

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction of the study. It begins with the background of the study, which explains the importance of developing a Big Book as a shared reading medium to support English language learning for preschool students and integrate Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 (Life Below Water). This chapter also discusses the research problems, research objectives, research significance, limitations of the study, and the definition of key terms related to the research.

1.1. Research Background

The development of literacy in childhood is an important foundation for academic success and lifelong learning. According to Padmadewi et al., (2020) literacy activities in basic education can support children's development of reading and writing skills in EFL contexts, highlighting the importance of providing meaningful literacy experiences from an early stage. According to Ratminingsih et al., (2025) story-based learning plays an important role in English literacy development, particularly through the interaction between teacher-student readiness and parent involvement. The development of reading literacy in preschool children significantly improves their language skills and engagement with texts. According to Suras et al. (2025) reading literacy is the process of preparing children to master the skills of understanding the content of a text and interpreting it verbally. Children's reading skills can be stimulated through reading activities, such as repeatedly reading children's storybooks, which will improve their reading ability.

In early childhood education, the use of methods such as storytelling and interactive games with active involvement and guidance from teachers significantly increases children's interest and literacy skills (Latifah et al., 2025). In addition, research on teachers' perceptions of language and literacy education in early childhood shows the importance of aligning perceived educational priorities with practices that support the effective development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the preschool environment (Kim & Jang, 2025).

Reading engagement in preschool children is a dynamic concept that significantly improves early literacy skills and overall learning experiences. In this study, reading engagement is specifically viewed from the behavioral dimension, which is reflected in children's attention, participation, and responses during reading activities. Children who are directly involved in reading activities show higher motivation and actively participate in reading activities, which is very important for future academic success. According to Istihari, (2024) conducting an exploratory study using the interactive Read-aloud approach showed a significant increase in reading engagement and critical literacy in young students and promoted understanding and motivation. Reading aloud can support children's development by fostering analytical thinking, critical thinking, communication, curiosity, imagination, and initiative, suggesting that reading aloud can provide an engaging experience for young learners Suwastini et al. (2025). Furthermore, Rismadewi et al. (2023) emphasized that students often experience difficulties in understanding texts, particularly in identifying main ideas, vocabulary, and meaning, indicating the importance of providing supportive and engaging reading experiences to improve students' interaction with texts. In addition, the role and support of family

and an inspiring reading environment have been shown to have a positive correlation with students' level of learning engagement, highlighting the importance of a holistic approach in fostering reading habits (Pioquinto & M. Oco, 2025). Encouraging reading engagement in preschool children will support their motivation, concentration, overall learning experience, and improve their early literacy skills. When children are actively engaged in reading and supported by their families and an inspiring environment, it will benefit their academic and personal growth.

Based on observations and interviews conducted at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja, the preschool students were still at the early stage of literacy development. Rather than reading independently, the children were primarily introduced to basic literacy skills, such as recognizing letters, listening to stories, looking at pictures, and responding to simple questions. The preliminary findings also indicated that opportunities for meaningful and interactive reading experiences were still limited. English lessons relied heavily on traditional methods, including flashcards, pictures, and repetitive drilling. Shared reading activities using books were rarely implemented, and Big Books had not been used in the English classroom. Consequently, children's attention and participation could decrease during learning activities, while opportunities to engage with stories, pictures, and simple English language through interactive reading were limited.

Shared book reading is a learning activity in which teachers and children read books together and interact with each other during the reading process. Teachers guide children by explaining new words, pointing out pictures, and encouraging children to talk about the content of the book. This interaction helps children

