

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Early literacy is crucial for children and an important foundation of their education, significantly influencing their future academic success and overall cognitive growth. According to Kurnia et al. (2022), early literacy can support children's language development, especially reading and writing skills, helping them achieve future learning success when stimulated from an early age. However, literacy in Indonesia remains a challenge. The 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results show that Indonesian students' reading scores reached only 259, far below the OECD average of 476. Furthermore, only around 25% of Indonesian students achieved level 2 or higher in reading literacy (OECD, 2023). The Minimum Competency Assessment (AKM) in the Indonesian Education Report shows that at the young learner level, the proportion of students achieving minimum literacy competencies has consistently increased from 52.04% in 2022 to 57.11% in 2023 and 59.04% in 2024, but gaps in basic literacy skills remain across Indonesia (Pratiwi et al., 2025). Therefore, strengthening literacy needs to begin in early childhood education by developing pre-literacy skills as a foundation for reading skills at subsequent levels of education. In line with this, Widyaningrum (2022), explains that the concept of Minimum Competency Pre-Assessment (Pre-AKM) in early childhood education was developed to

stimulate pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills according to the child's developmental stage, as preparation for literacy competencies at the elementary level.

Given the role of English as a global language used worldwide, it is crucial to teach English from an early age. In Kuwait, teachers at the kindergarten level emphasize the importance of learning English, explaining that learning English as a global language can foster international communication (Al-Yaseen, 2021). Additionally, research shows that children's oral English proficiency in kindergarten is strongly associated with their subsequent English literacy skills and overall school success, suggesting that early mastery of spoken English forms a bridge to later reading and writing development. Furthermore, formal oral language instruction in kindergarten plays a decisive role in shaping later academic success (Wang, 2021).

However, preschool students often experience difficulties in maintaining behavioral reading engagement because of their short attention spans and their preference for interactive and visually attractive reading materials. According to research by Chowsomchat et al. (2023), other factors that influence behavioral reading engagement include the quality of reading materials, parental support, and individual differences in learning styles. They need reading materials that contain interesting visuals that can make the enthusiasm of children who read them high, so that children do not get bored quickly, have fun reading spontaneously, and have the ability to read independently (Wang, 2020). According to Son et al. (2023), children's behavioral engagement in shared reading is reflected in their attention, active participation, and enjoyment

during reading activities, which are considered indicators of reading motivation. According to Liao et al. (2020), research findings indicate that children tend to spend more time focusing on illustrations than on printed text during reading activities. To address these challenges and support behavioral reading engagement, educational media such as Big Books integrate reading materials, which play an important role for preschoolers.

In early childhood education, shared reading is considered an effective approach to promoting behavioral reading engagement, as it encourages interaction, active participation, and meaningful learning experiences between teachers and children. Through shared reading, children are encouraged to pay attention, respond, and actively participate during reading activities, which helps them develop positive attitudes toward reading and supports the development of early literacy skills.

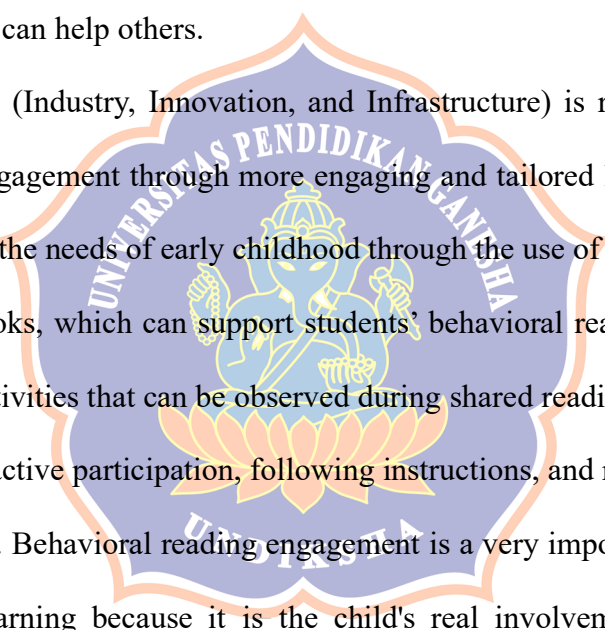
Developing Big Books is a recommendation to facilitate preschoolers' early reading experiences in an engaging and enjoyable way. The Big Book is a powerful educational media in early literacy. According to Rofiah et al. (2023), a Big Book is a large-format storybook featuring enlarged and engaging illustrations, commonly used in early childhood education settings. According to Kusuma Dayu & Setyaningsih (2022), Big Books are large and visually appealing storybooks that teachers use in interactive reading activities to introduce and reinforce sentence patterns, helping children become familiar with language structures. Big Books effectively encourage preschoolers to start reading enthusiastically. Repeated use of Big Books stimulates language and speech development while helping children recognize letter shapes beyond the

