

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Literacy is a fundamental skill in the development of children. According to Septiani & Syaodih (2021) literacy is the foundation of life skills to analyze and critique various phenomena, and it is the starting point for understanding science and technology. However, many young learners face challenges in developing literacy skills, which can hinder their overall learning process. Snow et al., (1998) emphasize that early literacy difficulties can lead to long-term academic struggles, including poor reading comprehension and limited vocabulary acquisition. Furthermore, Neuman & Celano (2012) highlight that low literacy levels in early childhood can perpetuate educational inequalities, particularly among children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In Indonesia, literacy remains an important issue in education. The implementation of the Minimum Competency Assessment (AKM) assesses students' literacy competencies, including their ability to understand, use, reflect on, and evaluate written texts. This shows that literacy has become one of essential competencies emphasized in Indonesian education. In addition, Wibowo et al., (2020) reports that the PISA rankings revealed Indonesia's reading scores ranked 72nd out of 77 countries. Several factors contribute to the low reading interest among children, which can be categorized into internal and external factors. Internal factors include a lack of motivation to read, unattractive book covers, and students not utilizing their free time to read, while external factors involve the lack of facilities, ineffective teaching strategies, and limited parental support (Siumarlata & Ratu Tandiarrang,

2019). These challenges call for a more effective approach to foster children's literacy skills from an early age.

The process of teaching reading to young learners presents its own challenges. Teachers need to consider students' characteristics, their needs, appropriate teaching strategies, and media that align with their learning styles. Reading instruction can be particularly difficult for young children, who often become easily bored, lose focus, or prefer to play. A meaningful learning process that is engaging and enjoyable is crucial. In this regard, learning media play a pivotal role in supporting children's engagement with reading activities. According to Nurani & Mahendra (2019) learning media are essential in delivering information to students and enhancing the learning process, particularly in reading. The use of creative and innovative learning media is expected to make reading more meaningful for young children.

Based on classroom observations and interviews conducted at TK Danend Kiddy School Singaraja, reading activities in the TK B class have been implemented using storybooks, supported by basic reading strategies, but have not yet been fully conducted through structured shared reading activities. However, the reading media are still limited in terms of size and variety, which affects students' attention and participation during reading activities. In addition, students' behavioral engagement is not yet consistent, as some students tend to lose focus during the activity. Furthermore, the integration of SDG 5 (Gender Equality) has not been meaningfully introduced in the reading materials. Therefore, there is a need to develop a more engaging reading media that can support students' behavioral reading engagement while integrating gender equality values.

To address this gap, this study proposes the development of a Big Book as a contextual and engaging reading media that can be used for shared reading activity in the classroom. Previous studies have shown that the use of Big Book can support students' reading development and make learning more engaging (Mahayanti et al., 2017; Maharani et al., 2023; Parwati et al., 2024). According to Madyawati (2016), a Big Book is a picture book with unique characteristics, such as enlarged text and images. This media helps students recognize writing symbols, and the large size allows students to engage with reading materials more effectively than traditional small-sized books or teacher's notes on the board. Prawiyogi et al., (2021) further state that a Big Book is characterized by its large, colorful pages, repetitive words, a simple plot, and a rhythmic text pattern that can be sung. In this study, the Big Book designed with a practical size of A3 to ensure visibility for all students during reading activities. It contain 8-10 pages of full-color illustrations with simple, repetitive sentences to help young learners follow the story. Each page contain 1-2 sentences that are directly connected to the illustrations, so the children can easily understand the message. This format is intended to not only support reading aloud activities, but also to maintain students' interest and engagement throughout the storytelling session.

In addition, to supporting literacy, Big Book also offer opportunities to introduce value-based content through storytelling. This research emphasizes the value of Gender Equality, which is the focus of Sustainable Development Goals. In general, SDGs are the main goals set by the United Nations to create global change over a 15-year period. The United Nations launched the SDGs in 2015 with the hope that the seventeen target points would be achieved by 2030 (UNESCO, 2017). These goals address various

global issues such as poverty eradication, hunger, health and welfare, education, gender equality, and many other critical areas. Specifically, SDG 5 which is gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women and men, and girls and boys. It means that the different behaviors, aspirations, and needs of all genders are equally valued and considered (UNESCO, 2009). This value is central to SDG 5, which aims to eliminate gender-based discrimination and promote equal participation in all areas of life, including education. Integrating this concept into early childhood education helps shape children's understanding of fairness and inclusion from an early age.

