A2-level learners, English learning websites can be designed with suitable content such as short texts, basic vocabulary, and simple comprehension tasks. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), a learner-centered approach is highly effective for beginner to intermediate learners as it fosters active engagement. The website developed in this study adopts this approach by allowing users to choose topics, explore materials independently, and receive immediate feedback supporting both motivation and reading comprehension development.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

Based on the theory and limitations of the background of the problem above, the author formulates the problem as follows:

1. How is the process of designing and developing a TOEFL ITP-based reading comprehension English learning website for A2 level students carried out?
2. How is the feedback from users and other stakeholders regarding the use and benefit of the website?

1.3 Objectives of The Study

The following is the purpose of creating a reading-based English learning website, as the preparation of the Final Project, which produces, applies online English learning:

1. To describe the process of designing and developing a reading-based English learning website for A2 level students aligned with the TOEFL ITP Reading Comprehension section.
2. To evaluate the feedback from users and other stakeholders regarding the usability and effectiveness of the website.

1.4 Significance of The Study

1.4.1 Theoretical Contributions

Theoretically, the development of this website serves as a reference for the application of CEFR-based learning in digital contexts, particularly for reading skills at the A2 level. It enriches existing literature on English language learning by integrating reading pedagogy, CEFR frameworks, and technology-mediated instruction. Furthermore, this study may support further exploration of learner needs in the development of skill-focused, adaptive digital learning tools. It also contributes to curriculum discourse by offering practical insights into how CEFR descriptors can be implemented through interactive learning media.

In addition to the CEFR-based foundation, this study emphasizes the integration of TOEFL ITP-based reading comprehension as the core content

framework. The TOEFL ITP assesses academic reading skills through multiple-choice questions focused on identifying main ideas, understanding details, interpreting vocabulary in context, and making inferences. By adopting these cognitive and structural elements in the instructional design, the research offers a theoretical bridge between standardized test requirements and digital instructional media. This approach strengthens the relevance of the developed materials not only for general English proficiency but also for learners aiming to improve their performance on the TOEFL ITP reading section.

This study applies a Research and Development (R&D) approach, specifically adopting the ADDIE model as its development framework. The ADDIE model standing for Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation is a widely used instructional design model that provides a structured and systematic approach to developing learning materials. It was chosen because of its clear, iterative process that allows for continuous refinement based on evaluation at each stage. This model is especially suitable for educational product development, as it ensures that the output is grounded in learner needs, designed with clear objectives, and validated through testing and feedback.

1.4.2 Practical Contributions

Practically, this study provides an alternative learning medium that enables students to engage with English reading materials anytime and anywhere. The website is designed to support learner autonomy and improve comprehension through question sets adapted to the A2 level. The platform offers a user-friendly and interactive interface to encourage student motivation and reduce monotony often found in traditional reading exercises. For educators and curriculum developers, the product may serve as a model for integrating digital platforms into English instruction. In addition, the website can be used as a prototype for future research on the effectiveness of technology-based media in enhancing students' English reading skills.

1.5   Output

The output of this Final Project writing is a website-based digital product that functions to support English learning, specifically focusing on online reading skills, with the purpose of both learning and assessing students' abilities at the A2 level according to the CEFR. This website contains 5 sets of practice sessions, each consisting of 20 reading comprehension questions, and 3 sets of test preparation sessions, each consisting of 40 reading comprehension questions. These are adapted from the TOEFL ITP Reading Section but calibrated to match the CEFR A2 level. The use of the TOEFL ITP as a reference was intentional, as it provides a structured and widely recognized format for reading assessment, which, when adapted to A2 level, allows learners to engage with authentic and academically relevant question types. This approach was chosen to familiarize learners with standardized test formats while still maintaining alignment with CEFR descriptors. The website has been accessed and tested by 30 guest users, primarily non-English major students, to evaluate its usability and effectiveness. The output of this Final Project can be accessed online as a website at: https://esphrasso.com.