

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **A. Background of the Study**

In many English education programs, literature is commonly used as a medium to teach language skills such as reading comprehension, vocabulary, or grammar. Teachers often choose poems, short stories, or novels to provide linguistic input or cultural examples. Although this approach has a clear pedagogical benefit, it sometimes neglects the deeper function of literature as an independent object of the study. As a result, students tend to think of literary texts as learning aids rather than as artistic expressions that carry aesthetic, social, and moral values which have important messages to explore. This orientation can be seen in the study conducted by Can and Tezcan who state that literature is commonly integrated into the teaching and learning process to improve students' language skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Can & Tezcan, 2022). Similarly, Mardiani and Baharudin explain that literary works including prose, drama, and poetry can support the development of students' language components, which are important in achieving language proficiency (Mardiani & Baharuddin, 2023). These studies indicate that literature is generally positioned as a tool to help the development of students' language proficiency rather than help students engage with literary text.

Literature learning in many formal schools still focuses on grammar, text structure and its language feature. As a result, literature learning focus more on studying linguistics aspect, which may limit students' opportunities to

express their personal interpretation of literary work. This phenomenon is interesting because literature learning generally expected to provide opportunities to develop students critical thinking, support emotional awareness, and their involvement with the text (Febriani et al., 2022). However, recent research explains that literature is still used to support learning outcome such as language proficiency and reading comprehension that often focuses on grammar and text structure rather than emphasizing students' making meaning (Bist & Kandel, 2025; N. S. Dewi et al., 2025)

Several studies have discussed teaching literature in EFL classroom from the perspective of teaching practice and teachers' views. Bist and Kandel stated that teaching literature dominantly focus on achieving language learning outcomes, such as language proficiency and reading comprehension, rather than facilitating students' interpretation of literary text (Bist & Kandel, 2025). Furthermore, Abuelnour and Hussein explained that literary is used in EFL/ESL teaching to improve language learning, critical thinking, and cultural awareness that focus on more students' outcomes rather than students' interpretation of literary work (Abuelnour & Hussein, 2025). Another study conducted by Dewi et.al reported that literary work mostly used for teaching materials that support linguistic competence, which focus on grammar and text structure (Dewi et al., 2025). These studies proved that teaching literature in EFL context mostly focuses on more language objective that emphasize on linguistics aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

The use of literary works in the classroom as a supporting learning resource or medium which is used by teachers to develop students' English basic skills is an interesting and a creative way to be implemented in the process of teaching and learning, but providing students literary texts to be studied as an art which has meaning, values or messages tend to stimulate student's critical thinking to actively construct meaning and connect the text to their personal experiences (Ijabah & Asdar, 2024). Therefore, it is important to use the literary works in the classroom as it is, to explore students' understanding about the literary works or trigger their abilities to think critically about something reflected in the literary works and compare it to their experiences in a real life or draw some lessons from the literary works.

Responses of students toward literary works or texts may varies. They may connect the literary texts with their experiences, try to engage with the text or connect them to certain literary text which is identical to the previous one; the content, the characters, theme or else. Richard Beach explains that meaning of a text is not fix stated in the text, but it is constructed from the interaction between reader and the text (Beach, 1993). Furthermore, Beach explains that when constructing meaning, readers are still influenced by their personal experience, psychological condition, social, and cultural phenomenon.

Films are sometimes seen as a kind of literary art or text since they have the same storytelling tools as novels or plays—think narrative cycle, deep character growth, and themes. A book, novel, or short story create a story through its plot, dialogue, and symbols, and films do something similar with

their scripts, visuals, and editing to pull viewers into the emotions and ideas. Mario Klarer sees film as one of the main genres in textual studies, right alongside fiction, poetry, and drama, which makes it a natural fit for treating films like texts in literary analysis. In his book *An Introduction to Literary Studies*, he points out how film mixes words and visuals like drama, but everyone can "read" it over and over through recordings, just like flipping through a book. That really bridges the gap between the page and the screen, letting us use the same tools for digging into narratives themes, and structure (Klarer, 2005). In EFL classroom, films will fit to be used as literary to be analyzed, since films have more element to attract the students' attention.

