

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Basic literacy, particularly reading skills, plays a fundamental role in supporting student learning and development, as literacy is not limited to the ability to understand written text but also encompasses essential language and cognitive competencies, including listening, speaking, critical thinking, creativity, and effective communication that enable students to understand and interpret information, convey ideas, make sense of their experiences (Padmadewi et al., 2018; Padmadewi et al., 2022; Widiasih et al., 2023). In early childhood, the development of literacy is crucial because it lays the foundation for children's future learning and academic success (Abreu et al., 2020). In order for children to become literate, they must start by reading. By honing their reading and language skills from an early age, children can develop their communication and cognitive skills, thereby fostering a love of learning (Puspita & Kurniawan, 2024). Through early literacy, children can improve their vocabulary, comprehension, and critical thinking skills, which are essential for problem solving and supporting academic achievement (Marwan et al., 2024). Children with early literacy skills tend to perform better and develop better social and emotional skills in school, as they are able to express themselves more effectively (Rafiyya et al., 2024). Using storytelling, interactive reading activities, and other engaging activities can promote early

literacy, fostering their interest in reading and guiding them toward a lifelong desire to learn (Oktavianti & Nur, 2024).

One of the fundamental aspects of early literacy is the development of reading skills, as reading is the primary receptive language skill that enables children to receive, process, and understand information through written text (Rismadewi, 2023). In the context of early literacy, learning English is also very important because English is an international language that plays a vital role in global communication and is widely used in various aspects of life, including education, technology, and business (Suprianti et al., 2020; Suprianti, 2020). At an early age, children's brains are more flexible and responsive to new languages, making it easier for them to develop listening, speaking, and comprehension skills naturally (Smalle & Bogaerts, 2024). Introducing English during the preschool years not only increases vocabulary and pronunciation, but also supports cognitive growth, creativity, and problem-solving skills (Xia et al., 2022). In addition, early exposure to English helps children gain confidence in expressing themselves and prepares them to interact in a global world where English serves as the international language for education, technology, and cross-cultural communication.

Despite the importance of early literacy and language learning, literacy outcomes in Indonesia remain a serious concern. According to the 2022 PISA results, only about 25% of Indonesian students achieved minimum proficiency (Level 2 or higher) in reading (OECD, 2023). The OECD also highlights those students who attend preschool tend to perform better in reading at later stages of education, suggesting that literacy challenges are rooted in early learning

experiences. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening early literacy foundations through engaging reading activities in preschool settings is crucial for improving long-term reading outcomes in Indonesia.

To instill early literacy, especially in English language learning, we need to improve preschoolers' engagement in reading. Engagement can be defined as the extent to which students are emotionally connected and actively involved in educational activities, including interactions with participants, learning activities, goals, and the learning environment (Puspitasari & Hayati, 2023). Higher levels of student engagement are positively correlated with academic achievement, whereas low engagement can have a negative impact on students' learning outcomes and their overall academic performance (Putri et al., 2021). Reading engagement during the preschool period plays an important role in helping to enrich vocabulary, comprehension skills and positive attitudes toward reading, thereby enabling long-term literacy skills to develop. Children who are introduced to books and interactive stories from an early age are more likely to develop phonemic awareness and better reading skills, which are essential for reading fluency and future academic success (Nkurunziza, 2024). Increasing children's active involvement in reading activities will help improve their cognitive abilities, such as attention and memory, which play a vital role in overall language development (Barber & Klauda, 2020). Reading engagement itself consists of three interrelated dimensions: behavioral, emotional and cognitive engagement (Cao et al., 2024). Among these dimensions, this study focuses on behavioral engagement, as it is the most

visible indicator of children's active engagement in reading sessions and reflects their motivation to participate in literacy activities.

Among these three dimensions, behavioral engagement is particularly important during early childhood because it reflects how children show interest and participate physically and verbally during reading sessions. Behavioral engagement refers to students' positive academic behaviors, including their active participation, persistence, effort, and attention during learning activities (Reeve et al., 2025). Behavioral engagement can be seen when children actively listen to stories, point to pictures, repeat words, ask questions, or respond to prompts during reading sessions (Lingwood et al., 2023). These behaviors indicate that children are not only physically present, but also mentally and physically engaged in the reading process. When teachers provide interactive and enjoyable reading experiences, such as using expressive stories, props, or picture books, children are more likely to show higher levels of behavioral engagement (Cárdenas et al., 2020). This active participation strengthens deeper connections with the text, improves vocabulary mastery, and helps from consistent reading habits from an early age.