improve their communication skills, vocabulary, and understanding of the text (Cárdenas et al., 2020). Shared reading significantly increases children's engagement in reading during literacy activities. Interaction between teachers and students, especially through shared strategies while reading books together, increases children's responsiveness, attention, and interaction with the story. When teachers read stories while showing pictures and illustrative texts, it motivates children to participate and respond actively (Wu et al., 2025). The use of a Shared Reading Strategy through digital photo stories and found its relevance to students' reading comprehension (Kresnawati et al., 2013). According to Wanicharoen, (2024) shared reading effectively encourages early literacy development by increasing children's vocabulary, willingness to participate, and understanding of reading activities. Furthermore, Yuliati (2022) highlighted the importance of interactive reading aloud activities in supporting literacy learning, suggesting that interactive reading experiences can provide opportunities for children to engage with reading activities. These findings indicate that shared reading is a powerful method for increasing reading engagement and participation among young children. However, observations at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja indicate that shared reading is rarely applied because teachers rely mostly on flashcards and repetition instead of book-based reading activities. This highlights the need for an interactive shared reading medium to support children's literacy development.

Offer alternative solution to support literacy and shared reading activities is Big Books. Big Books are large books containing large text with bright, colorful illustrations designed to attract and hold the attention of young children, especially in early childhood education. This medium has specific characteristics such as

attractive, colorful pictures, repeatable words, and predictable storylines (Oktaviana et al., 2021). According to Zainudin et al. (2023) Big Books can effectively support early reading development by making reading more enjoyable. Big Books for preschoolers differ from those for early primary school children, where early primary schools use more text. Big Books have special characteristics in both text and images, and have unique characteristics in terms of image and color. Using Big Books can develop aspects of language skills, including literacy skills in children, as well as increasing interest in reading books and student motivation (Kusuma Dayu & Setyaningsih, 2022). According to Elsiyana et al., (2025) Big Book media can provide an effective and accessible learning resource to support students' reading comprehension and literacy development. The use of Big Books as teaching media significantly improved students' reading comprehension because the combination of large text and illustrations helped students understand reading materials more effectively. This finding indicates that Big Books can provide meaningful reading experiences and support students' interaction with texts (Jayendra et al., 2018). According to Sunaryati & Azzahra, (2020) the use of Big Books is considered effective in raising students' environmental awareness. Big Books nurture and motivate students by making reading fun and interactive, encouraging deeper engagement with the text. The use of big books in teaching students to read will increase creativity and enrich students' reading experiences (Eka et al., 2020). The use of big books as a versatile and engaging teaching medium in early childhood education, by combining large, colorful pictures and repetitive, predictable text, will improve language skills, increase students' interest in reading and motivation, and encourage holistic development, including environmental

awareness. Suitable themes are those related to development goals. By integrating themes related to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the ledger, educators can not only increase language and reading engagement in early childhood, but also introduce them to important global issues in an age-appropriate and meaningful way.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a global framework agreed upon and adopted by the United Nations (UN) to address global challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation through 17 interrelated targets. These targets aim to promote sustainable development in various economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, 'Life Below Water,' aims to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development (Lothian & Haas, 2024). SDG 14 is highly relevant and beneficial for early childhood education because the theme of marine life is visually appealing, familiar, and concrete for young learners. Children easily relate to sea animals and ocean-related visuals, making it easier to introduce environmental values in an age-appropriate way. Integrating SDG 14 into literacy activities helps raise children's awareness of marine conservation while support positive attitudes toward protecting their environment. In this study, the focus on marine life protection was selected because marine animals provide a concrete and engaging context for preschool students to understand the importance of keeping the sea clean and protecting living organisms from pollution. The Big Book will be integrated with the theme of SDG 14 and designed to be contextual, visually attractive, and appropriate for preschool students. This reading medium is expected to support teachers in delivering more

meaningful literacy activities. Overall, the development of the SDG-based Big Book aims to create a sustainable impact on early literacy at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja.