Based on the description above, this research aims to investigate tenth grade students' responses to the film *Akeelah and the Bee* at MAN 1 Grobogan using Beach's Reader-Response theory. This theory is relevant because it emphasizes the role of reader in the interaction between the text (Beach, 1993). By applying this approach, the study tries to understand how students interpret and involve with the text. Furthermore, this study also aims to identify the type of responses the students give. Understanding these types give insight on how students make meaning towards literary text. The findings are expected to give clearer understanding about how students' involvement with literary works through a film.

## **B. Problem Statement**

1. How do tenth grade students at MAN 1 Grobogan respond to the film *Akeelah and the Bee* based on Reader-response theory?

2. What type of response is the most dominant among tenth-grade students at MAN 1 Grobogan?

### **C. Objective of the Study**

1. To investigate tenth grade students' responses to the film *Akeelah and the Bee* at MAN 1 Grobogan based on Reader-response theory.
2. To identify the type of response is the most dominant among tenth grade students at MAN 1 Grobogan.

### **D. Significance of the Study**

#### **1. Theoretical Significance**

This research is expected to give insight into literature context especially in application of Reader-Response theory in analyzing students' responses to the film as literary text. This research contributes to understand how students construct meaning based on their personal experience, emotional, and social background.

#### **2. Practical Significance**

##### **a. Teachers**

This research is expected to help teacher understanding how students interpret and engage with literature. This may help teacher design more interactive and fun learning in teaching literature, where students' opinion, experience, and emotion become foundation in the classroom discussion.

##### **b. Students**

For students, this research is expected to help students in improving their ability to interpret and respond to literary work presented in the form

of film. By involving in film *Akeelah and the Bee*, students can express their thoughts, feelings, and personal reflection of the story. This process helps them to connect with the story, themes, characters in the film, which promotes deeper understanding and critical thinking.

### **c. Researcher**

This research can be reference for future researcher who wants to do research or investigate reader respond toward literary work especially in the context of reader respond study and literature learning.

## **3. Pedagogical Significance**

This research contributes to teaching literature by supporting student-centered learning through Reader-response theory using film as literary text.

## **E. Definition of Key Terms**

### **1. Tenth Grade Students**

Tenth grade students are students in the first year of senior high school at MAN 1 Grobogan.

### **2. Students' Responses**

Students' responses refer to the active participation in interpreting the meaning of a text. Johana et al. (2025) explained that responses are readers' active participation in interpreting a text which then their interpretation or reaction give a meaning and benefit to the literary work.

### **3. Film Akeelah and the Bee**

Film Akeelah and the Bee mentioned in this research refers to the film produced by Doug Atchison. This film tells the story of Akeelah Anderson, a student who becomes interest in spelling bee competition and begins to prepare for it under the guidance of Dr Larabee.

### **4. Reader Response**

A reader response study is often used in the field of literature which focus on analyzing readers' response toward literary work. Reader response study is a study which focus on readers' active participation in interpreting and building meaning from a text. This study state that reading is not passive action but an interactive process which readers connect their emotion, personal experience with the text (Ilyas et al., 2025). In this research, this study is used to investigate EFL students respond to the film Akeelah and the Bee.

### **F. Limitations of the Study**

This study focuses on investigating EFL students' responses to the film Akeelah and the Bee using Beach's Reader-Response Theory (1993). Furthermore, it identifies the most dominant type of responses among EFL students at MAN 1 Grobogan. It is important to note a challenge encountered during the data collection step; several participants had difficulties to comprehend the questionnaire on their own. To ensure they could still answer the questionnaire meaningfully and accurately, the researcher gave them a guidance on the questions and clarified any

confusion. This approach was important for helping them overcome the language gap. However, it should be considered that this direct assistance and interaction might have influenced the way participants responded. In addition, the researcher allows students to answer in Indonesia or English language.