

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Teaching English to young learners is very important in today's connected world because it creates many opportunities for them. When children learn English, they can access a wide range of educational resources, such as books and online materials, which can help them in school and prepare them for higher education (Dewi et al., 2021). Additionally, learning English helps develop important skills like critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving (Masduqi, 2011). It also exposes children to different cultures, helping them understand and appreciate various ways of life (Ariantini et al., 2024). It explains that teaching English to young learners is essential for their success in a global society, supporting their personal growth, and improving their academic skill. Thus, English teachers are required to put their efforts in enhancing students' language learning.

One of the efforts to enhance young learners' English language learning is through their involvement in English literacy program. Supporting English learning through literacy practices is very important for helping young learners succeed. When they engage in activities like reading storybooks, writing, and having discussions, they strengthen their understanding of the language and improve their reading and writing skills (Padmadewi & Artini, 2019). These activities not only help them learn new words and grammar but also make learning fun and enjoyable. By using appropriate literacy materials that relate to their own lives, teachers can make English learning more meaningful for students (Ratminingsih et al., 2020).

This approach also builds their confidence and encourages them to use English. In short, supporting English learning through literacy practices in elementary school creates a strong foundation for students, helping them do well in school and in life, as discussed earlier about the importance of teaching English to young learners.

In Indonesia, despite the implementation of numerous literacy programs aimed at improving reading and writing skills among students, the results have not been as satisfying as expected (Parmini et al., 2023). One notable phenomenon is the low performance of Indonesian students in international assessments, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). PISA results have consistently shown that Indonesian students struggle with reading comprehension, mathematics, and science compared to their peers in other countries (Hewi & Shaleh, 2020). For instance, in the 2023 PISA assessment, Indonesia ranked significantly lower than many other countries, indicating that while literacy programs have been introduced, they have not effectively translated into improved student outcomes. Additionally, the English Proficiency Index (EPI) in 2025 has shown that Indonesia ranks low in English language skills compared to other countries in Southeast Asia. This low proficiency can be attributed to various factors, including a lack of qualified teachers, insufficient resources, and a curriculum that may not adequately address the needs of students (Maruf et al., 2020).

One of the major problems contributing to low English literacy skills in Indonesia is the lack of authentic literacy learning materials that are culturally relevant and engaging for students (Anwas et al., 2022). Many existing resources do not reflect the interests or experiences of Indonesian children, making it difficult

for them to connect with the content (Nitiasih et al., 2022). This disconnect can lead to a lack of motivation and engagement in learning English, further hindering their literacy development.

A preliminary study conducted at SDN 3 Sepang further confirms the challenges related to low English literacy skills in Indonesia, particularly highlighting the issues of teacher qualifications and the availability of authentic literacy learning materials. Based on the preliminary observation conducted, English literacy activities were very limited because teachers do not yet have adequate English language skills and there are no supporting media such as story books that are appropriate to the children's level. While children prefer picture story books with simple language and interesting illustrations, the libraries did not provide these kinds of media. Thus, the most important and urgent initial step to improve English literacy in elementary schools is to provide literacy media that are appropriate to the level and interests of children. These media include illustrated storybooks, storybooks with simple language, and interactive materials that can attract students' interest in reading while also helping teachers in carrying out literacy activities, even though teachers' English skills are still limited.

Limited resource to support English literacies can make it difficult for students to learn to read and write effectively, which is very important for their overall education (Lesia et al., 2021). Teachers who do not have strong English literacy teaching skills may struggle to give clear instructions, understand students' needs, and keep students interested in reading activities (Romadhon et al., 2024). This can cause students to have poor learning experiences and may reduce their motivation literacy. Considering the preliminary data, it is urgent to develop

storybooks that are relevant to facilitate the students' English literacy. Developing a storybook to support English literacy practice is essential, typically aged 9 to 10 years, is essential because this developmental stage marks a transition from basic decoding to more advanced reading skills and also considering the findings from the preliminary study conducted at SDN 3 Sepang. At this fourth grade, students are capable of understanding more complex vocabulary, sentence structures, and narrative elements, which supports the enhancement of their reading comprehension and critical thinking abilities (Kodan, 2017). Additionally, fourth graders are increasingly expected to engage in independent reading and to analyze texts in alignment with curriculum standards, including vocabulary development and interpretation of themes.

The use of storybooks has been widely used in context of students' English language learning enhancement. Ratminingsih et al., (2020) have explored the importance of utilizing storybook in supporting EFL students' reading comprehension. They found that storybook had a significant influence in helping students develop their reading interest and overall comprehension. Grolig (2020) furthermore elaborate the use of storybooks not only on reading but also on students' oral skills. The study found that providing storybooks can be a strong foundation to develop students' English skills. Despite studies related with storybooks, there has not been much research discussing how storybooks can be adapted to be easy to use by teachers with limited English skills, so that teachers can still facilitate literacy activities even though their English skills are not optimal. Pujiani et al., (2023) revealed that e-storybooks significantly enhance vocabulary mastery among young learners of English, demonstrating the effectiveness of storytelling as a teaching method. This innovative approach not only facilitates

vocabulary acquisition but also encourages independent learning by providing engaging and accessible content. Furthermore, Indarini and Rahmadani (2024) concluded that picture storybook media effectively improves the reading abilities of children aged 7-8 years, particularly in key areas such as reading accuracy, clarity of voice, intonation, and fluency. This method aids children in developing a better understanding of punctuation and overall reading comprehension, resulting in clearer and more engaging oral reading performance.

