CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

It is widely accepted that English has become an international language that is not only used as a means of communication in daily conversation, but also as an academic language in many countries (Altbach, 2015). Learning English has become a must due to its important role in today's era. Moreover, Mbato (2013) even stated that because of its high expectation, having English mastery has even seen equal to having a greater chance for career and opportunity. Therefore, teaching English for young learners (TEYL) at the primary level is considered essential as children at the age of six to twelve have rapid progress development in learning languages (Bland, 2019). Moreover, studies conducted by Mourao (2016) and Ellis (2018) indicated that TEYL does not only help children to build their linguistic competence but also build their knowledge in the field of literacies, intercultural learning, and global issues. Kostoulas (2019) supported the idea of TEYL by stating that early start of language education will always lead to better educational outcomes.

To prepare the future generation, the government of Indonesia has included English as one of the subjects to be taught at school, in which English is learnt as

a foreign language. English has been taught from the Elementary School level since 1998 when Competence-based Curriculum was applied in Indonesia. In the latest 2013 Curriculum, however, English has become a local content in many schools which makes it becomes extracurricular with only 35 minutes learning session per meeting (Rusiana & Nuraeiningsih, 2016). Apart from the curriculum, teaching and introducing English to young learners is still considered highly important. Yuvaraj (2009) argued that children possess a critical period of language acquisition due to their ability to maximally acquire language as a genetic process. Within this critical period, their brains' ability to memorize words is sharper compared to when they have become adults. When being introduced to English starting from an early age, children will be more familiar with the intonation and sound of the language (Sommer, 2011).

However, there is often a misconception that teaching English to young learners is easier than teaching English to higher-level learners. Rich (2018) opposed the misconception by stating that teaching younger learners requires more demanding tasks which requires teachers to be more skillful. The demanding tasks mostly come as the consequences of the young learners' characteristics, which are still at the age of four to twelve years old (Suhartatik, 2008). Suhartatik (2018) stated that young learners are characterized by their moody feelings, short attention span, big curiosity, high motivation for liked things, great interest in talking about interesting and concrete things, and active physical activities. These characteristics demand teachers to design an appropriate teaching method which could accommodate the learners' needs and interests.

The characteristics make the students have different needs in education, which can also be special needs. Students with educational special needs, according to Rofiah et al. (2020) refer to those who have unique characteristics that differ from other students in general, without necessarily showing physical, emotional, or mental disabilities. The Government Regulation No. 17/2010 article 129 paragraph (3), on the other hand, includes students with conduct disorder, slow learning progress, autism, motor impairments, multiple disorders, and learning difficulties as students with special needs.

Realizing the needs to accommodate these students, the Government of Indonesia has proposed regulations related to inclusive education. According to Zakaria and Tahar (2017), inclusive education allows students with special educational needs to learn in regular classroom together with the students that have regular needs. Permendiknas No. 70/2009 article 3 also regulates that every student who has physical, emotional, mental, and social disabilities or has the potential for social disabilities, intelligence, and unique talents has the rights to participate in inclusive education at specific education units with accordance to their needs and abilities (Rofiah et al., 2020). In the same sense, the Act No. 20/2003 article 32 states that students with educational special needs are provided with the opportunities to obtain education in regular schools, ranging from early childhood education level to the high school level. The regulations emphasize that inclusive education has become a necessity that needs to be implemented starting from the early education program. Therefore, education units and teachers are expected to be capable in teaching students with special educational needs (Saputra, 2018).

In the increasingly inclusive educational settings, teachers are challenged to deal with various students' needs, which includes students with dyslexia. Dyslexia is a specific neurological learning disability that is characterized by difficulties in word recognition, spelling, and decoding abilities (Cimermanová, 2015). The difficulties in dyslexia come as the results of deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected. Wood (2006) stated that dyslexia is a chronic condition that lasts for lifelong. He added that studies found that there is a definite difference between the brains of dyslexics and non-dyslexics, since it is a neurological problem in origin. A report published by British Dyslexia Association or BDA (2014a) indicated that around 10% of the population has a certain level of dyslexia. This further implies that all teachers are in need to understand students with dyslexia. Since dyslexia is very hereditary and it can affect children for their entire life and might bring problems to them, early identification is strongly needed.