To ensure the message of gender equality is accessible to young learners, the stories developed in the Big Book include simple and relatable themes that reflect equal roles for boys and girls. For instance, one story may feature a girl who aspires to be an engineer and a boy who enjoys cooking and dreams of becoming a chef. These examples aim to challenge traditional gender stereotypes and show that any profession or responsibility can be carried out by anyone, regardless of gender. Through storytelling, the Big Book serves not only to support reading engagement but also to introduce gender equality values from an early age. By integrating Big Book with SDG 5, this research aims to create an educational tool that promotes both literacy development and gender equality values. The combination of shared reading activities and social values is expected to provide a holistic learning experience for young learners.

Considering the limited size and variety of learning media observed at TK Danend Kiddy School Singaraja, this research adopts a Design and Development

(D&D) approach, specifically utilizing the ADDE model. There are four phases in the ADDE model namely analysis, design, development, and evaluation. The stages include analyzing and identifying the learning needs, designing the Big Book learning media based on SDG 5 values, developing the Big Book with engaging, interesting illustrations and simple text, and conducting evaluation through expert judgment, user judgment, and limited student trials to assess its quality and feasibility.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

Early literacy development in early childhood education does not aim to require children to master reading skills, but to build familiarity with printed texts, sounds, and meaning through engaging and interactive exposure. However, based on classroom observations at TK Danend Kiddy School Singaraja, reading activities in the TK B class have been conducted using storybooks supported by basic reading strategies. However, these activities have not yet fully supported interactive reading experiences that allow all students to clearly access the text and illustrations at the same time.

In addition, the reading media used in the classroom were still limited in terms of size and variety, which reduces opportunities for students to actively participate during reading activities. As a result, students' behavioral reading engagement is not yet consistent, as not all students are actively involved in responding to the teacher, focusing on the story, and engaging with the reading activity throughout the session.

1.3 The Limitation of the Study

This study was limited to the development and prototype testing of a Big Book as SDGs-based reading material for early childhood learners. This research focuses on designing and evaluating the feasibility, practicality, and content validity of the Big

Book, rather than testing its long-term effectiveness in improving students' reading skills. The product developed in this study serves as a prototype, which evaluated by experts and the teacher to obtain feedback for further refinement.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the needs of teachers and students regarding reading materials that support gender equality and reading behavior engagement?
2. How is the reading material that promotes gender equality developed to engage students in reading activities?
3. What is the quality of the developed reading material for early childhood learners?

1.5 Research Objectives

Based on the research problem, there are several objectives of this research:

1. To identify the needs of teachers and students regarding reading material that supports gender equality and facilitates reading behavior engagement at TK Danend Kiddy School Singaraja.
2. To describe the development process of reading material that promotes gender equality at TK Danend Kiddy School Singaraja.
3. To assess the quality of the developed reading material at TK Danend Kiddy School Singaraja.

1.6 Significance of the Study

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

This research was expected to contribute to the theoretical development of English language education, especially in the use of Big Book as a learning

media that integrates values of gender equality (SDG 5). Through stories presented in the Big Book, students are expected to understand teaching materials more effectively while also being engaged in reading activities. Furthermore, this study adds insight into how literacy development and value-based education can be combined in early childhood learning.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

a. For students

This study was expected to support students' early literacy development by providing attractive and interactive learning media. The Big Book based on gender equality values allows students to learn reading in a fun and meaningful way while also supporting their reading engagement. In addition, it helps children understand equal opportunities between boys and girls in their daily lives.

b. For teachers

This research provides teachers with innovative and practical learning media that can be directly implemented in the classroom. The Big Book based on SDG 5 not only increases students' interest in reading but also helps teachers introduce important social values in a simple and age-appropriate way.

c. For researchers

This study can serve as a useful reference for future researchers who wish to explore the development of literacy-based learning media or the integration of SDGs into early childhood education. It contributes the

existing literature by showing how Big Book can be used to support reading engagement while integrating gender equality values in learning activity.