story content (Heriani et al., 2023). According to Silinskas et al. (2020), formal literacy activities focusing on letters enhance language development and support children's reading acquisition. This interactive, repetitive reading helps strengthen language understanding and build confidence. Thus, the Big Book not only plays a vital role in supporting early reading but also serves as an effective media for introducing meaningful real-world concepts to young learners.

The integration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) values into a kindergarten context is a significant way to promote sustainability values through learning experiences appropriate to children's developmental stages. Research shows that the SDGs cannot be taught as abstract theoretical concepts to young children; therefore, they need to be integrated into concrete, contextual, and meaningful learning experiences through classroom activities and learning media appropriate to the characteristics of young children (Chapman & Gorman, 2022).

According to Anderson et al. (2021), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the main goal of overcoming various problems in the world, ranging from poverty and economic growth to climate change. However, this study focuses on SDG 9, which is industry, innovation, and infrastructure. SDG 9 addresses sustainable industrial practices, including reducing plastic waste through recycling and resource-efficient production (Abdelzaher, 2023). By integrating the SDGs theme into reading materials, namely Big Books, teachers can support early sustainability for young learners and integrate the values of SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and

Infrastructure). SDG 9 promotes a sustainable, resource-efficient, and environmentally friendly industry, and storytelling integrate SDGs introduces these concepts to young children in an age-appropriate way (Halkos & Gkampoura, 2021). Integrating SDG 9 into reading materials by engaging children through relevant stories can raise awareness of global issues simply and understandably for kindergarten. Industry can be simplified as the ability to make things with our hands. Innovation can be simplified as the ability to try new ideas and be creative. Finally, infrastructure can be simplified as building things that can help others.



SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) is related to behavioral reading engagement through more engaging and tailored learning experiences tailored to the needs of early childhood through the use of creative media, such as Big Books, which can support students' behavioral reading engagement in reading activities that can be observed during shared reading activities, such as attention, active participation, following instructions, and responding to stories being read. Behavioral reading engagement is a very important aspect of early literacy learning because it is the child's real involvement in the learning process, which ultimately supports the formation of reading habits and the development of basic literacy skills that are the foundation for successful learning at the next stage of education (Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Guthrie et al., 2007).

Young learners should learn about SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) because early childhood is the most appropriate stage to introduce mental values. What is introduced here is innovation, problem-

solving, and collaboration. Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure are very big and very abstract for young learners. So, based on the story, give creativity, which means making ecobricks- innovative ecobricks- problem-solving: solve the problem from plastic bottles; they can collaborate with their friends to make it. Here, in a simplified way for their age, they have explored creating useful objects from plastic materials, building simple structures, and creative solutions to solve the problem. Finally, they make ecobricks, something that can solve problems in real life.