Despite its importance, many preschoolers still demonstrate low levels of reading engagement. They often exhibit minimal participation, low enthusiasm, and limited concentration during reading activities. This problem can be caused by several factors, including children's limited attention spans and the lack of interactive and stimulating reading materials used by educators. Young children often find it difficult to focus on one task for a long period of time, making it difficult for them to remain actively engaged with traditional

reading materials. According to (Manalu & Winardi, 2025), the attention span of preschool-aged children typically lasts only a few minutes per activity, so educators must employ dynamic and varied approaches to maintain their interest. If appropriate strategies such as interactive storytelling or hands-on activities are not used, children's interest will quickly wane and their literacy skills will not develop rapidly during these critical early years.

In addition, the limited attention span of preschoolers often leads to fragmented learning experiences, where children find it difficult to maintain concentration during reading sessions. This lack of sustained focus can result in minimal comprehension and reduced recall of vocabulary or story details. To address this issue, educators need to create short, varied, and multisensory reading sessions that incorporating songs, movements, or visual aids to help maintain attention and make reading more enjoyable (Novita & Juhairiah, 2021). Providing positive feedback and encouragement during reading activities can also help children stay motivated and focused, as it reinforces their sense of accomplishment and enjoyment in learning (Dyansatithi & Hasanah, 2024). Organizing reading activities into small, well-managed segments helps align with children's natural patterns, thereby increasing engagement and learning process.

Another important consideration is the need of engaging reading media that can support children's active participation during reading activities. Reading media that primarily presents text and images without providing opportunities for interaction may offer limited support for children's active involvement in the reading process. Interactive reading activities, such as

prediction, questions, and responses to the story, can encourage children to participate in constructing meaning and developing personal connections with stories (Chuang & Jamiat, 2023; Alhamad et al., 2024; Megawati et al., 2025). Reading media that supports such interaction, for example through story prompts, open-ended questions, visual support, and opportunities for discussion, can further encourage children's participation during reading (Wu et al., 2025; Deliman, 2025). Therefore, engaging reading media that facilitates interactive reading activities is important for providing children with opportunities for active participation and enjoyment during reading, which are relevant to their reading engagement.

To overcome these problems, it is very important to use interactive and visually appealing reading media. Books with bright graphics, good page texture, and interactive aspects are able to attract children's attention and maintain their interest in reading activities (Song, 2021). Stories with animation-like images have been proven effective in encouraging children's engagement in a way that is appropriate for their level of understanding (Triatna, 2024). When preschoolers engage in participatory reading activities that allow them to point, touch, and respond, it can enhance their understanding and comfort during the reading experience. Creating a literacy-rich environment with engaging materials that are appropriate for children's developmental levels can help educators foster strong reading habits for life (Santamaria, 2020 as cited in Barluado et al., 2024).

Students' reading engagement can be supported by the use of engaging and meaningful reading media that attract children's attention and provide

enjoyable reading experiences (Nitiasih et al., 2022). Therefore, selecting the right learning media is crucial, especially for early-age learners who are just beginning to develop their literacy skills. An effective media that can be used is a big book with colorful illustrations and interesting stories that can attract children's attention and enhance their reading experience (Kusna & Puspitasari, 2023). Big Book media is a large-sized learning medium that applies a global method, combining large text and illustrations to support early reading learning (Mardiyana & Dafit, 2022). In addition, the attractive visual of big book can also help children understand stories more easily and enjoyably (Zola & Nurhafizah, 2021). With its large size, children can be helped to see text and pictures clearly even in group reading activities, thereby encouraging a shared reading experience and participation (Dayu & Setyaningsih, 2022). The bold and clear illustrations make the elements within them more powerful, which can develop children's vocabulary and understanding. The visual beauty combined with simple yet engaging stories forms the foundation of big books in creating an appealing reading environment and fostering a love for literacy from an early age.

In addition to its attractive visuals, the Big Book developed in this study incorporates interactive elements that can encourage children to participate actively in reading activities. Interactive story activities allow teachers to highlight keywords, ask children to predict what may happen next, and draw their attention to specific details in the illustrations (Susanti, 2020). The interactive nature of Big Books can also encourage children's participation through activities such as repeating phrases, answering questions, and

responding to parts of the story (Cipolletti et al., 2025). These activities provide opportunities for children to interact with the teacher, the story, and the illustrations, making the reading experience more participatory and meaningful.

