

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Shared reading activities at the preschool level are a form of dynamic collaborative interaction between teachers and students by utilizing storybook media (Boit et al., 2025; Cipolletti et al., 2025). Through this method, the learning process is designed to run in a multi-directional manner by involving active question-and-answer sessions as well as the delivery of opinions or spontaneous comments directly from children (Hadley & Dickinson, 2019). Teacher-led learning plays a crucial role in building a lively classroom atmosphere and supporting the development of children's early literacy (Hadley & Dickinson, 2019). In order for the interaction to run optimally, the use of large visual media such as big books is an important instrument because the readability of the text and images can be enjoyed by the entire class at the same time. These large-scale interactive media not only captivate children's visual attention, but are also pedagogically designed to help teachers maintain students' focus, minimize off-task behavior (daydreaming, chatting with peers, and making noises), and increase their behavioral engagement in the classroom.

In the context of early childhood learning, the success of the implementation of the shared reading method is greatly influenced by the level of behavioral engagement or behavioral involvement of students during activities (Fredricks et al., 2004). This behavioral involvement refers to the child's operational actions and active participation that can be observed

directly, such as the ability to maintain visual attention to the media, compliance in following the teacher's instructions, and persistence to stay focused on learning tasks (Son et al., 2023). At the preschool level, maintaining behavioral engagement is a challenge because children at this age are in the developmental stage of self-regulation, so they tend to be prone to indifferent behaviors or distracted by stimuli outside of learning (Blair & Diamond, 2008; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2000). Therefore, behavioral engagement is not just an indicator of passive compliance, but a form of interactive participation that includes children's activeness in responding to teachers' questions and providing spontaneous comments related to the storyline being discussed (Hadley & Dickinson, 2019; Son et al., 2023). Through the optimization of this behavioral involvement, the dynamics of the classroom become lively so that the process of internalizing children's early literacy knowledge and skills can be achieved to the maximum extent (Duncan et al., 2007; Mol et al., 2009).

The empirical condition regarding the dynamics of students' engagement is confirmed in real terms through preliminary observations conducted in the Kindergarten A Girikarnika Montessori Preschool class. Observational data showed that the students showed inconsistent engagement from the beginning to the end of the activity, and not all of them were able to read fluently. The results of these observations also show that the use of visual aids in learning activities has proven to be very effective in attracting active student engagement in the classroom. Moreover, it was found in the field that students showed more interest and engagement when learning used visual

aids that applied real-life pictures or graphics that resembled their original forms.

In daily practice in the classroom, teachers at Girikarnika Montessori Preschool have used various learning media to support preschool children's activities. Teachers combined reading media and visual aids in classroom activities; one example is the use of printed images of animals or plants equipped with short descriptive text. In addition, teachers also generally combine two types of media at once, namely digital and print learning media. Based on the teacher's statement, students are proven to be much more actively engaged when they interact with interactive or playable learning media. However, despite the diversity of media that has been implemented, this school has never implemented Big Book media in their learning system, especially in the practice of shared reading.

Although teachers have made efforts to implement various learning media, some real instructional challenges are still often found in shared reading activities at Girikarnika Montessori Preschool. The main problems faced include difficulties in maintaining students' focus of attention as well as low readability of texts and illustrations due to inappropriate book sizes. So far, shared reading still use standard-format books, which is the main root of the emergence of visual barriers. Based on an in-depth analysis of the use of standard books, it was identified that there were physical weaknesses where standard books were not able to reach students who sat in the middle and back rows. Only students sitting in the front row get a clear view of the text and illustrations, thus triggering the phenomenon of visual gaps.

The weakness in the spatial dimension of the standard book has a direct impact on the overall decline in the quality of classroom management. When illustrations and small texts are forced into group learning, children who lose visual access will automatically shift their energy to off-task behaviors. Teachers must repeatedly stop the narrative of the story halfway just to reprimand students who are chatting with peers, discipline a daydreaming child, or arrange for students to come forward in order to see the details of the picture. These constant interruptions not only cut off effective learning time, but also disrupt the flow of storytelling and decrease preschoolers' memory retention of the moral values being discussed. This is in line with the theory that asserts that classroom management failures in early childhood are often rooted in the use of visual media that is unfriendly to the spatial capacity of the group (Boit et al., 2025; Wu et al., 2025). Furthermore, the physical limitations of these standard books turn off the spontaneous responses of back-row students, as they do not have a clear enough visual basis to answer the triggering questions of the teacher.