Based on the literacy challenges in Indonesia and the preliminary observations conducted at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja, it was found that preschool students were still at the early stage of literacy development and were primarily introduced to basic alphabet recognition. The learning activities mainly relied on simple and conventional media, such as flashcards and pictures, supported by repetition. However, Big Books had not been used as a reading medium in the classroom, resulting in limited opportunities for children to engage in meaningful shared reading activities and demonstrate active behavioral engagement during reading. Furthermore, the learning activities had not yet incorporated environmental themes related to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, *Life Below Water*. These conditions indicate the need for a reading medium that is developmentally appropriate, visually engaging, and able to connect early literacy learning with environmental awareness. To address these needs, this study employs a Design and Development (D&D) approach guided by the ADDIE model to develop a contextual Big Book as a shared reading medium. The research gap lies in the limited development of Big Book media that integrates shared reading activities, preschool children's behavioral engagement during reading, and SDG 14, particularly the value of protecting marine life. Therefore, this study aims to develop a visually appealing and developmentally appropriate Big Book that supports preschool children's behavioral engagement during shared reading while introducing early awareness of the importance of protecting marine life.

1.2.Problem Identification

In early childhood education, developing emergent literacy skills is important as a foundation for children's future reading development. Students at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja are still developing their early literacy skills, although they have been introduced to basic literacy materials such as the alphabet. The teaching approach used by teachers mainly focuses on introducing letters and recognizing word sounds through repetition. However, letter pronunciation has not been introduced systematically, and teachers have not utilized storybooks as learning media in reading activities. Instead, they mostly use flashcards, pictures, and miniatures to introduce letters and words. This condition indicates that the available learning media do not optimally support students' reading engagement and early literacy development. Therefore, there is a need to develop an interesting and appropriate shared reading medium, such as a Big Book, to support preschool students' engagement in reading activities and early literacy learning.

1.3.Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study was conducted in a limited setting, involving only one class (A2) at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja. Therefore, the results may not be generalizable to other early childhood education contexts with different characteristics.

Second, the focus of this study was limited to one aspect of reading engagement, namely behavioural engagement, which includes students' observable participation, attention, and responses during shared reading activities. Other

aspects of reading engagement, such as affective and cognitive engagement were not explored in depth.

Third, the developed Big Book only integrates one Sustainable Development Goal, specifically SDG 14 (Life Below Water). As a result, students' exposure to other sustainability topics is limited, and the findings cannot represent the effectiveness of Big Books in delivering broader SDG content.

Finally, the effectiveness of the Big Book as a learning medium is highly dependent on the implementation of shared reading strategies by the teacher. Variations in teaching methods, interaction quality, and classroom conditions may influence students' engagement and learning outcomes.

1.4. Research Questions

1. How is a Big Book designed and developed as a shared reading medium integrating Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water) to support preschool students' behavioral reading engagement in English language learning?
2. What is the quality of the developed Big Book as a shared reading medium integrating Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water) to support preschool students' behavioral reading engagement in English language learning?

1.5. Research Objectives

1. To design and develop a Big Book as a shared reading medium integrating Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 Life Below Water that is

contextually appropriate and suitable for preschoolers' English language learning.

2. To evaluate the quality of the developed Big Book in terms of its content, relevance, language appropriateness, visual design, and pedagogical suitability based on expert validation.

1.6. Research Significance

1. Theoretical Significance: This study helps improve early reading skills in preschool children by using Big Books, which have big text and pictures that make it easier for young learners to follow and understand stories. It also teaches children about the environment and the importance of protecting life below water, helping build their awareness of sustainability from a young age.
2. Practical Significance: The study gives teachers, schools, and parents a fun and effective reading tool to help children enjoy reading while learning about important environmental issues. Big Books encourage children to participate, think, and learn together, making reading time more engaging and meaningful.

