

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the introduction of the research. It focuses on the research background, problem identification, limitations, research questions, research objectives and significances.

1. 1 Research Background

English is an international language that has an important role in various aspects including education (Jumrah, 2019; Komang et al., 2014). According to Lee et al. (2020), the data from British Council in 2014 shows there are about 1.5 billion English language learners (ELLs) which is divided into 750 million who are learning English as a foreign language (EFL) and 375 million are learning English as second language (ESL). While in 2017, about 2 billion people are learning and using English internationally (Irby et al., 2020). Therefore, Wyse (2009) argues that teaching and learning English literacy is a priority to be prepared in order to learn all other areas.

Literacy refers to an ability to communicate in oral and written language in the form of printed and digital media (Ward, 2011). August et al. (2014) mention the components of literacy such as decoding, oral reading fluency, vocabulary and writing which are important elements to be mastered and as a key to learn all knowledge aspects. The importance of teaching English from an early age is described by Artini (2017) and Sonnenschein et al. (2017). Based on the previous literature (Artini, 2017; Lucas et al., 2020; Lucas et al., 2020; Hopf et al., 2019),

they find that age will give advantages in effectiveness, long-term outcome, and they have good flexibility. Further, Winarni et al. (2020) explain that language learning cannot be separated with language skills such as listening, speaking, writing, reading. They add that, this principle is suitable with *Kurikulum 2013* which is developing language skills or literacy. Fuchs et al. (2021) emphasize that by the end of 6th grade, primary school students are expected to be able to read and write in the English language.

Responding to the importance of language literacy, Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture regulation number 23 in 2015 released a program named *Gerakan Literasi Sekolah (GLS)* in all levels of education (Megawati, 2017). Yet, it is not easy to learn the elements of language literacy for EFL learners (Hidayati, 2018). Previous literatures find that the problems of the students in learning literacy are engagement and language skills (Barr et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2020; Merga, 2020). In order to develop students' literacy, advanced technology should be integrated by the teachers (Chanock, 2013; Lee et al., 2020). It is because the integration of technology in the classroom is crucial for teachers in 21st century education (Hosseinpour et al., 2019).

According to Habibi and Sofwan (2015), English is included as local content in Indonesia primary schools. Looking at that statement, it breaks the explanation about the importance of literacy and literacy development from an early age. On the other hand, Syamsu (2018) explains about the GLS movement in primary school. Syamsu emphasizes that in GLS implementation, school readiness is important to support its movement in school. The readiness includes the school's physical capacity, teachers, students, parents, and from other communities (public

participation, institutional support, and policy tools). Yet, relating to the current situation of COVID-19 pandemic, the literacy program seems forgotten. The students cannot come to school and the teachers cannot directly give guidance in learning and literacy activities. Therefore, technology is starting to be an important element that needs to be integrated during this situation.

The integration of technology in teaching English literacy components (writing and reading) give positive impact to the students (Sulisworo et al., 2016; Jahan Khan et al., 2017; Ang & Yunus, 2018). It is able to increase their motivation, language skills and give them also a chance to become literate in digital media. Thus, this electronic learning model is used as a learning model along with the face-to-face learning model which is known as blended learning (Akgunduz & Akinoglu, 2016). This approach is able to help teachers in decision-making, incorporating new learning strategies to meet students' needs and give them wider learning experiences (Wilkes et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020).

Blended learning is known as the best practice of the integration between face-to-face and online learning activities (Firdaus & Isnaeni, 2018; Pardede, 2012; McPhee & Pickren, 2017). The advantages of blended learning have already been investigated by several previous studies in supporting the development of students' language skills and engagement. There are previous studies conduct in improving students' motivation, engagement (Lestariyana & Widodo, 2018; Firdaus & Isnaeni, 2018) and improving students' writing and reading skills (Padmadewi & Artini, 2019; Prescott et al., 2018). Furthermore, in relation to the outbreak situation Tupas and Linas-Laguda (2020) and Yuan et al. (2020) propose a blended learning model for teaching and learning activities for preparing students in a new normal

era. It is because Cui et al. (2021) find that fully online learning activity is ineffective for primary school students who still need direct guidance from the teachers.