This analysis of the weaknesses of conventional books resulted to an urgency for the development of Big Book media as an instructional solution. Through its macro physical characteristics, Big Book offers expressive illustrations and large-scale texts specifically designed to attract the attention of the masses of students from a distance (Colville-Hall & O'Connor, 2006; Nambiar, 1993). The change from standard format to Big Book format serves as a tool to eliminate visual gaps in the classroom, so that all students have the right to access the same and inclusive views (Fitri et al., 2022). By meeting

the visual needs of every corner of the room, children's concentration can be maintained for longer, and students' behavioral engagement can be developed significantly (Canuto et al., 2024). The use of the visual aspect of macro assistance is the main key to capturing preschoolers' attention, strengthening memory, clarifying understanding of conceptual meaning, and stimulating students' listening abilities optimally (Nazarov, 2023; Teng, 2022).

However, in order for this macro media to have a deep impact and not just excel in terms of visual aesthetics, the content in the Big Book must be integrated with the substance of values that are meaningful, contextual, and able to bind students emotionally. Therefore, the visual illustrations and story content in this development are adapted from the second pillar of the Sustainable Development Goals, namely Zero Hunger (SDG-2) (United Nation, 2015). Zero Hunger is a UN global agenda that aims to end world hunger due to conflict, climate change, and economic decline by 2030 (United Nation, 2015). Data from the World Food Programme shows that nearly 282 million people in 59 countries face an acute food crisis by 2023. For preschool-age children, the macro values of SDG-2, which seem abstract, are reconstructed into micro-concepts that are close to their daily lives, such as the introduction of healthy nutritious food consumption habits (fruits and vegetables), the cultivation of the character of appreciating food by not throwing it away (anti-food-wasting), and the cultivation of social empathy to share food with others (FAO, 2016; Türkoğlu, 2019). When the storyline of Zero Hunger is presented through compelling macro illustrations,

children's behavioral engagement will be built consistently because they feel personally connected to the content of the story.

Building awareness of global issues from an early age is the key to creating a more caring future generation (Türkoğlu, 2019). The implementation of the SDGs in the context of early childhood English learning has been proven to provide the capacity for students to solve their learning problems (Cordova, 2024), improve learning outcomes, foster environmental awareness, form the perspective of wise global citizens, and strengthen the value of self-norms (Putri et al., 2024), which significantly helps improve children's language skills (Manurung et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2024). In addition, the urgency of this development is also driven by the challenge of differences in the level of understanding among the students of Kindergarten A Girikarnika Montessori Preschool, which forces teachers to spend extra effort. This barrier to diversity of abilities has been circumvented by teachers through the implementation of Differentiated Learning. In line with the theory of Needs Analysis from Hutchinson & Waters (1987), it is important for researchers to map the needs of teachers and students, so that the Big Book is designed not only to overcome behavioral problems due to the limitations of standard books, but also to function as a practical differentiated learning instrument in the classroom.

Although research on Big Book media has been widely carried out in the field of education, studies that specifically develop Big Books with the theme of Zero Hunger to support preschool children's behavioral engagement in shared reading activities are still very rare. Most of the earlier literature has

tended to focus on testing general cognitive aspects or structural aspects of language alone. There are still few studies that position the macro physical design criteria of the Big Book as the main solution to improve classroom behavior management due to the visual gap phenomenon of the standard book, as well as attributing it to the instillation of SDGs character values. In addition, the integration of SDGs values in Teaching English for Young Learners (TEYL) has so far been minimally explored due to the erroneous assumption that global issues are too abstract for preschool-age children. This theoretical and practical gap is filled through this research.

Therefore, the research entitled "Developing Big Book "Zero Hunger" as Shared Reading Media to Support Preschool Students' Behavioral Engagement at Girikarnika Montessori Preschool" was carried out by offering three main novelties. First, this study reconstructed the original SDG-2 global target (Zero Hunger) into narrative content appropriate for the preschool level to promote eating healthy food, anti-food-wasting behavior, and empathy for food sharing as a form of social character development for children. Second, from the visual design aspect, this product pioneers the development of macro visual elements that are precisely tailored to the spatial needs of the classroom at Girikarnika Montessori Preschool based on real-life imagery concepts in order to eliminate visual gaps, in line with the fact that students are more interested in real image objects. Third, the Big Book product developed is equipped with a bilingual narrative text, which is specifically designed as a practical tool for teachers to integrate the use of Big Book with Differentiated Learning, so that the variation in the level of understanding of diverse

students in the classroom can be supported well during the shared reading activity.