Previous studies, such as those by Maureen et al. (2020), have demonstrated the effectiveness of structured storytelling as an instructional media in early childhood education, highlighting its potential to develop essential literacy skills in young learners. Oktaviana et al. (2021) show that Big Book media effectively support the development of early reading abilities by focusing children's attention and encouraging their active engagement in reading, creating a more conducive learning environment. Nevertheless, these studies did not explicitly integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 9 on industry, innovation, and infrastructure, into the development of preschool reading materials. This indicates a gap in the literature, as Big Book research has mainly focused on developing a Big Book as a shared reading media to support students' behavioral reading engagement and integrate Sustainable Development Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) content. Hence, the gap gives the limitations of Big Book media in integrating SDG 9 in shared reading activities. There is a practical gap between these findings and the real classroom practices at TK Lab Undiksha

Singaraja. Based on preliminary observations conducted in the B2 class, it was found that the teachers had not used interactive reading materials and had never used Big Books media in the classroom for English learning. The learning materials commonly used in the classroom were worksheets and small-sized picture storybooks. During shared reading activities, several students appeared less engaged, easily distracted, and only a few actively participated in the classroom. The reading materials were still limited and did not fully support students' behavioral reading engagement because the illustrations, text size, and story content were not appropriate for early childhood learners. SDG 9 was chosen as the content in the shared reading media because it introduces young learners to meaningful, real-world concepts in a simple, age-appropriate way. Therefore, by using a Big Book that integrates SDG 9, it is hoped that students can support their behavioral reading engagement. This study aims to fill the gap by integrating a Big Book as a shared reading media to support students' behavioral reading engagement and integrate Sustainable Development Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) content at TK Lab Undiksha.

## 1.2 Identification of the Problem

The main problem in early childhood education is the low involvement of children in reading activities at the preschool level. Based on preliminary observations conducted at TK Lab Undiksha, in the B2 class, it was found that there are reading activities, but reading facilities were not available in the classroom. The teacher only brought reading materials situationally during reading activities. The picture storybook used by the teacher was of a small size,

making it difficult for all students to clearly see the text and illustrations during the activity. Several students appeared enthusiastic and even tried to move closer to see the pictures in the book. However, students' attention and behavioral reading engagement were not always stable throughout the activity because some students were easily distracted. In addition, the language used in the story was sometimes too long and complex, which can cause students to lose focus and have difficulty understanding the vocabulary. The school also has no scheduled specific reading activities; there is an extracurricular reading activity every once in a week after school. Reading activities are highly dependent on the role of the teacher. The teacher once taught the children to tell stories together using books, but the teacher still reads them because many students are still unable to read. To read stories in English, the children are still not able, so the stories were read by the teacher and then translated into Indonesian.

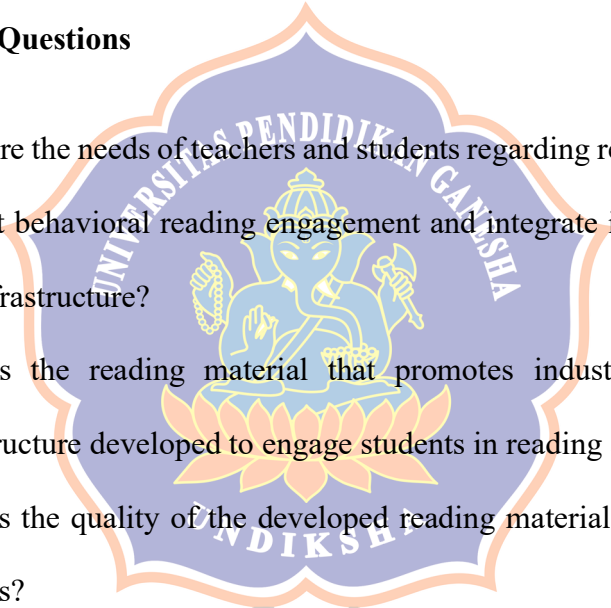
In addition, integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into early childhood education remains challenging, as most teachers are unfamiliar with the concept. In fact, introducing SDGs from an early age is important for global awareness, critical thinking, and the values of cooperation. Therefore, the use of a Big Book integrating SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) is considered a potential solution to support preschool children's engagement in literacy.

### **1.3 Limitations of the Problem**

This study is limited to the development and evaluation of the quality of the Big Book as a learning media designed for preschool students at TK Lab

Undiksha, in grade B (aged 5-6 years), and to determine the feasibility and usability of the resulting product. The research focuses on supporting students' behavioral reading engagement, including interest and participation, while also integrating Sustainable Development Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) content into the Big Book. This study did not address the effectiveness of Big Books in facilitating student learning outcomes. Therefore, it is hoped that further research will focus on testing the effectiveness and impact of the developed Big Books.

