

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Literacy Research Background

development is crucial as it lays the foundation for continuous learning and academic success particularly for young learners in Indonesia (Apriliana et al., 2022). Research consistently shows that children who engage in reading activities from a young age are more likely to develop strong literacy skills, which contribute to their academic development (Ningsih et al., 2019). Reading activities at the elementary level not only enhance vocabulary but also fosters a love for learning that can sustain over time. According to Juniarta et al (2020) reading is one of the basic skills that must be mastered because it helps students to understand ideas, gain information, and enjoy the learning process, while also supporting vocabulary development and language skills. These reading skills also support critical thinking, communication and problem solving abilities which are important in today's era. However, many students still face challenges in developing their reading skills.

In response to these challenges, several programs have been implemented in Indonesia to enhance students' literacy, such as the School Literacy Movement, which includes 15 minutes of reading before class, the National Literacy Movement and Literacy for All program (Bata et al., 2023; Subur et al., 2022). These programs aim to promote students' interest in reading and improve their literacy. However, despite the various programs that have been implemented, Indonesia still faces significant challenges in this area (Wijaya et al., 2024). The results from the Programme for International Student Assessment PISA (2022) show that Indonesia ranked 69th out of 80 countries in reading literacy, which indicates a serious gap in

Students' reading performance (Sulistyaningrum, 2024). This suggests that problems in reading development still need attention, as they can affect students' learning and future opportunities.

One possible reason for this low reading performance is students' reading engagement. Previous studies by Rizaldi et al (2024) have shown that students with higher reading engagement usually achieve better reading outcomes. An important component of reading engagement is reading behavioural engagement, which refers to active and observable participation of students in reading, such as reflected in their effort, persistence, attention, positive conduct, active participation, reading frequency, and interaction with texts. (Fredricks et al., 2004; Guthrie, 2004; McGeown & Smith, 2024). These behavioural indicators are important because they can reflect students' motivation and involvement with reading materials. Therefore, addressing the factors that make reading behavioural engagement is crucial not only for individual academic success but also for improving the overall literacy in Indonesia. Despite the importance of reading behavioural engagement, many young learners struggle to maintain their engagement with reading materials (Sotelo, 2024). Research by Bergdahl & Nouri (2020) indicates that lack of engaging and relatable materials contributes significantly to this disengagement. As a result, students may become less engaged in reading activities which can affect their reading.

To understand how these issues appear in the classroom, this study conducted preliminary observations and an interview with a teacher at SD Lab Undiksha Singaraja. The findings indicate a similar situation, where students show low reading behavioural engagement, which also affects their reading. This low reading

behavioural engagement was reflected in reading activities where students showed low interest, rarely participated in discussions after reading activity, and were often distracted during reading time. Students sitting at the back of the class were also not engaged, some were talking to their peers, did not understand the material and showed signs of boredom like making a joke during the reading activity that shows they are not fully engaged with the material. In addition, students were generally passive during reading activities, as many of them did not follow the reading activity and only a few students responded to the questions.

Apart from the low level of reading behavioural engagement observed, it was also noted that the availability of appropriate reading materials for elementary students was still limited. Most of the reading materials provided at the school consisted mainly of textbooks and worksheets. These materials were mostly text-based with few illustrations. Which made them less engaging for students. This lack of engaging reading materials also contributes to students' low behavioural engagement in reading activities (Widiati et al., 2023) . Moreover, in the context of 21st century learning which emphasizes real world issues and global awareness, the materials used in the school still lacked themes that are relevant to students' real-life experiences and social environments. This shows that students have limited opportunities to develop their understanding and awareness through reading, especially when the content is not connected to their daily lives.

Besides the limited availability of appropriate reading materials, another challenge found in the classroom was the lack of digital reading materials, especially digital storybooks. In the classroom, technology had not yet been integrated to support reading activities. The availability of digital materials that are

suitable for young learners was also still limited. This condition made it harder to attract students' attention and encourage active participation during reading. In this context, integrating technology into reading activities becomes increasingly important, as it can provide a more engaging learning experience for students. Digital reading materials that combine text, images, and sound are considered more effective in increasing their engagement in reading (Fisher & Hitchcock, 2022). Therefore, digital storybooks can be used as an alternative to support students reading behavioural engagement.