Despite the advantages in blended learning, there must be questions about comparing the implementation of blended learning and face-to-face learning especially for elementary school students. Responding to this possibility, Linse (2005) highlights the importance of parents' involvement. It is because parental involvement can help students develop their social, emotional, cognitive and academic skills. Linse (2005) adds that parents' involvement will give good implication especially for primary students to reduce learning anxiety. Moreover, the integration of technology in learning activities needs extra attention from teachers and parents. Without guidance and supervision, they easily become victims of the internet (Linse, 2005).

According to Nguyen (2021) primary learners who learn a second language or foreign language are still learning literacy skills in their mother language, besides they also have cognitive, physical, emotional and social growth. Based on that statement, it is important to consider the beginner students' language development especially in the foreign language. Therefore, Nguyen (2021) finds that creating an English language environment, artistic components, meaningful context, and real life practice are useful strategies for the beginner learners. It is important to develop their language competencies especially for the primary students in level three. It is because even though they are already able to create simple sentences for communication, there are some difficulties in understanding the situation. The

students in level 3 also already have two years of learning experiences in learning English through formal education.

Referring to the importance of parents' involvement, blended learning in primary school, consideration on the integration of technology and learning activity, and the importance of English for beginner learners, Bersin (2004) argues that it is important to select criteria of blended learning especially for beginner students. Bersin (2004) reveals that the most important factor that must be considered is program types. Program types drive teachers' decisions on measurement, tracking and learning objectives. It means that deciding program types will lead the teaching practice and direct students in learning activities. On the other hand, opposite practice is found in its implementation. The preliminary observation showed that most public primary school teachers do not have specific programs in their online learning during this outbreak situation. Textbooks are the main learning sources and there is no specific literacy program. Further, the teachers reveal that parents' involvement is just in accepting and guiding students when they do the exercises.

Based on the explanation above, the study on blended learning based literacy with parents' involvement is important to be conducted. The present research produces a teachers' guide to direct the teachers in transferring the materials, exercises and literacy program based on two learning modes, which are online and offline learning modes. This study is a part of bigger research which aims at producing a guide for teachers in conducting blended learning in teaching English literacy for beginners. This study focused on developing the guideline for teaching beginner level 3. This product is seen as an important guideline because it

proposes flexibility in its mode, exercises, sources, learning media and especially parents' involvement. Therefore, the present study aims at developing teachers' guide for beginner level 3 in conducting blended learning to improve beginner learners' literacy with the involvement of parents.

1. 2 Problem Identification

Literacy can be defined in the wider way as a practice of acquiring, interpreting, creating and communicating meaning (Li et al., 2021). Literacy is important to be prepared from primary level because it is needed for students to master a variety of knowledge and achieve the objective of every subject learning (Padmadewi et al., 2020). Several previous researchers conduct research in order to improve students' literacy skills such as promoting literacy corners, through digital stories and scaffolding (Damayanti, 2017; Lestariyana & Widodo, 2018; Padmadewi & Artini, 2019). On the other hand, Padmadewi et al. (2020) reveal the result of PISA especially in the reading skill of the students is still low. It is supported by data that showed Indonesian students are ranked 72 out of 77 countries. It shows students' literacy especially since primary level needs to be improved.

Blended learning is one example of advantages in digital technology that is adapted by educational institutions (Tang & Chaw, 2015). Primary educations also start to emerge the traditional learning (face-to-face) learning with online learning activities (Prescott et al., 2018; Gu et al., 2021; Kumala et al., 2021). Yet, Graham et al. (2019) found that the percentage of primary schools teachers' readiness in implementing blended learning strategy is still low. The challenges also do not only

come from the teachers, but also from the environment. The study from Asrial et al., (2019) showed that the materials, incomplete class equipment and they do not have various strategies.

The problems in the present research were not only found through empirical studies, but from need analysis that has been conducted to several primary English teachers also revealed some problems. They do not really have an English literacy program in their school, especially in public elementary schools. They just give the students exercises in the textbook and sometimes they make their own exercises for the students. While for the materials, sometimes they give the students videos but mostly the students just read the book that they get from the school. Therefore, there are no follow-up activities or literacy programs for them. From those previous problems, it is important to develop guidance in conducting blended learning for teachers as well as improving students' English language literacy. Therefore, the use of blended learning in improving students' literacy, can widen their ability in language production, but also their digital literacy in processing information (Barton & Woolley, 2018). Further, this study can contribute for primary English teachers for supporting materials in face-to-face and online learning activities.

