

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Research

A key component of accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) created forth by the UN in 2015 is education. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are intended to address a number of global issues, such as inequality, poverty, social injustice, and climate change. Each goal in the SDGs has an important role in creating a just, sustainable and peaceful world. From the 17 SDGs, quality education (SDG 4) is the main foundation that contributes to the achievement of other goals, such as reducing inequality, creating decent employment opportunities, and maintaining environmental sustainability (Enyanto et al., 2024 as cited in Puspitasari, 2025). The agenda for the twenty-first century acknowledges that education is essential to achieving the other SDGs (Gunamantha, 2010).

As it stated in goal 4 “quality education” remains that education is the key for enabling other goals. Education is a core SDG because improving and equalizing the quality of education can promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Achieving goal 4 will directly impact the progress of other goals. The other goals will be influenced by education, such as; education reduces poverty by enhancing personal skills, increasing employability, and improving economic growth. Education helps to improve food security and reduce hunger. Educated populations lead to reduced mortality rates and improved health. Education can empower women and girls or closing gender gaps in employment and leadership. According

to Herlambang (2019, as cited in Milati & Nugraheni, 2024), The main goal of education is to prepare the next generation to understand and apply values and norms based on experience, knowledge, skills and talents, which will become the foundation of their lives and activities in the future. By educating the population or communities about utilizing energy technologies can promote sustainable energy use. Education will enhance people's skills and innovation, so it can contribute to productive and sustainable economic activities. Then, environmental education builds awareness about climate change and forces us to push sustainable practices. Education increases awareness and understanding of global issues, which is a crucial step in driving individual and collective behavioral change. Students can comprehend the connection between their everyday behaviors and their effects on the environment and society through curricula connected to the SDGs. For example, education on sustainable natural resource management can encourage students to adopt environmentally friendly practices in their daily lives, such as reducing the use of single-use plastics and increasing recycling. It facilitates the accomplishment of SDG objectives, including goal 12 on responsible production and consumption (UNESCO, 2019).

Although education is a powerful instrument for achieving the SDGs in a global context, the implementation should be aligned with the existing local context. Local context or local culture will make the real examples in learning SDGs-based reading material for students. Thus, curriculum in Indonesia can adjust the strategies to integrating the local context or local culture into the reading materials. To adjust the strategies for achieving SDGs, curriculum must be related to SDGs content and adapted to the local conditions to ensure relevance and

participation. Various studies have shown that curriculum that is adjusted to local needs and realities can increase the relevance and effectiveness of education on SDGs. Research by Simamora (2021) revealed that teaching materials that link global environmental issues with local challenges have great potential in helping students understand the relevance of SDGs in their own context. Developing a curriculum that takes local context into account involves developing learning materials that are accessible and understandable to students from diverse cultural backgrounds. This means that learning materials should be designed to illustrate the relationship between global SDG theory and local practices that they experience every day. For example, in teaching about the SDG goals related to clean water management (goal 6), the curriculum can include topics relevant to local water resources, water management practices in local communities. In Bali, there is a system named *subak*. The *subak* system in Bali is a form of customary law that has socio-agrarian-religious characteristics, where a group of farmers manage irrigation water for rice fields. This system is based on the concept of *Tri Hita Karana* (THK), which emphasizes harmony between humans, nature, and God, thus enabling sustainable management of irrigation and agricultural land (Sumiyati et al., 2012). Furthermore, curriculum adjustments that take local context into account can increase student engagement with the learning material. When students see how SDG principles are applied in their own lives and their communities, they will be more motivated to learn and participate in SDG efforts. This creates an opportunity to connect learning to their real lives, making education more relevant and useful (Simamora, 2021). A local context-based approach also allows for the identification and response to specific challenges faced by local communities. By developing

locally appropriate teaching materials, schools can provide more effective education in addressing local issues, such as environmental pollution or social injustice, while still upholding the global principles of the SDGs (United Nations, 2015).

As awareness of the SDGs grows around the world, it is crucial to build or improve understanding from an early age through education, particularly in elementary school. Integrating SDG values from an early age is essential to foster awareness, critical thinking, and responsible behavior among young learners. Supported by UNESCO, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) encourages schools to incorporate sustainability themes into teaching materials, including those related to environmental protection, clean energy, health, and social justice. When SDGS-based content is integrated into the curriculum, students will gain a deeper understanding of their role as global citizens and more likely to internalize values such as empathy, fairness, and awareness for the environment. Research by Simamora (2021) stated that when students see how SDG principles are applied in their own lives and their communities, they will be more motivated to learn and participate in SDG efforts. This creates an opportunity to connect learning to their real lives, making education more relevant and useful (Simamora, 2021). Therefore, primary school is a strategic stage to introduce the SDGs not only as a knowledge domain but as a way of thinking and living.