Digital Storybook is digital versions of traditional storybooks that combine text, images, audio, and video (Irawati, 2018). According to Son & Butcher (2024) Digital Storybooks play a crucial role in developing a love for reading among young learners, as they can attract students through animations and sound effects that make the story more engaging. Digital Storybooks also provide opportunities for interactive learning, as students can click on different parts of the story to see animations or make simple choices, which can encourage them to be more active in reading activities (Indriani & Suteja, 2023; Kamil et al., 2023) . Thus Digital Storybook not only fosters students' engagement but also encourages them to understand the message of the story. This can be supported by how the content is designed. The content integrated into the digital storybook can include educational elements and themes that are relevant to students' real life experience.

Building on this, it is important to incorporate real world issues in reading activities. This encourages students to develop critical thinking, problem solving skills, and the ability to apply knowledge in practical contexts (Rusmin et al., 2024). In this context, real world issues can be introduced in reading materials through the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to Yang (2023) the United Nations introduced the SDGs in 2015 as a set of 17 global goals to address major challenges and promote sustainability by 2030. These goals include issues such as poverty, inequality, environmental problems, and climate change (Carpentier & Braun, 2020). Among these 17 objectives, Goals number 1 focuses on No Poverty. As the first goal, SDG 1 focuses on No Poverty, which aims to end extreme poverty, defined as living on less than \$1.90 per day by 2030 (Hemanth, 2024). This goal also aims to reduce the number of people living in poverty by ensuring access to basic needs such as healthcare, education, and social support. Reducing poverty is not only an economic issue, but also an important step toward achieving Sustainable Development Goals (Hayat & Mohyuddin, 2019). In the context of reading, teachers can foster empathy and awareness to students by including stories that show the challenges of people living in poverty. This encourages students to think about social issues and the causes of poverty, which are relevant to SDG 1: No Poverty.

The relevance of Digital Storybooks in supporting reading engagement and the use of SDGs themes especially in Goal 1: No Poverty have been highlighted in previous studies. Thus, previous research highlights the importance of engaging reading material that is important in supporting literacy (Bus et al., 2020). Several studies have shown that digital storybooks can increase students' engagement and reading interest especially supported by features such as clickable features, illustrations, and audio (Fisher & Hitchcock, 2022; Gunayasa et al., 2023; Nurhidayah & Wibowo, 2025; Rahiem, 2021). Other studies also indicate that stories which are culturally relevant can improve students' understanding and

engagement, particularly when the story is aligned with students' real-life context and needs (Fibriasari et al., 2021; Gunayasa et al., 2023; Shabiriani et al., 2023). In addition, research focusing on the integration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in education has demonstrated that including real world themes such as poverty into learning materials can foster critical thinking, empathy and global awareness among students (Aji et al., 2023; Guo et al., 2024; Mulero et al., 2024; Romadhan et al., 2024; Subur et al., 2022) . Previous studies underline the needs for reading materials that are not only interactive but also meaningful such as digital storybooks that integrate real world issues. However, most of these studies only focus either on the multimedia features of digital storybooks or on the content of the story without combining both aspects. Moreover, many of these studies were conducted at different educational levels and do not fully reflect the needs of elementary students in Indonesia.

This study addressed this gap by developing a digital storybook that combines multimedia features with SDG 1 No Poverty content to support students reading behavioural engagement. This development is based on the identified needs of students in the classroom. According to Hutchinson & Waters (1987), needs depend on the learning context and goals. In this study, students' needs are viewed in terms of target needs and learning needs. Target needs refer to what students need to achieve, while learning needs refer to how they can achieve it. Based on these needs, students need to develop reading behavioural engagement and require reading materials that are interesting, interactive, and meaningful to support their reading. Therefore, the digital storybook is designed to meet these

needs by providing reading material that keeps students engaged and presents relevant content that encourages critical thinking and promotes awareness.

The target are fifth grade elementary students at SD Lab Undiksha Singaraja. This study focuses on developing a digital storybook to support students' reading behavioural engagement by providing stories supported with illustrations and interactive features such as click-able features, pop up words and audio. Specifically, this study aims to (1) analyze the needs of students and teachers regarding reading materials, (2) Design and Develop a digital storybook based on students' and teachers' needs to support reading behavioural engagement (3) Evaluate the quality of the developed Digital Storybook through expert validation in terms of Digital storybook criteria and SDG 1 Learning Objectives (4) Examine the potential of the product in supporting students reading behavioural engagement through teacher evaluation. By aligning the story content with real world themes, this development is expected to provide meaningful reading materials that support students reading behavioural engagement. However, this study is limited to the stages of analyzing, designing, development, and evaluation only, and does not include the product implementation or testing with students in a classroom setting. Therefore, further research is needed to explore how the digital storybook can be used in actual classroom practice.

