

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Basic literacy has been one of the most important foundations of education. Basic literacy is the ability to read, write, and calculate (Fitria, 2023a; Harsanti, 2020). Fitria (2023b) also supports this by stating that basic literacy also consists of the ability to solve problems. It also refers to students' comprehension of content, critical thinking, and communication skills. Supported by other researchers, basic literacy is closely related to the usage of language verbally and in writing (Harsanti, 2020).

According to Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Number 5 2022, the policy governing the education system in Indonesia, the curriculum implemented in Indonesia, Merdeka Belajar, aims to empower students' literacy as the foundation for students in Indonesia. It is stated that the goal of the curriculum is to increase students' literacy and numeracy referring to their ability to comprehend reading texts, express opinions regarding the comprehension, and writing expository and narrative texts from different points of view (Kemendikbud, 2013). The primary purpose of the curriculum implemented in Indonesia is to provide all students in Indonesia with the opportunity to learn basic literacy. According to Padmadewi et al. (2022), basic literacy is critical, considering that literacy ability in elementary school is still low and needs support from the government. It is also supported by the results of the Program for International Student Assessment that Indonesian students have low literacy skills (Dewi et al., 2018). It also includes students with special needs, such as students

with autism spectrum disorder. Besides that, it is also supported by the declaration of the United Nation. As stated by Sandra (2020), the United Nations declared a policy regarding the attitude of the institution, including the educational institution, toward human rights. Everyone should be given equal opportunities, including access to education. It also becomes one of the main reasons that many schools, including those in Indonesia, accept students with special needs into their institutions (Robertson et al., 2003).

Autism Spectrum Disorder, (hence ASD), is a term referring to those who have problems with social communication, social interaction, flexibility in terms of repetitive behaviour, limited interest, and also activities (Padmadewi & Artini, 2017; Puspita et al., 2019). ASD students are reported to be less likely to initiate conversations with their peers and respond appropriately to questions asked by the interlocutor. According to Duff and Clarke (2011), students with ASD usually show difficulty in comprehending things that they read. They can read the passage and verbalize it without knowing its inferences (Accardo, 2015).

In regard to how students with ASD students learn things, Puspita et al. (2019) stated that students with ASD are strong visual learners. It can be said that students with ASD learn things more easily if the matter is visualized through pictures, videos, etc. ASD show improved responses to the visualized information (Mccorkle, 2012; Padmadewi & Artini, 2017). Visual learning style is the learning style that utilize visual media such as pictures, charts, maps, diagrams, and videos (Puspita et al., 2019). It is also supported by Ramadhani et al. (2019b) and Sophya (2017) who found in their research that visual aids are essential in teaching students with autism spectrum disorder. Autism spectrum disorder students learn English

more effectively with aid of visual aids, such as pictures, videos, and objects (Bidari & Yanti, 2021; Lasintia et al., 2021; Puspita et al., 2019). Visual aids should be able to attract students' attention and the use should be proper. Thus, visual aids are crucial for students with autism spectrum disorder due to the nature of their learning styles and the benefits of using visualized learning media.

One of the learning media used for teaching students with autism spectrum disorder is called a social story. Social story is a teaching tool typically used to teach students with autism spectrum disorder (Riga et al., 2021a). This teaching tool is used to introduce specific competencies within the social rule contexts. As stated by Bawazir and Jones, as cited in as above, the social story can be used to create meaningful communicative interaction between teachers and students; thus, it can serve as a means to teach basic literacy to students with autism spectrum disorder.

The utilization of social story in Indonesia has been focusing on students' communication skills and increasing specific competencies regarding to students' behaviours, such as building friendships, making learning decisions, and social interaction. The researchers found that communication between peers shows positive development after the use of social story (Alotaibi & Dimitriadi, 2016; Balakrishnan & Alias, 2017; Bozkurt & Vuran, 2014a; Saad, 2016). According to Riga et al. (2021a), social story help students with ASD perceive the same situation differently; thus, implementing social stories enable teachers to acquire and develop students' communication skills. Not only that, according to Padmadewi et al. (2024), the teachers in Indonesia have good perceptions about the inclusive education, but are not able to implement the system optimally. It is stated that

teachers face challenges in implementing inclusive education (Padmadewi et al., 2024).

However, considering how English is the lingua franca in the world, very few studies related to the utilization of social story in the context of bilingualism have been conducted. In addition, according to Trelles et al. (2019), bilingualism brings benefits to students with autism spectrum disorder specifically in their ability to comprehend vocabulary across languages. It enables them able to comprehend the meaning of words when they are surrounded by dual language in their daily exposure. It is also supported by Garrido et al. (2024) who stated that exposure to language has an impact on students' lexical and morphological development. Bilingualism plays an important role in developing students' basic literacy in comprehending the meaning of words. Thus, the context of bilingualism in teaching students basic literacy becomes an additional important factor in supporting the success of the learning (Garrido et al., 2024).

Even though social stories have also proven beneficial for students with autism spectrum disorder and language exposure plays an important role in the success of the learning process for students with autism spectrum disorder, studies regarding this matters are hardly found. The non-existence of the implementation of social story for students with autism spectrum disorder leads to the observation of the implementation. As the pre-observation results come out, a bilingual private school in North Bali, called as North Bali Bilingual School, has been using social stories as media to teach students' particular competencies related to their behaviour. It is the school in Singaraja that implement social stories and proves the difference in using them as a learning medium to teach specific skills to students with autism

spectrum disorder. Other research conducted in the same place also found that basic literacy becomes a primary concern and empowered effectively by several programs, including Social Story and Task Performance Analysis, IEP, Buddy Program, and Interactive Storytelling (Dewi et al., 2018; Padmadewi, Artini, et al., 2025; Padmadewi, Sukadana, Purandina, et al., 2024; Padmadewi & Artini, 2017). Another empowerment about increasing the ability of students with special needs in this school is conducted through the *menyama braya* principle (Padmadewi, Sukadana, et al., 2025). Students with autism spectrum disorder are exposed to more than one language, such as Bahasa Indonesia, English, and even Balinese, in subjects like Physical Exercise, English, Art, and Music. Therefore, the researcher conducted research about the implementation of social stories to teach three students with autism spectrum disorder in a partial inclusive program, specifically focusing on their reading comprehension, within a bilingual school environment that allows them to be exposed to more than one language.