Unfortunately, children who have dyslexia are often hard to be identified as they can be very bright and cheerful in learning (Cimermanová, 2015). However, the problem can be noticed once they show indication of issues in acquiring written language. Dyslexic students are frequently reported to be frustrated and struggling in learning before they were diagnosed with dyslexia as people would only judge them as lazy, disorganized, and stupid students who cannot read and write well. They also face more struggle as the strategies and methods used in teaching non-dyslexic students are often different from the ones that are effective for them. Therefore, as the ones who are directly involved in the cognitive development of the students, teachers are expected to be more aware of their

students' needs by choosing the right teaching strategy. The strategy becomes essential as the consequences of underestimating it will result in a lack of success in many early educational programs. Therefore, teachers need to carefully design and plan their teaching and learning activities in order to best meet the students' needs, particularly the ones with dyslexia.

Several previous studies have investigated the strategies that are used by teachers in teaching dyslexic students as well as coping with their learning difficulties in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) learning. A study by Troeva (2015) identified several strategies used in teaching students with dyslexia, which included multi-sensory approaches, systematic (structured, cumulative, and sequential) instruction, over-learning, reinforcement, and metacognition. The study revealed that the strategies applied for dyslexic students need time, tasks, and materials differentiation. Another study conducted by Sudek and Encinas (2019) stated that the teaching strategy for EFL students with dyslexia must begin with dyslexia identification, which then followed by temporal strategies and accommodations, personal instructions, spatial arrangements, visual strategies and accommodations, kinesthetic strategies and accommodations, and technological tools. Other related studies were also conducted by Cimermanová (2015), Manilla and Braga (2017), Awada and Plana (2018), Menbet (2018), and Hebert et al. (2018), which either investigated the most appropriate teaching strategies used by teachers for dyslexic students or experimented strategies that were considered appropriate.

Unfortunately, despite the regulations, there has been limited studies discussing the strategies used to teach dyslexic students, particularly in Indonesia.

A study by Novianti et al. (2019) and Irdamurni et al. (2018) even formulated learning strategies for dyslexic students as studies investigating how dyslexic students learn to read and cope with their difficulties remain scarce. A study by Novita et al. (2019), on the other hand, investigated the coping strategies that dyslexic students have in order to deal with their learning difficulties. Studies discussing the matter at primary school level in Bali are even harder to find. As an example, a study by Friantary et al. (2020) was conducted in Bengkulu to investigate the methods used by elementary teachers in teaching dyslexic students.

Even though there has been limited studies discussing teaching strategies used to teach dyslexic students in Bali, a non-profit organization named Bali Dyslexia Foundation provides education learning programs for students with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia. There is an English teacher in the foundation who teaches dyslexic students. Considering the numbers of students that may have dyslexia, the struggle they have in learning English, and the limited studies discussing the strategies used to teach them in Bali setting, it becomes interesting to investigate the teaching strategies used by the teacher in Bali Dyslexia Foundation.

Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the strategies used by the teacher at Bali Dyslexia Foundation in teaching students with dyslexia in the context of EFL learning. This study is important to be conducted in order to help teachers in other schools to deal with dyslexic students by providing the right strategies. It is important for other teachers to know these teaching strategies since the government has regulated that teachers need to be capable and provide learning process that can accommodate students with special educational needs, including

dyslexia. Moreover, the results of the aforementioned studies also indicate that there has been very little studies providing special strategies that teachers can use to teach students with dyslexia. Therefore, this study can also add to the literature regarding the matter. In addition, considering the numbers of students that may have dyslexia and how important it is to assist them in the learning process, this study becomes urgent to be conducted. The urgency of this study is further emphasized through the regulations made by the government which have addressed the importance of implementing inclusive education that can accommodate dyslexic students' special needs, which certainly needs special strategies.