1.7 Scope of Study

This study was limited to kindergarten students at TK Danend Kiddy School Singaraja. The focus of this study was to develop a Big Book as a learning media integrating SDG 5 (Gender Equality) to support students' behavioral reading engagement. Therefore, the final product of this study was a prototype of Big Book based SDG 5 designed for early childhood English learning.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

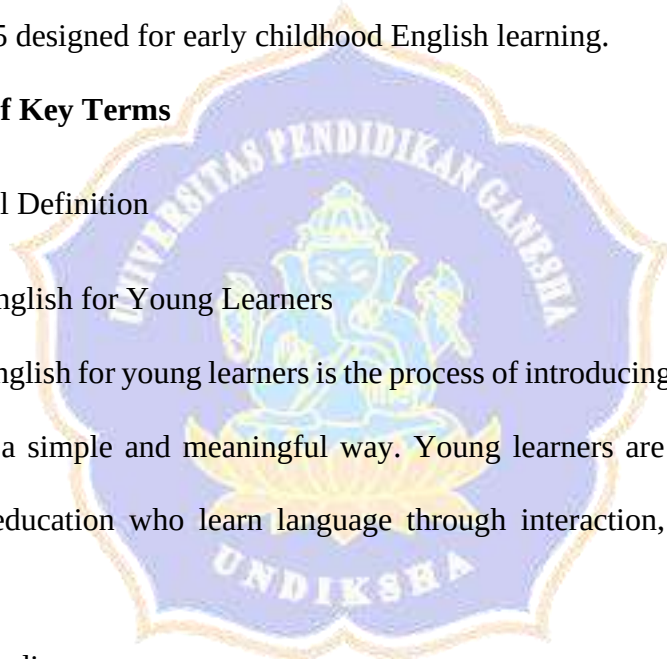
1.8.1 Conceptual Definition

a. Teaching English for Young Learners

Teaching English for young learners is the process of introducing English to young children in a simple and meaningful way. Young learners are children in early childhood education who learn language through interaction, play, and visual support.

b. Learning Media

Learning media refers to tools or materials used to support the delivery of instructional content and facilitate the teaching and learning process. It helps students understand the lesson and makes learning more engaging.



c. Big Book

A Big Book is a large-sized book with big texts and illustrations that can be clearly seen by all students. It is used by the teacher to read together with students in the classroom.

d. Gender Equality (SDG 5)

Gender equality is a condition where boys and girls have equal roles, rights, and opportunities. It teaches students to respect each other and understand that both boys and girls can do the same activities.

e. Behavioral Reading Engagement

Behavioral reading engagement refers to students' observable participation during reading activities, such as paying attention, responding to the teacher, following instructions, and actively participating in the learning process.

f. Shared Reading Activity

Shared reading activity is a reading activity in which the teacher and students read a text together. The teacher guides the students by modeling reading, asking questions, and encouraging students to participate during the reading process.

1.8.2 Operational Definition

a. Teaching English for Young Learners

Teaching English for young learners in this study is defined as the process of teaching basic English to kindergarten students using simple, interactive, and visual-based activities.

b. Learning Media

Learning media in this study refers to a visual media developed by the researcher to support the teaching and learning process.

d. Big Book

Big Book in this study is an enlarged illustrated storybook developed by the researcher and used as a media to teach English to young learners.

e. Gender Equality (SDG 5)

Gender equality in this study refers to the values presented in the Big Book story, such as equal roles and fairness between boys and girls.

f. Behavioral Reading Engagement

Behavioral reading engagement in this study refers to students' observable behaviors during reading activities using the Big Book, such as paying attention, answering questions, participating in activities, and following the teacher's instructions.

g. Shared Reading Activity

Shared reading activity in this study refers to a guided reading activity where the teacher reads the Big Book together with students while engaging them through questions, discussions, and interactive participation.