To build global insight in students, there is still a lack of SDGs content reading materials that are appropriate for primary school students' age and understanding in order to foster global awareness in students. Based on the results of initial observations, there are not many reading materials that are specifically designed to

be easily accepted and understood by elementary school students. Furthermore, based on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Indonesian students' reading skills are relatively low. One problem that occurred in Indonesia from a long time ago until now has not been resolved is the very low literacy rate. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Indonesia now has a relatively low literacy rate. The result of the PISA survey in 2022 indicates that Indonesian students scored 359 reading ability points, this point is far below the average score of OECD member countries which ranges from 472-480 points. Indonesia is placed 10th out of 14 developing countries in the 2016 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report, which was released by UNESCO (Fajar et al., 2017). This indicates that a significant number of students are unable to identify the main idea, interpret information, or reflect on content in written texts. The problems are closely related to the limited availability of reading materials, which leads to low reading ability among Indonesian students. Therefore, special treatment is needed to address these issues. This data is strongly supported by National findings and educational reports that one of Chairman of the Buleleng Regency Education Council named I Made Sedana stated that “hundreds of junior high school students in Buleleng regency unable to read fluently” (Kusuma, 2025). According to information gathered at the Buleleng Middle School Principals' Working Meeting (*Musyawarah Kerja Kepala Sekolah*), Sedana reported that around 400 middle school students' difficulty in reading. The hundreds of students come from 60 middle schools in Buleleng Regency. This gap highlights the urgent

need to develop contextualized reading resources that reflect both linguistic needs and sustainability messages.

However, SDGs content is rarely found in education context, especially in Indonesia. Some regions or community groups in Indonesia still struggle to access adequate and quality education, resulting in inequalities in access to education (Maula et al., 2023). In addition, most of the content in textbooks contains morals that should be adhered to by society. At primary school level, the knowledge about SDGs is still infrequently given to students. Whereas, the whole 17 goals in SDG are very important to know for young learners. They will know about the importance of maintaining stability between the environment, economy, nature, and other things that are interconnected. One study conducted in Kosovo reveals a general awareness of SDGs among future teachers, particularly focusing on social and economic aspects while ignoring environmental concerns. The findings suggest a need for an enhanced curriculum that incorporates diverse sustainable development topics to improve a sustainable worldview and engage students in global challenges. In addition, Bekteshi and Xhaferi (2020) stated that in order to observe the effects of learning about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the necessary and specific SDGs should be taught in English lessons. Additionally, they claim that a variety of subjects covered in English classrooms encourage understanding about the SDGs (Bekteshi & Xhaferi, 2020).

Apart from material limitations, the capacity of teachers to effectively integrate SDGs content into classroom instruction is another major challenge. Many elementary school teachers still lack sufficient training and pedagogical support to deliver SDGs-related topics in English lessons. Teachers may not be familiar with

the SDGs framework or may not know how to convert complex global goals into real and understandable lesson plans. Moreover, structural issues such as limited teaching aids, overcrowded curricula, and minimal access to professional development programs exacerbate the problem. These constraints are particularly pronounced in rural and underserved areas, where the implementation of innovative or interdisciplinary approaches is even more difficult. Without adequate preparation and resources, teachers struggle to create learning experiences that are both linguistically accessible and thematically meaningful. This statement is supported by several studies that suggest the need for additional support and training for teachers to integrate the SDGs themes into reading materials (Kumar & Sharma, 2022, Yu et al., 2024).

It is necessary to conduct a thorough investigation on how SDGs-based reading materials can be effectively integrated into English language instruction, especially at the primary level. Reading materials that discuss SDGs are still rarely found in Indonesian language, moreover in English language. This claim is consistent with an Indonesian study found that just 10% of basic reading textbooks provided appropriate environments (Ramadhianti & Candra, 2020). The English language needs to be emphasized, such as vocabulary, how to speak, how to write, and how to read English words. Such integration requires more than simply inserting global issues into the texts. However, it must consider linguistic appropriateness, pedagogical strategies, and students' developmental stages. Effective integration involves aligning reading materials with both language learning objectives and sustainability values, so that learners not only improve their English skills but also internalize moral, environmental, and civic lessons. This calls

for a deliberate design that balances vocabulary level, sentence complexity, and the visual layout of texts with themes such as clean water, healthy lifestyle, and gender equality. Moreover, this integration must be informed by classroom realities, taking into account the local culture, available teaching resources, and the teachers' instructional capacity. Therefore, research that explores the practical pathways and model frameworks for embedding SDGs in English reading materials is urgently needed to support educators and material developers in making sustainability a natural part of language education.

