

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Reading is one of the most essential language skills that plays a significant role in students' academic development and lifelong learning. Through reading activities, learners are able to obtain information, expand their knowledge, enrich vocabulary, and develop comprehension skills that support learning across subjects. In early childhood education, reading functions as a foundational literacy skill that influences children's cognitive, linguistic, and social development. Therefore, introducing reading activities at an early age is crucial to prepare children for more complex learning processes in the next levels of education (Holdaway, 1979).

In early childhood education, reading instruction is not solely focused on introducing letters and words as preparation for future reading skills, but also on developing children's interest, habits, and engagement in reading activities. Early literacy scholars emphasize that early reading experiences play a crucial role in shaping children's language development, cognitive growth, and social interaction skills (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Therefore, the success of early reading instruction is closely related to how actively children are involved during reading activities. Reading engagement is a crucial aspect of literacy development. According to the reading engagement theory proposed by Wigfield and Guthrie (2008), reading engagement involves several dimensions, including attention, enthusiasm, participation, and emotional response. These dimensions influence children's motivation and attitudes toward reading, which in turn affect their long-term literacy development. Moreover, children's engagement in reading activities influences their interest in reading and their willingness to participate actively in literacy experiences, which supports long term literacy development (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Moreover this study focused on behavioral reading engagement. Behavioral reading engagement refers to children's active behavioral involvement during reading activities, as demonstrated by their attention to the

story, effort to follow the reading process, persistence in completing reading related activities, and active participation during shared reading interactions (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Skinner et al., 2009). Furthermore, Behavioral engagement refers to students' participation in positive school-related behaviors, including compliance with school rules, effort and attention in academic tasks, and involvement in school activities such as extracurricular programs (Fredricks et al., 2004a).

To foster behavioral reading engagement in early childhood classrooms, appropriate instructional strategies are needed, one of which is shared reading. Shared reading is an effective reading instruction strategy because it actively engages students in meaning-making through interaction with the teacher and peers (Dowdall et al., 2020). According to Fisher and Frey (2008) shared reading allows students to develop reading comprehension through collaborative activities such as discussion, prediction, and clarification of meaning. During this process, the teacher models effective reading strategies, provides explanations of vocabulary, and guides students in understanding the text. This supportive learning environment helps reduce students' anxiety and increases their confidence and motivation, particularly for learners of English as a foreign language. Shared reading also contributes to students' vocabulary development and phonological awareness. Cunningham (2005) argues that shared reading exposes learners to new vocabulary in meaningful contexts, which facilitates word retention and understanding. This perspective aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of scaffolding in learning, where teachers provide appropriate support according to students' levels of ability. Through interactive and collaborative reading experiences, shared reading enables learners to actively engage with texts and develop essential reading skills.

In order to optimize the effectiveness of shared reading activities, the selection of appropriate reading media becomes a crucial factor. According to Wayan et al. (2024) learning media contribute positively to children's English learning experiences by making learning activities more engaging. One form of reading media that effectively supports shared reading is the use of Big Books in reading activities. Previous studies have shown that large-format books used in shared reading contexts support children's reading comprehension and engagement by

making print and illustrations more visible and accessible to all learners (Elley, 1989; Kaderavek & Justice, 2002). In addition, oversized books promote interactive reading practices that encourage children's participation, prediction, and discussion during reading sessions, creating a more enjoyable and effective learning environment (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007). learning medium that include real pictures, attractive illustrations, and engaging reading content can capture students' attention during learning activities (Arditami et al., 2019). In the context of shared reading, these characteristics are consistent with the purpose of a Big Book, which is to encourage preschool children's behavioral reading engagement, particularly their attention and active participation throughout the reading process.

One of the key strengths of Big Books lies in their visual elements, which are particularly important in early literacy instruction. Visual supports play a crucial role in attracting children's attention and facilitating meaning-making, especially at the preschool level. Research indicates that illustrations and visual representations significantly support vocabulary development and reading comprehension in young learners (Johnson & Mayer, 2009). Furthermore, visual input enhances memory retention and supports language processing by connecting verbal information with images (Levie & Lentz, 1982; Paivio, 2014).

Furthermore, Elley (1989) explains that Big Books support reading comprehension through repetitive language patterns, simple sentence structures, and meaningful illustrations. These features assist young learners in constructing meaning from the text by helping them understand vocabulary and story content, particularly for students who are still developing early reading skills. In addition, repetition in Big Books supports word recognition and phrase familiarity, which contributes to improved reading comprehension and increased reading engagement during shared reading activities.