1.2 Problem Identification

Teachers are challenged to deal with various learners' needs, which includes students with dyslexia. Dyslexia is a specific neurological learning disability that is characterized by difficulties in word recognition, spelling and decoding abilities that is often unexpected and lasts for lifelong (Cimermanová, 2015; Wood, 2006). BDA (2014) reported that around 10% of the population has a certain level of dyslexia. This implies that all teachers are in need to understand students with dyslexia. Unfortunately, it is hard to identify students with dyslexia, which leave them in struggle as they are being labelled as lazy and unorganized students who cannot read and write well (Cimermanová, 2015). The inappropriate strategies and methods used in teaching them give them more struggle in learning English. Therefore, as the ones who are directly involved in the cognitive development of

the students, teachers are expected to be more aware of their students' needs by choosing the right teaching strategy.

Unfortunately, there has been very little studies that teachers can use as a reference in designing the strategies that best meet the dyslexic students need, particularly in Bali setting. It is because most of the studies that investigated the strategies used by teachers in teaching dyslexic students and deal with their learning difficulties in learning EFL were conducted abroad and not in Indonesia. Some other related studies that were conducted in Indonesia did not investigate the topic in EFL setting. Moreover, none of the studies were conducted in Bali. Therefore, it can be said that teachers in Bali have few access to references in designing strategies for teaching dyslexic students, since studies discussing the matter are still limited, particularly in Bali.

However, Bali Dyslexia Foundation, with their teacher, provides education learning programs for children with dyslexia. Considering how important it is to provide effective teaching strategies for students with dyslexia and limited studies discussing the topic, it becomes interesting to investigate the teaching strategies used by the teacher at Bali Dyslexia Foundation. Furthermore, as the government of Indonesia has also addressed the importance of implementing inclusive education with special strategies that can accommodate dyslexic students' needs, this study becomes urgent to be conducted. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the strategies used by the teacher at Bali Dyslexia Foundation in teaching students with dyslexia in the context of EFL learning.

1.3   Scope of the Study

Based on the aforementioned identification of the problem, this study is limited on investigating the teaching strategies used by the teacher at Bali Dyslexia Foundation in teaching English to students with dyslexia. The strategies being investigated were the ones that were used to deal with the dyslexic students' learning difficulties as well as enhancing their English mastery in the context of English as a Foreign Language learning.

1.4   Research Question

Based on the background of the study, problems identification, and limitation of the problem, the research question of this study can be formulated as follows:

a. What are the teaching strategies used by the teacher in Bali Dyslexia Foundation in dealing with dyslexic students' learning difficulties?

1.5   Research Objective

Based on the aforementioned research question, the research objective of this study can be formulated as follows:

b. To investigate the teaching strategies used by the teacher in Bali Dyslexia Foundation in dealing with dyslexic students' learning difficulties

1.6   Significance of the Study

1. Theoretically, this study is expected to give a contribution to the body of literature that is related to strategies in dealing with dyslexic students' learning difficulties, as well as an overview of how the strategies are being used.

2. Practically, this study is expected to give positive significance to English teachers, schools, and other researcher.

a. For English teachers

The result of this study can be used as input by teachers to design a suitable strategy that could assist students with dyslexia in dealing with learning difficulties, as well as enhancing their English mastery in order to meet the regulations set by the government of Indonesia.

b. For Schools

The result of this study can be used as a consideration for schools to adjust their teaching and learning process in order to meet the needs of dyslexic students. Further workshops could also be conducted to make teachers more ready to implement appropriate teaching strategies for dyslexic students.

c. For Other Researcher

The result of this study can be used as a reference in conducting research related to teaching strategies for dyslexic students.