Previous studies only focusing on the improving quality of the education and the impact on the students have been conducted (Kwee, 2021, Cordova, 2024, Seva et al., 2023). These studies indicate that SDGs content has several positive impacts for both educators and learners. Most of the previous studies show that the students do not have any knowledge of Sustainable Development Goals. Bekteshi & Xhaferi states that most students do not have any knowledge of Sustainable Development with the specific number 39.3 %. On the other side, several studies have shown that the students agree to the sustainable development goals program. According to Seva et al. (2023), 58.5% of students stated that it is essential to incorporate SDG-related reading resources into their reading texts in order to improve their English, and 30.5% of students stated that these materials are very significant. However, there is just a little research that examines students' reading content needs on the topic SDGs.

Thus, this needs analysis plays a crucial role to find out the students' understanding in SDGs, the students' interest in reading material with SDG content, and how reading materials can be developed according to students' characteristics

and needs. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), introduced by the United Nations, offer relevant and meaningful content to be introduced to young learners. Themes such as environmental protection, clean water, healthy living, and equality are not only globally important but also closely related to students' everyday experiences. This statement is supported by the research that was conducted by Seva et al. (2023). According to the study, 58.5% of students stated that it is essential to incorporate SDG-related reading materials into their texts in order to improve their English, and 30.5% of students stated that these materials are very significant (Seva et al., 2023). Integrating SDGs into English reading materials provides an opportunity to improve both literacy skills and students' understanding of real-world issues. However, before designing reading materials, it is necessary to understand what students actually need in terms of reading input. Adopted from Hutchinson and Waters (1987) theory (as cited in Singh & Ganapathy, 2017), a needs analysis must include both target needs (why is the reading materials needed, how will the reading materials be used, what will the reading materials content areas be, and who will the learner use the reading materials) and learning needs (why are the reading materials important and what the reading materials resources are available). Therefore, it is important to analyze students' lacks, wants, and necessities as well as their learning preferences, including types of texts, media, and topics they are most engaged with.

This study aims to analyze fifth-grade students' target and learning needs related to English reading materials with SDGs content. By identifying what students currently lack, what they want, and what is necessary for their learning. The results of this study are expected to provide useful guidance for the

development of teaching materials that support the achievement of SDGs at the elementary level. Most previous studies have focused on the impact of SDGs education in general without considering students' specific needs (Kwee, 2021, Bekteshi & Xhaferi, 2020, Cordova, 2024). This study is also expected to fill the gap by analyzing the target and learning needs of elementary school students related to SDGs-based reading materials. This study is also expected to provide recommendations for the curriculum regarding reading materials given to elementary school students. By understanding students' target needs and learning needs, it is hoped that more effective methods can be found in integrating SDGs into the education curriculum, so the students not only understand global concepts but can also apply them in their daily lives.

1.2 Identification of Problems

One of the main challenges in education about Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is identifying relevant and appropriate reading content for primary school students. The content must be adjusted to the age and cognitive development of students so that it is easy to understand. If the material is too technical or does not relate to students' daily experiences, this can result in confusion and lack of interest. Therefore, it is important to develop reading materials that use simple language, are accompanied by concrete examples, and are relevant to students' daily lives (Scott & Gough, 2014). The development of reading content must consider the stage of students' cognitive development. Children in elementary school are in the process of forming abstract thinking skills, so the material must be broken down into easy-to-understand information. The use of clear language and interesting illustrations can help students understand SDG concepts. For example, materials

about climate change can use relevant local images and stories, such as the impact of extreme weather on their environment.

The relevance of the content to students' daily lives is essential to enhance understanding. Teaching materials should connect SDG concepts to students' experiences and environments. Examples that relate directly to their local context, such as waste management or natural resource conservation, will make the material more meaningful and motivate students to learn. In addition, interesting and interactive reading materials, such as project-based activities or educational games, can increase student engagement. By linking the material to fun activities, students will be more motivated and excited to understand and apply the principles of SDGs in their daily lives.

The method of presenting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) content is an important issue in education because the way information is presented affects the extent to which students can understand and engage with the material. The presentation method must be able to simplify complex information without reducing its essence, and make the teaching material interesting and easily accessible to students. If the material is not presented in an effective way, this can reduce students' understanding of the principles of the SDGs and affect their motivation to learn (Pappas & Pappas, 2015). One effective method is the use of visual media, such as images, infographics, and videos. Visual media can help simplify abstract concepts and make them easier to understand. For example, a video featuring a local story about the impacts of climate change can help students see firsthand how the issue affects their environment, making learning more relevant and immersive. Interactive activities are also very important in presenting

SDGs content. Activities such as group discussions, simulations, and educational games can increase student engagement and allow them to experience SDG principles firsthand. This approach not only makes learning more interesting but also helps students understand how the concepts are applied in real-world situations. Project-based approaches are another effective method. Through projects that involve research and application of SDG principles, students can develop practical and critical thinking skills. For example, students can work in groups to design a waste management project in their school, which not only enhances their understanding of waste management but also provides hands-on experience in implementing sustainable solutions.