#### 1.4 Research Questions

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1. What are the needs of teachers and students regarding reading materials that support behavioral reading engagement and integrate industry, innovation, and infrastructure?
  2. How is the reading material that promotes industry, innovation, and infrastructure 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

1. To identify the needs of teachers and students regarding reading material that supports behavioral reading engagement and integrates industry, innovation, and infrastructure at TK Lab Undiksha.
2. To describe the development process of reading material that promotes industry, innovation, and infrastructure at TK Lab Undiksha.
3. To assess the quality of the developed reading material at TK Lab Undiksha.

## **1.6 Significance of the Research**

It is hoped that this research will benefit many people through its theoretical and practical significance.

### **1.6.1 Theoretical significance**

The results of this study are expected to contribute to existing knowledge on early literacy development and sustainability education for preschool students, especially in the use of a Big Book as a shared reading media that integrates the values of industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG 9). By exploring the use of a Big Book to support behavioral reading engagement and integrating SDG content, this research provides empirical evidence for the theoretical framework of early childhood literacy and environmental awareness. Additionally, it may enhance our understanding of how storytelling can introduce young learners to sustainability concepts in an engaging and developmentally appropriate way. It is hoped that these findings will add to the literature on literacy media development.

### **1.6.2 Practical significance**

The results of this study are expected to provide benefits for:

a. The Educators

For educators, this study provides teachers with practical strategies for using a Big Book as a shared reading media to support students' behavioral reading engagement and integrate SDG 9 content. It provides insights into how Big Book can be integrated into early childhood education to support

both behavioral reading engagement and the integration of sustainability content.

b. Students

For students, this study is expected to support early reading through engaging and interactive activities with the Big Book. Additionally, students will gain early exposure to sustainability concepts in a playful, age-appropriate way.

c. Other Researchers

The results of this study can serve as a reference for further research on media used as a reading media to support students' behavioral reading engagement, integrated into reading materials that incorporate the SDGs.

## 1.7 Definition of Key Terms

### 1.7.1 Conceptual Definition

a. Big Book

Big Book is a large storybook designed to be read together in shared reading activities, with text and illustrations enlarged so that all students in a class can see clearly (Colville-Hall & O'Connor, 2006). According to Rofiah et al. (2023) The Big Book is usually used in early years settings.

b. Shared Reading

Shared reading is a model in which teachers use enlarged text and illustrations so that all children can see, follow, and actively participate in the reading (Holdaway, 1979).

c. Behavioral Reading Engagement

Behavioral reading engagement is reflected in students' active participation, attention, effort, persistence, and positive conduct during learning activities (Wigfield et al., 2008). The ways young learners interact with books, texts, and reading activities in the classroom (Cameron et al., 2009).

d. Sustainable Development Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure)

Sustainable Development Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) is one of the goals in the Sustainable Development Goals that focuses on building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and developing innovation as a driver of sustainable economic and social development (Nations, 2015).

### 1.7.2 Operational Definition

a. Big Book

In this study, Big Book is operationalized as a learning media for shared reading of a large printed book containing text and illustrations used by teachers to support behavioral reading engagement in early childhood education.

b. Shared Reading

In this research, shared reading is operationalized as a shared reading activity between teachers and students using a Big Book. The teacher guides students in reading by pointing to text and illustrations, while

students observe illustrations, point to images, answer questions, and participate in discussions related to the story's content.

c. Behavioral Reading Engagement

In this research, behavioral reading engagement is operationalized as students' involvement in shared reading activities, demonstrated through active participation in learning. This engagement includes paying attention to the story, looking at and pointing to pictures, answering the teacher's questions, repeating simple words, showing enthusiasm, following teacher directions, and demonstrating curiosity.

d. Sustainable Development Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure)

In this study, SDG 9 is operationalized through Big Book content that integrates ecobricks as a simple innovation in utilizing plastic waste. The concept was introduced to students through the Big Book, which integrates SDG 9 during shared reading activities to support behavioral reading engagement in the importance of innovation in sustainable infrastructure.