1.2 Problems Identification

Based on the results of initial observations in the classroom, in-depth interviews with teachers at Girikarnika Montessori Preschool, and relevant literature reviews, several crucial instructional problems were found in shared reading activities. The first problem that is most visible in the field is the behavioral engagement of preschool-age students during reading, which is still inconsistent. At the beginning of the story reading session, students generally show high enthusiasm and focus on listening to the teacher's directions, but in the middle to the end of the story, their concentration decreases drastically, triggering unfocused behaviors such as playing alone or chatting. This indicates that the current learning media has not been able to maintain students' collective attention for an optimal duration of time, where the main root cause comes from the storybook size format used in the classroom because it is considered too small. Currently, teachers still use standard printed books to guide reading activities together in large groups, so that the text and illustrations on the books cannot be clearly seen by students sitting in the middle or back rows of the class. This limitation of the field of view creates a visual gap that often forces students to move forward to see the details of the picture and ultimately interferes with the conduciveness of classroom management.

This condition is exacerbated by the fact that although the school has made efforts to combine various conventional print media and digital devices,

Girikarnika Montessori Preschool has never implemented Big Book media in their learning system. Macro-sized media is needed to support the shared reading method so that all materials can be accessed fairly by all students remotely, where the absence of media with large text prints and spacious visual space makes the English literacy transfer process less effective. In addition to the issue of physical size, the visual content in most of the storybooks available in the classroom today is also still dominated by anthropomorphic animal characters or abstract fictional illustrations. Psychologically, preschoolers think concretely and need visual representations that are close to their daily lives, so the use of these abstract visualizations makes it difficult for students to project themselves or empathize directly with the characters in the story. As a result, the moral values that are to be conveyed become more difficult for children to internalize because of the cognitive distance between their real world and the fictitious character.

In addition to the problem of character representation, the English shared reading learning materials currently used have not systematically integrated important global issues, including the second Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) point regarding Zero Hunger. Food-related topics are very close to the world of children and have the potential to be used as a means of character formation from an early age, but children have not been introduced to SDG-2 micro-concepts such as the importance of choosing healthy food, sharing with others, and the habit of not wasting food (anti-food-wasting). This neglect of value integration makes literacy learning

simply focus on linguistic aspects without strengthening global social awareness. The above factors ultimately lead to a major challenge for teachers in managing the diversity of language skills and different levels of understanding of students within the same classroom. Moreover, the reading media available today are rigid and not equipped with interactive pedagogical guides that are adaptive for teachers, which makes it difficult to implement differentiated learning strategies. As a result, students who have a slower learning rhythm or have not mastered basic literacy skills tend to lag behind and lose interest during group reading activities.

1.3 Limitation of The Research

Given the breadth of the scope of instructional problems found in the field and the time constraints that exist, this research is strictly limited to several aspects so that the product development process can run in depth, direction, and effectively. In terms of subject and context, the reference for the need for this media design is based on the characteristics of preschool-age children at Girikarnika Montessori Preschool who are in the early literacy phase. The object of development in this study is limited to the design of media in the form of a macro-sized physical storybook (Big Book) in English and Indonesian, which is specifically designed to support the shared reading learning method. This book uses human characters visualization approach to facilitate the process of children's social projection, with the scope of story content that is specifically limited to the internalization of the micro-values of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Number 2, namely Zero Hunger, which includes the habit of choosing healthy foods, growing empathy for

sharing, and the formation of anti-wasting food behaviors.

Furthermore, the crucial limitation in this study lies in the scope of its methodology, where this research does not conduct implementation, trials, or experiments directly with students in the field. The research flow is limited to the stage of feasibility evaluation and validation of the final product using expert judgment instruments. The evaluation of the quality of the media is entirely based on the objective assessment of competent experts in the field of Teaching English for Young Learners. Thus, the success indicators of this study are measured based on the achievement of the feasibility, validity, and pedagogical suitability standards of the Big Book products developed based on the collective decisions of these experts before the products are ready for mass production or implementation in the future.

1.4 Research Questions

- 1.4.1 What are the needs of teachers and students regarding an appropriate shared reading media?
- 1.4.2 How is the Zero Hunger-based Big Book developed?
- 1.4.3 What is the quality of the Zero Hunger-based Big Book as a shared reading media?

1.5 Research Objectives

- 1.5.1 This study aims to identify the needs of teachers and students regarding an appropriate shared reading media.
- 1.5.2 This study aims to develop a Zero Hunger-based Big Book.
- 1.5.3 This study aims to evaluate the quality of the Zero Hunger-based Big Book as a shared reading media.

1.6 Expected Product Specifications

The product developed in this study is in the form of a bilingual Big Book media (English-Indonesian) in macro format entitled "Good Food, Good Life" to support shared reading activities at the preschool level. The physical specifications of the media are deliberately designed in large sizes to eliminate visual gap barriers, so that the story text and visual illustrations can still be clearly seen by all students, including those seated in the middle and back rows of the class. In terms of content, the narrative of this book explicitly integrates the universal values of Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger, which are contextualized into three concrete habits of children, namely the introduction of a nutritious, healthy diet, the growth of empathy for sharing, and the cultivation of anti-food waste production behaviors. The delivery of the social moral message is driven by a storyline with concrete children's human characters, namely Hera and Tony, to build emotional closeness with the readers. In addition, the language structure of the book is arranged using short, rhyming, and repetitive sentences with simple vocabulary control to suit the cognitive capacity of Kindergarten A students.