In addition to supporting reading development, learning materials used in early reading activities also play an important role in introducing social values to young learners. One of the global values that is relevant to be introduced at an early age is Sustainable Development Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), which emphasizes equality, inclusion, and respect for diversity. Introducing SDG 10 values to children

aged 5–6 years is important because this developmental stage is a crucial period for shaping children's attitudes and social behavior. Early childhood is a critical period in the formation of children's attitudes, values, and morality. At this age, children easily accept and internalize the values they are taught. Therefore, it is very important to introduce the values of tolerance early on in order to become an integral part of their personality (Rusmiati, 2023a)

Integrating SDG 10 values into shared reading activities through Big Books provides an effective and age-appropriate approach to character development. Stories and illustrations that represent diversity, fairness, and equal opportunities help children understand social concepts in a concrete and meaningful way. Through shared reading, teachers can guide discussions, model respectful behavior, and encourage inclusive interactions among students, while the large format of Big Books ensures that all children have equal access to the reading materials during classroom activities. As a result, SDG 10–integrated Big Books not only support students' engagement in reading activities but also help foster values of equality and inclusion from an early age.

Moreover, highlighting Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10, which focuses on reducing inequalities, is highly important to be introduced at the preschool level. At the age of 5–6 years, children are in a crucial stage of social and emotional development, where they begin to understand differences among individuals and form their attitudes toward others. Introducing values such as fairness, respect, inclusion, and non-discrimination through meaningful learning experiences can help shape positive social behaviors from an early age. By integrating SDG 10 into reading materials like Big Books, children are not only engaged in reading activities but also gradually develop an understanding of how to treat others equally regardless of differences. In the long term, these early experiences are expected to contribute to the development of individuals who are more empathetic, respectful, and able to live harmoniously in diverse societies. Teaching anti-bullying in early childhood helps develop empathy, self control, and healthy social skills, so that children are able to interact positively and resolve conflicts peacefully. In addition, through story based learning, moral values can be

understood more concretely and support the creation of a safe and supportive learning environment (Faroh et al., 2025).

Reading problems in Indonesia do not emerge suddenly at the primary or secondary education levels, but rather originate from early childhood education. Weak reading foundations in early years may affect students' literacy development in later stages. One contributing factor is the misconception of literacy in Indonesia. According to Sucianti (2021) literacy is often narrowly interpreted as merely the ability to read letters and words, whereas literacy also involves understanding meaning, context, and information critically. As a result, reading instruction often focuses on decoding skills without adequately fostering engagement.

Another major factor influencing low reading ability is the lack of varied and appropriate reading media. The lack of varied and appropriate reading media can negatively affect students' reading engagement. Previous studies have shown that meaningful and interactive literacy materials play an important role in facilitating children's motivation and involvement in reading activities (Fredricks et al., 2004b; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Mol et al., 2009). Learning media that are not visually engaging and developmentally appropriate may reduce children's interest in reading activities. Research shows that young learners are more likely to be engaged in reading when instructional materials are meaningful, visually rich, and aligned with their developmental characteristics (Duke & Pearson, 2009; Neuman & Roskos, 1997)

Based on observation and interviews conducted with teachers at Girikarnika Montessori School, it was found that English learning activities are conducted once a week and reading activities are regularly integrated into classroom routines. Reading activities are implemented using various media such as flashcards and illustrated storybooks. Almost all students are actively involved in listening, repeating vocabulary, and participating in reading activities. Some students who are more confident in reading also help demonstrate reading aloud during shared reading sessions. In addition, the school has implemented a curriculum that promotes anti bullying and anti discrimination values, indicating the need for learning media that support these themes in classroom activities.

However, the main problem identified was the lack of engaging reading media, such as attractive books, which caused some students to lose focus during shared reading activities. Moreover, the books used in shared reading sessions were not appropriate in terms of size, as they were too small, making it difficult for students to clearly see the content of the book. Furthermore, the reading materials used tended to have very commonly encountered themes, such as animal, transportation, and body parts vocabulary, which limited students' interest and engagement during the reading activities.

Based on these problems, there is a need to develop an alternative reading medium that is more suitable for shared reading activities in early childhood classrooms. One proposed solution is the development of Big Books, which are designed with large-sized text and illustrations so that all students can easily see and follow the reading process together. The use of Big Books is expected to help students stay focused and actively involved during shared reading sessions by providing clearer and more engaging visual support. In addition, integrating themes from Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10 into the Big Book content can offer more meaningful and varied reading materials compared to commonly used vocabulary themes, while also aligning with the school's emphasis on anti-bullying and anti-discrimination values. Stories that introduce ideas such as fairness, respect for differences, and inclusive interactions can attract students' interest while supporting their social understanding in an age-appropriate way. Therefore, the development of SDG 10-based Big Books is considered a relevant solution to address the limitations of existing reading media and to improve students' engagement in shared reading activities.