1.2 Problem of Identification

Students with autism spectrum disorder are learners who benefit from visualized material (Puspita et al., 2019). It is stated that students with ASD learn more easily through visual aids, such as pictures, videos, realia, etc. Supported by McCokle as cited in Puspita et al. (2019a), students with ASD are proven to show significantly improved responses to visualized information. The utilization of learning media plays a significant role in the learning process of students with ASD.

However, even though the utilization of learning media is important, research stated that the usage of the appropriate learning media has been an issue for teaching students with autism spectrum disorder. The challenges faced by teachers are

related to how the learning media can attract students' attention and how they should be implemented effectively (Ramadhani et al., 2019b).

Students with autism spectrum disorder face challenges in communication, whether it is written or oral. Students with autism spectrum disorder often struggle to comprehend short passages as it becomes the primary purpose of Kurikulum Merdeka (Accardo, 2015). Students with ASD are able to read text without knowing the meaning of the text itself. However, even though students with autism spectrum disorder have difficulties of comprehending text and communicating in complying instructions, the usage of social story as one of the learning media for students with autism spectrum disorder, has not been undergone.

The importance of the issue has not been adequately addressed in research as very few or no studies have been undertaken regarding the implementation of social story for teaching basic literacy to students with autism spectrum disorder. Thus, this study is conducted to implement social story media to teach basic literacy to students with autism spectrum disorder.

1.3 Research of Limitation

The research limitation of this study is that it only implemented social story to teach basic literacy in Bahasa to students with ASD in one inclusive school, in North Singaraja. The students with autism spectrum disorder are in the first level of ASD, who do not have any difficulty in speaking. Not only that, the implementation of social story only covers students' literacy. Numeracy as part of basic literacy is also not covered in this proposed study.

1.4 Research of Questions

1. How are students with ASD different in reading comprehension before and after the implementation of the social story?
2. How are students with ASD different in behaviours while answering the reading comprehension questions before and after the implementation of the social story?
3. What are the difficulties encountered by the teachers during the implementation of social story to teach students with ASD?

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To describe the differences in students with ASD' reading comprehension at an inclusive school in North Bali before the implementation of the social story and after the implementation of the social story.
2. To describe the differences in students with ASD's behaviour while answering the reading comprehension at an inclusive school in North Bali before the implementation of the social story and after the implementation of the social story.
3. To describe the difficulties encountered by the teachers during the implementation of social story to teach students with ASD.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research is expected to have two significances namely theoretical significance and practical significance. The significance of this research is described as follows.

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

It is expected that this research will provide more theoretical substance regarding the benefits of implementing social story, beyond improving students with ASD's communication skills and desirable behaviour. The results of this study are also expected to provide additional theoretical evidence about the possible challenges faced by the teachers during the implementation of certain learning media.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

In practice, this study is expected to give significance to the government of Indonesia, teachers, and parents of ASD students, which is described as follows.

1.6.3 Indonesian Policy Maker in Inclusive Education

The study's results are expected to provide guidance on suitable learning media for to teaching basic literacy, particularly to students with ASD. The learning media is expected to be used by teachers in inclusive education, including inclusive education in public schools.

1.6.4 Teachers of Inclusive Education

The use of social story to teach basic literacy to students with ASD is expected to be beneficial for teachers as a learning medium used in the learning process. The study's results are also expected to provide teachers with a reference for selecting the type of learning media that can be used to teach specific competencies to students.

1.6.5 Parents of ASD Students

Parents of ASD can acknowledge the importance of visualized communication tools for students with ASD. Not only that, the study's product can also be used by the parents when teaching their kids at home.

1.7 Definition of Key Term

1.7.1 Conceptual Definition

a) Social Story

A social story is one of the learning specifically used to teach students with ASD. A social story is a form of individualized short story used to provide specific context and appropriate responses, teaching students with ASD a particular competence (Saad, 2016). Social story is usually used as a tool to help students with ASD learn particular social skills, such as social behavior, and communication. The characteristics of sentences used in social story are descriptive, perspective, directive, cooperative, and affirmative (Alotaibi & Dimitriadi, 2016; Saad, 2016).

b) Basic Literacy

Basic literacy consists of the ability to read, write, and calculate (Fitria, 2023a; Retno Harsanti & Atma Jaya, 2020). (Fitria, 2023a) stated that it consists of reading, writing, speaking, calculating, and solving problems. It is also supported by (Retno Harsanti & Atma Jaya, 2020) who stated basic literacy is closely related to the use of language both verbally and in writing. Basic literacy is essential for students able to learn independently, access the information provided to them, and participate in society.

1.7.2 Operational Definition

a) Social Story

The social story used are six social stories used in a private school in North Singaraja, North Bali Bilingual School, to teach students with autism spectrum disorder basic literacy covering questions with question words of what, who, when, when, where, why, and closed ended question. Not only that, but social stories also refer to three social stories that teach students' behaviour while completing the text passage given by the teacher, which covers their ability to maintain focus and able to ask for help.

b) Basic Literacy

Basic literacy refers to students' ability to answer reading comprehension questions after being treated with an intervention program that includes social stories with questions using words such as what, who, where, when, why, and closed-ended questions.

