CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

The first chapter of this thesis presents the background of this research, problem identification, research limitation, research question, research objective, and research significance. This chapter explains why the researcher conducted this research.

1.1 Research Background

In Indonesia, English has a position as a foreign language, and its use is also considered very important in society. Not only important in the society but also English takes a great influence in the field of education because English has been classified as local content in the 2013 curriculum. This policy can be considered a step for Indonesia to connect with global developments as well as to deepen science and technology which are mostly sourced in English (Sutaryo et al., 2022). Pajarwati et al., (2021) stated that providing English lessons from an early age is expected to make students able to compete at the international level and increase the nation's competitiveness in a global society. The underlying assumption is that English language skills can be trained properly if someone is directly involved and socializes in an environment that uses English as a communication tool (Faridah, 2021).

In learning a new language, the basic thing that must be possessed by language learners is literacy skills. According to Suniyasih et al. (2020), literacy is commonly known as the ability to read and write. By having good literacy mastery, language learners will be able to understand, create, and inform the information they get in written, oral, and digital form (Wulandari et al., 2021). Literacy skills also greatly affect the quality of individuals. In addition, intellectual and emotional development is strongly influenced by one's literacy skills (Thompson et al, 2018). Not only important for improving academic achievement but also literacy plays an important role in developing the quality of human resources (Ratminingsih et al., 2021). Apart from that, reading and vocabulary mastery also become the important thing to be considered. Without good reading competence, one's literacy skills will be poor (Ratminingsih et al, 2021). Meanwhile, vocabulary is an essential element in language learning because it can be defined as a foundation that can support and help learners to understand information, convey meaning or ideas, and facilitate other language skills (Alamri & Hakami, 2022).

However, in reality, the scientific literacy ability of Indonesian children is still very low. Based on the results of the PISA (The Program for International Student Assessment) test in 2018, Indonesia was ranked 71st out of 79 countries (Yani et al., 2021). In addition, a study conducted by UNESCO in 2016 regarding reading interest in countries around the world showed that Indonesia was ranked the second lowest in the world (Susanti & Prameswari, 2021). From the results of the PISA test and the UNESCO study, it can be seen that the literacy level of Indonesian children is very low and a movement or solution is needed to overcome this problem. Literacy skills

must be instilled from an early age. Young learners have strong and short-term memory so they can retain language knowledge in their memory if they are trained continuously (Apriliana, 2018). In addition, young learners have a very high curiosity, like to seek new experiences, are active, and have a lot of energy so that it will be easy for them to learn the language (Faridah, 2021, Uysal & Yavuz, 2015). Language learners will master English more if they are accustomed to and given English lessons earlier (Ratminingsih et al., 2018).

Since literacy becomes an essential part to be mastered in learning a new language, an appropriate solution is needed to improve young learners' literacy skills. Considering about literacy has a close relationship with vocabulary mastery, Yanti (2016) argued that implementing electronic dictionaries provided a great improvement in students' vocabulary mastery. In line with Yanti (2016), Hakim, Abidin, and Bahari (2018) also stated that using an electronic dictionary gave a positive impact on students' vocabulary mastery rather than using a printed dictionary. Other researchers also agreed that the digital dictionary gave a positive impact on students' vocabulary and literacy skills. Akramah et al. (2020), Ambarwati and Mandasari (2020), Lamido et al. (2021), and Alamri and Hakami (2022) argued that digital dictionaries provided so many conveniences to users. As a result, it had an impact on students' vocabulary mastery as well as students' literacy skills.

As mentioned above in the previous study, the use of dictionaries indeed is very helpful as the guidance to improve the student's vocabulary and reading comprehension which affects their literacy skills. Any kind of dictionary can assist to translate any difficult and unfamiliar words that can be problems for students' reading

activity. Apart from those matters, how effective among those kinds of dictionaries to perform at best in developing young learners' literacy skills still needs to be investigated further. Multilingual, printed and digital dictionaries are some language learning tools that enable learners to understand vocabulary in a foreign language. This recent study is a part of the previous research continuation to examine the design and development of the digital multilingual thematic dictionary. Through this current research, the findings hopefully are able to show the significant impacts of the implementation of a digital multilingual thematic dictionary on the students' literacy skills of sixth-grade elementary school students. Therefore, this experimental study will give clarity and knowledge as the justification to the readers, teachers, and other educational practitioners about the impact of digital multilingual thematic dictionaries on young learners' literacy skills.

1.2 Problem Identification

Regarding to the research background above, the problem identification could be formulated as below:

1.2.1 The literacy level of Indonesian children was very low and requires more attention

1.2.2 Literacy of young learners at an early age determined their competence and quality

1.2.3 The use of digital-based learning media was needed to facilitate students' language learning and to improve students' literacy skills

From the problem identification above, it could be concluded that literacy skills must be developed from an early age by being facilitated with digital learning media that was in line with the 21st-century learning era. The digital learning media was a digital multilingual thematic dictionary that is going to be treated to the students in the experimental group in order to verify whether or not it may affect significantly toward the literacy skill.

1.3 Research Limitation

This research was limited on finding the impact of digital multilingual thematic dictionary on the sixth-grade students' literacy skill.

1.4 Research Question

Based on the research background and problem identification stated before, the research question that needs to be answered is: "Is there any significant impact of digital multilingual thematic dictionary on the sixth-grade students' literacy skills?".

1.5 Research Objective

This research was conducted to present justification for whether or not there was any significant impact of using a digital multilingual thematic dictionary on sixth-grade students' literacy skills.

1.6 Research Significances

1.6.1 Theoretical significance of this research was to enrich theories of TEYL, especially in the EFL context regarding the use of a digital multilingual thematic dictionary and literacy skill development.

1.6.2 Practical significance of this research was: 1) Teachers could use digital-based learning media that was more attractive and in line with the 21st-century learning era. 2) EFL students got an alternative to learn vocabulary in an interesting and fun way. 3) Other researchers could use this research as a reference for the development of digital dictionary research in the future.