1. 3 Research Limitations

This research is limited to developing teachers' guide for teaching English literacy using blended learning especially for beginner level 3. The students in beginner level 3 are students who have already experienced 2 years in learning English through formal education and are able to communicate with simple sentences, but still have some difficulties. The research includes the product

development of teachers' guide, quality testing and effectiveness of the product. The product is a teachers' guide, which includes teaching materials, teaching steps, worksheet, homework, English literacy activities with the sources, parents' involvement and assessment.

1. 4 Research Questions

From the problems and limitation above, there are research questions that can be formulated as follow:

1. How teachers' guide developed to teach English literacy by using blended learning for beginner level 3?
2. How is the quality of teachers' guide for teaching English literacy by using blended learning for beginner level 3?
3. How is the effect of teachers' guide for teaching English literacy by using blended learning on beginner level 3?

1. 5 Research Objectives

There are two objectives in this study that can be seen as follow:

1) General Objective

Generally, the present study is conducted to develop teachers' guide for teaching English literacy by using blended learning for beginner level 3. This study also aims at developing the materials, literacy activities and parents' involvement program in blended learning mode.

2) Specific Objectives

1. Describing the teacher' guide developed for teaching English literacy by using blended learning for beginner level 3.
2. Determining the quality of teacher' guide for teaching English literacy by using blended learning for beginner level 3.
3. Investigating the effect of teachers' guide for teaching English literacy by using blended learning on beginner level 3.

1. 6 Research Significances

Based on the research background, research problems, research questions and research objectives above, there are two kinds of research significance can be formed:

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, the present study is expected to enrich teachers' materials and give guidance especially in teaching English literacy by using blended learning. This study concerns developing the product of blended learning as the reference for teachers in conducting English teaching and English literacy teaching activities in which involving the parents in the learning process.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

Practically, the result of the present study shows the product is expected to be beneficial for following:

1. Teachers

Primary school teachers especially who teach students in beginner level three are able to use the product as a teaching guide or as supplementary materials for the

students. The product also provides the teachers with references of online and offline materials and guidance in creating online games, online class discussion and online based assessment guideline.

2. Students

The product is expected to fulfill and provide the students with kinds of activities and learning materials. Besides, they will find reading materials for completing their reading log with their parents.

3. The Government

The study is expected to give information about the implementation of blended learning, especially English literacy activity. Besides, the product of the study can be developed by the education stick holder and promoted to be used in public primary schools.

4. Other Researchers

This study can be used as supporting activities and media for teaching English literacy by using blended learning for other researchers who want to develop the same product in higher levels.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

There are the explanations of conceptual and operational definitions of key terms that are used in the present study. The definitions are as follows.

1.7.1 Conceptual Definitions

1. Blended Learning

Blended learning is a thoughtful integration between face-to-face and online learning based experience (Hughes et al., 2019; McPhee & Pickren, 2017). It allows

the combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning activities with four models of blended learning, such as station rotation model, lab rotation model, flex model, and flipped classroom (Truitt & Ku, 2018).

2. Literacy

An ability to communicate in the form of printed and digital media is defined as literacy (Ward, 2011). Murray (2021) explains that preparing basic literacy skills should be from an early age.

3. Beginner Level 3

According to Hepple et al. (2014), a beginner student is someone who starts to learn English. It means that, these students have no experience in learning English. They just started to learn English through formal or informal education.

1.7.2 Operational Definitions

1. Blended Learning

The integration of face-to-face and online learning teaching and learning elements are developed through a teachers' guide in the present study. Learning goals, teaching framework, materials, worksheet, homework, and literacy program are developed based on onsite and online learning activities.

2. Literacy

Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are the basic literacy that is emphasized in the present study. These skills are developed through the product in the present research.

3. Beginner Students

The present study follows criteria from CEFR for beginner level 3. The criteria includes the students with two years English learning experiences and able to communicate in a simple way even though with some difficulties.