Adapting teaching materials to reflect local contexts is essential in improving students' understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Indonesia, which is known for its cultural and linguistic diversity, students' understanding of teaching materials is greatly influenced by their local context. This diversity encompasses various aspects, such as customs, regional languages, and daily practices that vary from region to region. Therefore, teaching materials on SDGs must be designed with students' cultural backgrounds in mind to make them more easily accepted and understood. Teaching materials that do not take into account local cultural contexts may not be relevant to students' everyday experiences and realities, which can result in decreased interest and effectiveness of learning. For example, materials on natural resource management should be adapted to local environmental conditions, such as traditional farming practices or local weather patterns, so that students can relate SDG concepts to their own lives. This adaptation helps students see a direct connection between the global theory of

the SDGs and their local situation, which can increase their understanding and engagement.

One crucial factor to take into account is how incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the curriculum will affect students' knowledge and understanding. Integrating SDGs into the educational curriculum aims to enhance students' understanding of global issues and encourage them to actively engage in sustainability efforts. When students are provided with in-depth and relevant knowledge about the SDGs, they will not only understand global challenges such as climate change, poverty, and social injustice, but will also be better prepared to contribute to solutions that support sustainable development. However, the effectiveness of this integration is highly dependent on the quality of the teaching materials and presentation methods used. Teaching materials that are too technical or not adapted to the level of cognitive development of students can result in confusion and decrease their interest in the topic. Therefore, it is important to prepare teaching materials in simple, clear language that is relevant to students' daily lives. In addition, the presentation methods used must be able to simplify complex information and make it interesting and easy to understand. The use of visual media, interactive activities, and project-based approaches are some examples of methods that can help explain the principles of the SDGs in a more effective way.

1.3 limitation of the study

The main focus of this study is limited to analyzing the needs of elementary school students in Buleleng related to reading materials with SDGs contents. Based

on Hutchinson and Waters (1987) theory (as cited in Singh & Ganapathy, 2017), a needs analysis must include both target needs (why is the reading materials needed, how will the reading materials be used, what will the reading materials content areas be, and who will the learner use the reading materials) and learning needs (why are the reading materials important and what the reading materials resources are available). By integrating SDG themes, language learning could provide students with relevant vocabularies, critical thinking skills, and cultural awareness related to global issues. Thus, it will be aligning language education with contemporary global citizenship goals. This limitation highlights the students' weaknesses in understanding global issues and their need to be able to understand these issues.

1.4 Research Questions:

Based on the background that has been explained, the research questions of this study are:

1. What are the target needs on SDGs based content reading materials?
2. What are the learning needs on SDGs based content reading materials?

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To identify the students' target needs on SDGs based content reading materials.
2. To identify the students' learning needs on SDGs based content reading materials.

1.6 Significance of the Research

The significance of the research on the students' needs on the development of sustainable reading materials lies in the potential to address both educational and

global sustainability goals by combining reading materials with the principles of sustainable development context. Thus, the students have many options to learn about the problems that exist in this world, especially in their environment. This research is expected to provide various benefits, including:

1.6.1 Practical Significance

This research will help in designing teaching materials that are appropriate to the age and level of understanding of elementary school students about SDGs. By identifying the need for relevant reading content, teaching materials can be made more interesting and easier for students to understand. The SDGs content presentation model developed will provide practical guidance for teachers in presenting materials interactively and interestingly.

1.6.2 Theoretical Significance

Add to the literature on the integration of SDGs in the basic education curriculum and its relevance to the local context. This research is expected contribute to the development of educational theories that connect global teaching materials with local contexts, as well as effective presentation methods.

1.6.3 Social and Community Significance

This research is expected to Improve students' understanding of global issues and encourage their involvement in sustainability efforts, strengthen the connection between schools and communities by involving local communities in the development of teaching materials, and the last, stimulate students' behavior that supports sustainable development in their communities.

1.6.4 Education Policy Development Significance

This research is expected to provide concrete evidence on the effectiveness of SDGs presentation methods and the relevance of reading content as a reference for policy makers. Support curriculum renewal efforts and the creation of education policies that are more inclusive and relevant to global issues. Ensure that the education provided not only meets academic standards but also prepares students to become conscious and responsible global citizens.