The existing research highlights the positive role of storybooks in enhancing English language skills among students, particularly in reading comprehension and oral abilities. However, there has not been a focus on research that develops literacy media that is appropriate to the level of English language skills of children in elementary schools that have limited library facilities and learning media. Therefore, research on the development of English storybooks in SDN 3 Sepang is very important to fill this gap by providing literacy media that is appropriate, contextual, and easily accessible to teachers and students, as well as paying attention to the real conditions of the school so that the literacy program can run effectively and sustainably.

By creating a storybook that is tailored to the needs and interests of young learners, teachers can offer engaging and relatable content that captures students' attention and makes learning English enjoyable (Khotimah & Wahyu, 2019). Additionally, a well-designed storybook can serve as a valuable resource for teachers who may lack formal training in English education, providing them with a structured way to facilitate literacy practice (Oktaviani et al., 2020). This approach directly addresses the gaps identified in the preliminary study, equipping both

students and teachers with the necessary tools to improve English literacy practice. Ultimately, developing such a storybook can play a vital role in overcoming the challenges faced in English language education at the primary level in Indonesia.

1.2 Problem Identification

The preliminary study at SDN 3 Sepang highlights significant challenges in English literacy development, particularly due to limited teacher qualifications and a lack of authentic learning materials. During English literacy practice, the teacher relied solely on government textbooks as the primary teaching resource. She claimed that she faced significant challenges in finding additional literature that included such appropriate English material content and expressed her inability to develop an English textbook due to her lack experiences. Many teachers, lacking formal training in English education, face difficulties in delivering effective instruction, which can impede students' language acquisition. Compounding this issue is the scarcity of quality English storybooks, which are essential for engaging students and fostering a genuine interest in reading. Developing a storybook tailored specifically for fourth-grade students addresses these challenges by providing age-appropriate, culturally relevant, and engaging content that supports both teachers and learners. Such a resource not only enriches the classroom environment but also encourages independent reading, thereby strengthening literacy skills and building confidence. This situation highlights the urgent need for effective solutions, particularly the development of storybooks. The absence of suitable educational resources can hinder the effectiveness of the English literacy

practice, making it crucial to create storybooks to help students enhance their English literacy.

Storybook was chosen as the primary literacy medium because it provides meaningful and contextualized language input that is appropriate for the cognitive and linguistic development of fourth-grade students. Through narratives, storybooks naturally integrate vocabulary, sentence patterns, and reading comprehension while maintaining students' interest and motivation. Compared to other literacy media such as worksheets, flashcards, or digital applications, storybooks support holistic English literacy development and allow cultural values to be embedded organically within the storyline. This makes storybooks particularly suitable for culturally responsive learning, as students can relate the content to their daily experiences. In the context of SDN 3 Sepang, where students' exposure to English outside the classroom is limited, a printed storybook is also practical, accessible, and flexible for classroom use without relying on technological facilities.

1.3. Research Questions

Based on the identified problems, the research questions proposed in this study are

1. What are the characteristics of storybook to support English literacy practice for primary level in SDN 3 Sepang?
2. How are the storybooks designed and developed to support English literacy practice for primary level in SDN 3 Sepang?
3. How is the quality of the developed storybook to support English literacy practice for primary level in SDN 3 Sepang?

1.4. Research Objectives

Based on the research questions, the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the characteristics of storybook to support English literacy practice for primary level in SDN 3 Sepang.
2. To develop a storybook to support English literacy practice for primary level in SDN 3 Sepang.
3. To investigate the quality of the developed storybook to support English literacy practice for primary level in SDN 3 Sepang.

1.5. Research Significances

1.5.1. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, by identifying the key characteristics of effective storybooks for young learners, this research contributes to the broader understanding of literacy development by highlighting how engaging and well-designed materials can facilitate language acquisition. It underscores the role of storybooks not just as reading practice tools but as meaningful resources that capture students' interest, support vocabulary growth, and enhance comprehension skills.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

The significance of this research lies in its practical benefits for both teachers and students in the context of English literacy development.

For teachers, the storybook designed in this study is user-friendly and tailored to those with limited English proficiency, accompanied by simple guidelines to ease lesson preparation and boost their confidence in consistently

conducting English literacy activities. This tool reduces the complexity of teaching and enables more effective delivery of literacy instruction.

For students, the storybook is adapted to their level of mastery, featuring simple texts and engaging illustrations that increase their motivation to read and facilitate comprehension of English. This, in turn, helps build a solid literacy foundation essential for their progression to higher learning levels.