The use of Big Books can be further supported through a shared reading approach. Shared reading is an interactive reading approach in which students actively participate in reading large-print books or enlarged texts, while being guided and supported by a teacher or more experienced reader (Altamimi & Ogdol, 2023). In early childhood education, shared reading emphasizes interaction, discussion, and shared attention between teachers and children, making it ideal for developing engagement in reading. Through shared reading, teachers model reading behavior, guide children's understanding, and encourage participation through questions, repetition, and discussion. The use of Big Book greatly supports shared reading practices, as their large text and illustrations allow children to clearly see and respond to the story during shared reading sessions. This approach promotes behavioral engagement by encouraging children to point to pictures, repeat words, answer questions, and actively respond to the text, thereby strengthening their motivation and engagement in reading activities. Therefore, Big Books can function not only as reading materials but also as a medium that facilitates interactive shared reading experiences in early childhood classrooms.

Big Books can also serve as a shared reading medium for introducing sustainability concepts by integrating reading materials related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 15: Life on Land. In 2015, the United Nations established Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15

which focuses on “Life on Land” and aims to protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and sustainable forest management, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and prevent biodiversity loss (Ishtiaque et al., 2020). SDG 15 is chosen as the theme for the Big Book because concepts related to soil, animals, plants, and the natural environment are concrete and closely related to the daily experiences of preschool children, making them easier to understand through visual stories. In addition, learning activities that explicitly discuss life on land have not been fully integrated in classroom at TK Lab Undiksha, as environmental education is often presented in a general manner without specific emphasis on biodiversity and sustainable land use. Therefore, the integration of SDG 15 into Big Book provides an appropriate and meaningful medium for introducing environmental values in an age-appropriate manner. Through large, attractive illustration and simple yet meaningful stories, big books can help children recognize the importance of protecting forests, preserving biodiversity and protecting the environment. Stories featuring animals, plants, and natural landscapes support the development of children’s emotional connection with nature and make them more aware of the need to protect it (Yılmaz et al., 2020).

The integration of SDG 15 themes into Big Book-based shared reading activities also provides opportunities for children to engage with meaningful reading content while being introduced to environmental concepts. Characters in the stories that exemplify sustainable behaviors, such as planting trees, protecting animals, and maintaining environmental cleanliness, can encourage children to adopt similar actions in their daily lives. During shared reading

sessions, teachers can facilitate interactive discussions by asking open-ended questions related to the story and children's real-life experiences, thereby encouraging active participation and deeper understanding. These reading activities can be reinforced through follow-up practices, such as gardening or creative projects using recycled materials, which help children connect the content of the story with real-world actions. Through the integration of SDG 15 into early literacy activities, the Big Book provides children with opportunities to encounter environmental values and concepts related to life on land while participating in meaningful shared reading experiences (Fauzi et al., 2024).

The use of SDGs-based storytelling in early childhood education is very important because it offers an approach that is interesting and appropriate for children's development in introducing environmental awareness and social responsibility. Through stories supported by clear illustrations and simple language, children can begin to understand global issues in a way that is relevant to their daily lives. Environmental themes such as conservation, recycling, and wildlife protection help foster children's sense of responsibility towards nature, while collaborative discussions during shared reading promote communication, empathy, and cooperation (Arabaci & Okyay, 2023). Furthermore, by presenting stories on theme of sustainability in children's first and second languages, bilingual storytelling activities grounded in the SDGs not only support English language development but also foster children's awareness as growing citizens, encouraging them to reflect on real-world environmental challenges and potential solutions (Mahayanti et al., 2026). In this way, SDGs-

based storytelling not only enhances early literacy development but also contributes to shaping future citizens who are environmentally responsible.

Based on the issues described above, it can be seen that in improving the reading engagement of preschool children still faces several challenges. Previous research by Oktaviana, Warmansyah & Utami (2021) found that children's reading abilities in Indonesia remain low and that the media and methods used are not very diverse. Similarly, Harsiwi & Yunarni (2021) explained that children have short attention spans and that the instructions provided by teachers during learning activities are often ineffective. These studies indicate the potential of Big Books as a reading medium for young learners. However, the studies did not specifically focus on developing Big Books that integrate a particular sustainability theme into shared reading activities. Research on Big Books that specifically integrates Sustainable Development Goal 15 (SDG 15): Life on Land as content for preschool English learning and shared reading activities also remains limited. In addition, limited attention has been given to developing such a Big Book specifically to support children's behavioral reading engagement. Therefore, this study focuses on developing and evaluating the quality of an SDG 15-based Big Book as a shared reading medium to support preschool children's behavioral reading engagement in English language learning.