Previous studies have shown that Big Books are effective in improving students' reading engagement and comprehension. However, most existing studies focus mainly on linguistic outcomes without integrating social or global values into the learning materials. There is still limited research that develops Big Books as English reading media combined with SDGs-based material, particularly SDGs 10 Reduced Inequalities, for preschool students. This gap indicates the need for innovative learning media that address both literacy development and character education.

Therefore, this study aims to develop a Big Book based on SDGs 10 Reduced Inequalities as a learning medium for preschool students. The developed Big Book is expected to support students' reading engagement while also fostering early awareness of equality and inclusiveness. By integrating literacy instruction with SDGs 10 values, this study is expected to contribute to early childhood education practices that are academically meaningful and socially relevant.

1.2 Problem Identification

Based on interviews conducted with teachers at Girikarnika Montessori School and supported by classroom observations, it was found that English reading activities have been implemented as part of the learning process. English is taught once a week, and reading activities are regularly integrated into classroom routines using various media such as flashcards and illustrated storybooks. Most students are actively involved in listening, repeating vocabulary, and participating in shared reading sessions. Some students who have higher confidence also assist in demonstrating reading aloud. However, despite these positive practices, several problems were identified in the implementation of shared reading activities, as outlined below.

1. **First**, the reading media that effectively support shared reading activities is still limited. The reading activities mainly rely on flashcards and small-sized illustrated storybooks. These media are not designed for shared reading purposes, as their size makes it difficult for all students to clearly see the text and illustrations at the same time.
2. **Second**, students' engagement during shared reading activities is not fully optimal. Although many students participate actively, some students tend to lose focus during reading sessions. This issue is closely related to the use of less engaging reading media, particularly books with small print and limited visual appeal. When students cannot clearly see the reading materials, their attention and involvement during shared reading activities decrease, resulting in uneven participation among students.
3. **Third**, the reading materials used in English learning activities tend to present very commonly encountered themes, such as animals,

transportation, and body parts vocabulary. While these themes are suitable for early learners, the repetitive use of similar topics limits students' interest and reduces the variety of learning experiences during reading activities. Moreover, the reading materials have not yet integrated themes related to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10, particularly values of equality, inclusiveness, and respect for differences, which are important to be introduced from an early age in a simple and contextual manner.

Based on the problems identified above, it can be concluded that the current reading media used in English reading activities at Girikarnika Montessori School are still limited in terms of size, variety, and thematic content. These limitations affect students' focus and engagement during shared reading activities. In addition, the absence of reading materials that integrate SDG 10 values indicates a gap between reading activities and the introduction of social values in early education. Therefore, these challenges form a strong basis for developing an SDG 10-based Big Book as an alternative shared reading medium that is more engaging, visually accessible, and appropriate for supporting students' participation in English reading activities.

1.3 Limitation of Study

This study is limited to the development and theoretical evaluation of an SDG 10-based Big Book as a shared reading medium for preschool students. The study focuses on identifying teachers' and students' needs, developing the Big Book based on those needs, and evaluating the quality of the product through expert judgment using the Design and Development (D&D) model with the ADDE framework.

The participants involved in the needs analysis are limited to teachers and preschool students at Girikarnika Montessori Preschool. Therefore, the findings reflect the needs and characteristics of the selected research setting and may not represent those of other preschool institutions.

The product developed in this study is specifically designed for English shared reading activities and integrates the values of SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), including fairness, inclusion, respect for differences, and anti-

discrimination. The story content, language level, vocabulary, illustrations, and learning activities are adapted to the developmental characteristics of preschool learners aged 5–6 years.

This study only focuses on behavioral reading engagement as the dimension of reading engagement. Other dimensions, such as emotional engagement and cognitive engagement, are beyond the scope of this study.

Furthermore, this study is limited to the Analysis, Design, Development, and Evaluation stages of the ADDE framework. The evaluation phase includes expert judgment to assess the theoretical quality and feasibility of the developed Big Book and a limited user judgment conducted through a one-time implementation to obtain preliminary feedback regarding the product's practicality. Accordingly, this study does not include large-scale classroom implementation or field testing, and it does not aim to empirically examine the effectiveness of the developed Big Book in improving preschool students' behavioral reading engagement.