1.2 Problem Identification

Based on classroom observations and interviews with the teachers at SD Lab Undiksha Singaraja, several problems have been identified related to students reading behavioural engagement. First, students showed low engagement during reading activities, as reflected in their passive behaviour

such as: lack of focus and limited participation. Some students, especially those sitting at the back of the classroom were observed showing signs of boredom for example, talking with their peers.

Second, the main reading media used in the classroom are limited to textbooks and students' worksheets. These materials are mostly text based with minimal illustrations support. As a result, students experience monotonous learning which reduces their engagement in reading. The lack of varied reading materials contributes to a low level of reading behavioural engagement, making it difficult for students to develop reading skills. Third, this condition is concerning because research by Nasrullah et al (2024) shows that children who do not engage in reading often struggle in developing strong literacy skills which may affect their academic success and future career opportunities.

In addition to these issues, there is a growing need to integrate meaningful and real world themes into reading materials to align with 21st century learning. In this context, students are expected not only to master academic content but also to develop essential skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and global awareness. Lastly, interviews with the teacher revealed that the integration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in reading was still limited, and the teacher was not yet familiar with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly Goal 1: No Poverty, indicating the need for further integration of this topic into reading, this highlights an urgent need for reading materials that are not only educational but also engaging and aligned with the students' needs and promoting awareness of global issues. Therefore the

development of a digital storybook based on SDG 1 No Poverty is considered necessary to facilitate students reading behavioural engagement.

1.3 *Limitation of the Problem*

The scope of this research is limited to maintain focus. The research will be conducted with Grade 5 students at SD Lab Undiksha Singaraja during the academic year 2025/2026. This study will focus on the development of digital storybooks aimed to facilitating English reading behavioural engagement at SD Lab Undiksha Singaraja. The study will concentrate on the process of analyzing, designing, developing, and evaluating a digital storybook as a reading material. This study does not cover wider classroom implementation or testing the long-term effectiveness of the digital storybook. In addition, the needs analysis process in this study only involved teacher interviews. Student interviews were not conducted because the teacher is considered more capable of providing comprehensive information regarding learning needs. Furthermore, based on the teachers' consideration, the students might experience difficulties in expressing their ideas and opinions clearly during formal interview sessions.

1.4 *Research Question*

- a) What are the needs of fifth grade students and teacher regarding reading materials that integrate SDG- 1 to facilitate reading behavioural engagement?
- b) How can a digital storybook integrating SDG-1 be designed and developed to support fifth grade students reading behavioural engagement?

- c) How is the quality of the developed SDG-1 digital storybook as evaluated by experts in terms of criteria of digital storybooks and SDG-1 Learning Objectives?
- d) How is the quality of the developed SDG-1 digital storybook, as evaluated by teacher, in terms of students' reading behavioural engagement?

1.5 Research Objective

- a) To identify the needs of grade fifth students and teacher reading materials that integrate SDG-1 to facilitate reading behavioural engagement.
- b) To design and develop a digital storybook integrating SDG-1 to support grade fifth students reading behavioural engagement
- c) To evaluate the quality of the developed SDG-1 digital storybook, as assessed by experts, in terms of criteria of digital storybook and SDG-1 Learning Objectives
- d) To evaluate the quality of the developed SDG-1 digital storybook, as assessed by teacher, in terms of student reading behavioural engagement.

1.6 Research Significance

The significance of this study lies in its potential contribution to both theory and practice

1. Theoretical Significance

This study aims to contribute to the theories of Literacy and English Language Learning development by designing Digital Storybooks that integrate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) themes. It highlights how digital storybooks can be used to support reading behavioural engagement

and foster awareness of global issues in young learners. These findings are expected to enrich existing literature on technology-based learning materials, literacy development, and the use of educational technology in elementary education.

2. *Practical Significance*

a) **For Teachers**

This research is expected to provide English teachers in primary schools with a meaningful and innovative reading material in the form of Digital Storybook, which can allow teachers to promote students' reading behavioural engagement in reading and support literacy.

b) *For Students*

The Digital Storybook aims to offer students an interactive and engaging reading material through multimedia elements such as narration, visual images, and clickable tools, students are expected to enjoy reading. In addition, the stories containing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) content are expected to build student social awareness, empathy and responsibility toward the environment and society.

c) *For others studies*

The results of this study are expected to provide insight on how digital media, specifically Digital Storybooks can support reading behavioural engagement and foster awareness of global issues. This research can serve as a reference for other researchers who are

interested in developing and analyzing similar reading media for educational purposes, especially for those focusing on literacy, digital reading materials, SDG integration and young learners reading behavioural engagement.