1.7. Definition of key terms

1.7.1 Conceptual Definition

a. Big Book

Big books are large-format books containing text and illustrations presented in large print that are easy for children to see and read during shared reading activities

(Karges-Bone as cited in Colville-Hall & O'Connor, 2006). According to Laily Sa'idah, et al (2020) There is no fixed standard size for a Big Book. Its size may vary according to the classroom context and learners' readability needs. Previous studies have reported Big Books in various sizes, including A3, A4, A5, and newspaper size.

b. Shared Reading

Shared reading is a learning activity in which teachers and children read books together and interact with each other during the reading process. Teachers guide children by explaining new words, pointing out pictures, and encouraging children to talk about the content of the book. This interaction helps children improve their communication skills, vocabulary, and understanding of the text (Cárdenas et al., 2020).

c. Sustainability of Development Goals

According to Johnston, (2016) the United Nations (UN) defines The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of universal goals and targets, consisting of 17 goals agreed upon by all PBB member. The SDGs represent a comprehensive action plan for people, the planet and prosperity, with the aim of eradicating poverty in all its forms while ensuring environmental protection, social inclusion and economic growth.

d. SDG 14 (Life Below Water)

Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) focuses on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. The objectives of SDG 14 are to reduce marine pollution, protect marine and coastal

ecosystems, regulate fishing to prevent overfishing, and improve scientific knowledge and research capacity. This goal emphasises the protection of at least 10% of coastal, marine and fisheries areas that are harmful to support the health of the marine environment and the livelihoods of communities that depend on it (Andriamahefazafy et al., 2022).

e. Reading Engagement

Engagement in reading is a concept that involves behavioural, cognitive, and emotional dimensions. Behavioural engagement refers to observable actions related to reading, such as time spent reading, effort expended, attention, active participation in reading activities, and following rules related to reading. This represents the reader's active engagement during the reading process, which is the basic level of engagement that supports deeper emotional and cognitive engagement (Alqahtani, 2024).

1.7.2 Operational Definition

a. Big Book

In this study, Big Book refers to a large-sized book designed and developed by the researcher containing simple English text, Indonesian translation, and attractive illustrations related to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14: Life Below Water. The Big Book was developed in A3 size (29.7×42 cm) to ensure that the text and illustrations could be clearly seen by preschool students during shared reading activities. This book is used as a shared reading medium to support preschool students' reading engagement at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja. The product incorporates several features, including clear and large letters, repetitive sentence

patterns, attractive illustrations, bilingual text (English and Indonesian), and a Life Below Water theme. The bilingual feature was included to provide language support for preschool learners, helping them understand the meaning of unfamiliar English words while gradually developing their English literacy skills. These features are integrated into the Big Book to facilitate children's participation, interaction, and engagement during shared reading activities.

b. Shared Reading

In this study, shared reading refers to an activity in which the teacher reads aloud the Big Book while pointing to the pictures and text to guide children's attention and understanding during the reading process. In the try-out of the product, the teacher implemented shared reading activities by showing the A3-sized Big Book to the children, reading the story aloud, pointing to the illustrations and written text, and encouraging children to participate through repeating words and responding to simple questions. The implementation of shared reading was measured through observable behaviors, including children's attention, participation, responses, and interaction during the reading activity, as well as their involvement in simple follow-up activities related to the story.

c. Sustainability of Development Goals (SDGs)

In this study, SDGs refer specifically to the integration of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 Life Below Water into the big book. SDG elements are implemented through story themes, vocabulary, and illustrations that promote marine conservation, reduce pollution, and raise awareness of marine life protection among preschool students.

d. SDG 14 (Life Below Water)

Operationally, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14: Life Below Water in this study is represented through elements of storyline, characters, background, and messages in the Big Book that emphasize the importance of protecting marine ecosystems. Marine life was selected because SDG 14 primarily focuses on conserving oceans and the organisms that depend on them, including fish, coral reefs, and other sea creatures. This content is designed to be understandable and relevant for early childhood learners. The integration focuses on introducing preschool students to marine animals, the effects of trash on the marine environment, and the importance of caring for and protecting marine life.

e. Reading Engagement

Reading engagement in this study refers to observable behaviours in class A2 at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja during Big book reading sessions, such as showing attention, showing excitement, asking or answering questions, and showing interest. Engagement was measured using a behavioural observation checklist developed from behavioural engagement indicators in early literacy.