1.4 Research Question

- 1.4.1 What are the needs of teachers and students on big book-based SDGs-10 reading media to facilitate reading behaviour engagement?
- 1.4.2 How is the big book-based SDGs-10 developed?
- 1.4.3 What is the quality of big book-based SDGs-10?

1.5 Research Objective

- 1.5.1 This study aims to accommodate teachers' and students' needs on big book-based SDG-10 reading media to facilitate reading engagement.
- 1.5.2 This study aims to develop a Big Book as a reading media based on the Reduced Inequalities (SDG-10) as the content.
- 1.5.3 This study aims to evaluate the quality of the SDG-10-based Big Book to support preschool students' reading engagement on Reduced Inequalities.

1.6 Significance of Study

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

The development of the Big Book in this study is expected to contribute theoretically to the field of early childhood education by providing SDG-based reading material that supports preschool students' reading engagement and awareness of reduced inequalities. The product is designed to function as a relevant and contextual learning medium that integrates literacy development with character education focused on fairness, inclusiveness, and equal treatment. Furthermore, the findings of this research are expected to enrich the body of knowledge related to literacy learning media in Indonesia, particularly those that integrate global citizenship values within early reading experiences.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

1.6.2.1 For the students.

The Big Book produced in this study is expected to offer preschool children an engaging and enjoyable reading material that promotes diversity, respect, and cooperation. In addition, the Big Book is intended to enhance children's reading engagement while fostering their awareness of equality and inclusion in line with SDG-10.

1.6.2.2 For the teachers.

This product is expected to provide teachers with an effective instructional resource that can be directly implemented to support literacy learning while nurturing values of fairness and non-discrimination. The Big Book may also serve as an alternative teaching medium that aligns with both developmental needs and global issues relevant to early childhood education.

1.6.2.3 For other researchers.

The results of this study are expected to serve as a useful reference for future researchers who are interested in investigating literacy media, SDG integration in early childhood education, or similar areas of study. The Big Book model developed in this research may be adopted, modified, or expanded to support related research and development efforts.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

1.7.1 Conceptual Definition

a. SDG 10 Based Big Book

An SDG 10–based Big Book is a large-format storybook designed as a learning medium for shared reading activities that integrates the values of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10: Reduced Inequalities. The book is characterized by large illustrations, enlarged text, repetitive language patterns, controlled vocabulary, and a simple storyline, enabling teachers and preschool students to read together while introducing the values of fairness, inclusion, respect for differences, and anti-discrimination (Karges-Bone, 1992, as cited in Colville-Hall & O'Connor, 2006.)

b. Behavioral Reading Engagement

Behavioral reading engagement refers to students' observable participation during reading activities. It includes behaviors such as paying attention, actively participating, following classroom instructions, maintaining persistence throughout the reading session, and demonstrating physical involvement in the learning process (Fredricks et al., 2004b; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Skinner et al., 2009).

c. Shared Reading

Shared reading is an interactive reading activity in which a teacher and students read a story together using a large-format book. During the activity, the teacher models reading aloud, guides students to follow the text and illustrations, encourages participation, and

facilitates interaction to support children's literacy development and engagement (Holdaway, 1979).

1.7.2 Operational Definition

a. SDG 10 Based Big Book

In this study, the SDG 10–based Big Book refers to an English learning medium developed using the Design and Development (D&D) research model with the ADDE framework. The product is a large-format Big Book designed for preschool shared reading activities and integrates the values of SDG 10 through a story about fairness, inclusion, respect for differences, and equal opportunities. The book was developed using large illustrations, controlled vocabulary, repetitive sentence patterns, contextual human characters, and simple storylines suitable for preschool learners. The quality of the product was evaluated through expert judgment.

b. Behavioral Reading Engagement

Behavioral reading engagement in this study refers to preschool students' observable behaviors during shared reading activities. It was measured using an observation checklist consisting of nine behavioral indicators, namely attention, active participation, persistence, effort, physical engagement, instructional response, consistency, initiative, and time allocation. The observation focused on identifying the extent to which students demonstrated active involvement during reading activities.

c. Shared Reading

In this study, shared reading refers to an English reading activity led by the teacher using the developed SDG 10 based Big Book. During the activity, the teacher reads the story aloud while showing the text and illustrations to the whole class, encourages students to repeat words or phrases, responds to students' answers, and facilitates interaction between the teacher, students, and the story. The activity is intended to provide equal visual access to all students while supporting their behavioral engagement during reading.