1.7 Urgency of Development

The urgency of developing Big Book media based on the Zero Hunger value is based on the existence of real instructional obstacles in the form of inconsistent student behavioral engagement during shared reading sessions at Girikarnika Montessori Preschool. The use of standard-sized printed storybooks in the school triggers a visual gap, where the limited range of view makes the focus and attention of students sitting in the back row very easily

distracted. These visual and attention problems are exacerbated by the limited variety of local literacy media that are able to introduce global social issues in a concrete way to early childhood. Therefore, the development of this product is very urgent to map adaptive solutions that are able to bridge the limitations of students' visual access while inserting SDG-2 values from an early age through a child-friendly approach. Through the presence of this interactive macro-format media, preschool teachers will be assisted with valid teaching instruments to encourage verbal activity, maintain concentration, and direct positive behavior of children collectively in the classroom.

1.8 Assumptions and Limitations of Development

The development of this product is based on the assumption that the modification of the physical size of the media into a Big Book format with colorful macro illustrations is able to overcome the readability barrier and optimize the visual attention of children significantly. Story construction driven by human characters that are close to children's daily lives is also assumed to be much more effective in internalizing the values of healthy eating and sharing than in the delivery of abstract moral concepts. In addition, two experts acting as experts in Expert Judgment are assumed to have professional competence and a credible theoretical background in the field of Teaching English for Young Learners (TEYL) to objectively assess the quality of the product.

On the other hand, this study has certain limitations, where methodologically the Design and Development (D&D) model with the ADDE framework is limited only to the stage of product quality evaluation

through expert assessment. This developmental research did not involve direct classroom implementation in the field or the measurement of empirical impact on real student behavioral attachment. The scope of needs analysis and pedagogical design of this media is also limited to the visual profile, language, and specific behavioral characteristics of Kindergarten A students at Girikarnika Montessori Preschool. Finally, the integration of global values in this book is strictly limited to SDG-2 (Zero Hunger) indicators, which are adjusted to the psychological capacity of preschool children's development.

1.9 Conceptual and Operational Definitions

1.9.1 Conceptual Definition

a. Zero Hunger-based Big Book

Zero Hunger-based Big Book is a learning media in the form of a macro-sized children's storybook (large format) that integrates the substance of the values of the second pillar of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-2: Zero Hunger). The media is theoretically designed with clear written text, repetitive or rhyming language patterns, and prominent, colorful graphic illustrations to capture the attention of the mass of students remotely, while instilling a contextual understanding of healthy food consumption and anti-food-wasting behaviors in the early literacy phase (Colville-Hall & O'Connor, 2006; Nambiar, 1991).

b. Behavioral Engagement

It is a dimension of students' engagement in the form of physical actions, obedience, attention levels, and motor-verbal

involvement that can be observed directly during the learning process. This attachment is a crucial foundation for preschoolers to be able to absorb instructional information optimally in the classroom (Fredricks et al., 2004; E. A. Skinner et al., 2009).

c. Shared Reading

It is an interactive collaborative literacy activity between teachers and a large group of students using large-format storybooks. This activity emphasizes the demonstration of reading strategies by teachers, the introduction of visual texts together, and the existence of interactive discussions to build children's contextual understanding (Boit et al., 2025; Hadley & Dickinson, 2019; Weadman et al., 2023).

1.9.2 Operational Definition

a. Zero Hunger-Based Big Book

In this study, the Zero Hunger-Based Big Book was operated as a bilingual print media product (English-Indonesian) entitled "Good Food, Good Life" with a minimum size of A3 (29.7 x 42.0 cm). This book has physical specifications in the form of large-font text, simple sentences with rhyme patterns (maximum 5 words per sentence), and is dominated by expressive visual illustrations that use concrete human characters (Hera and Tony).

b. Behavioral Engagement

Behavioral engagement in this study is defined as the manifestation of physical actions, activeness, and real obedience

shown by children directly during the process of shared reading activities using Big Books. In the field, this behavioral engagement was observed qualitatively by researchers/observers based on four visual indicators, namely attention, active participation, compliance, and persistence.

c. Shared Reading

Shared Reading in this study is defined as a reading learning activity or procedure led by teachers using Big Book media. Operationally, this method is carried out with the position of the teacher on his lap or by placing the Big Book in front of the class so that all children can see the text and pictures clearly. The process involves two-way interaction where the teacher reads aloud, points to the text word for word, invites the child to read together, and provides stimulus questions in between stories to trigger the child's response.