1.2 Identification of Problems

Based on the classroom observation and teacher interview conducted during the needs analysis, sustainability themes, particularly Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15 (Life on Land), had not yet been integrated into English learning activities for TK A1 students at TK Lab Undiksha. In addition, the teacher had never used a Big Book as a shared reading medium in English lessons. As a result, students had limited opportunities to participate in interactive English reading activities that could support their reading engagement and early literacy development.

1.3 Delimitation of The Study

The study focuses on developing and evaluating a Big Book as a shared reading medium for preschool students aged 4–6 years old. The study is limited to the integration of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15 (Life on Land) into the developed Big Book. In addition, the study focuses only on students' behavioral reading engagement observed during shared reading activities. The study was conducted at TK Lab Undiksha.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How is a Big Book designed and developed as a shared reading medium integrating SDG 15 (Life on Land) 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 SDG 15 (Life on Land) to support preschool students' behavioral reading engagement in English language learning?

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To develop a Big Book as a shared reading medium integrating Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15 (Life on Land) to support preschool students' reading engagement in English language learning.
2. To evaluate the quality of the developed Big Book as a shared reading medium integrating SDG 15 (Life on Land) to support preschool students' reading engagement in English language learning.

1.6 Significance of The Study

This study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically.

1. Theoretical Significance

This research enriches the literature on literacy media development, particularly in the context of early childhood education. This research can be a reference for future researchers interested in exploring innovative approaches to literacy development.

2. Practical Significance

This research offers a concrete product in the form of a big book that can be used by teachers and students. For teachers, this big book serves as an alternative teaching tool to make the learning process more interesting and effective. For students, this big book provides a fun medium to increase engagement and understanding in reading.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

1. Conceptual Definition

a. Big Book

A big book is a large book used in language and literacy teaching, in which stories are read aloud to students, with pictures and text presented simultaneously to support interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational modes of communication (Hall & O'Connor, 2006).

b. Shared Reading

A shared reading approach is a collaborative reading experience in which children actively participate in reading texts or other reading materials together (Altamimi & Ogdol, 2023).

c. Sustainability of Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of universal and interconnected sustainable development goals, consisting of 17 goals with 169 targets adopted by countries to guide development from 2016 to 2030 (Morton et al., 2017).

d. SDG 15 (Life on Land)

SDG 15: Life on Land is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015. This goal is classified as planetary or environmental goal, which focuses on protecting terrestrial ecosystems to ensure the sustainability of life on land (Beckmann, 2021).

e. Reading Engagement

Reading engagement is a complex concept that encompasses behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions, reflecting how readers interact with texts through actions, mental strategies, and emotional responses during the reading process (Alqahtani, 2024).

f. Behavioral Engagement

Behavioral engagement refers to students' observable actions and participation in learning activities (Guo et al., 2014). This includes behavioral dispositions that reflect how actively students engage in academic tasks and classroom activities.

2. Operational Definition

a. Big Book

A big book refers to a large storybook characterized by large print and colorful illustrations, designed to support shared reading activities, especially for students in TK Lab Undiksha.

b. Shared Reading

In this study, shared reading is operationally defined as a teacher-led reading activity, in which teacher and students in TK Lab Undiksha read texts together using Big Book, where the teacher provides models of reading behaviors (such as pronunciation, intonation, and expression) and actively engages students through questions, prediction, responses, and discussions about the story content during the reading session.

c. Sustainability of Development Goals

The Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) are universal framework consisting of 17 interrelated goals, launched by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that can be used as thematic content integrated into reading materials to introduce students in TK Lab Undiksha to the concepts of global responsibility and environmental awareness through educational storytelling.

d. SDG 15 (Life on Land)

SDG 15: Life on Land emphasizes the protection, restoration, and sustainable management of terrestrial ecosystems where in this study, SDG 15 is the main thematic focus in the stories used in reading activities for students in TK Lab Undiksha.

e. Reading Engagement

Reading engagement refers to the level of involvement, motivation, and emotional connection of students during reading activities. In this study, reading engagement identified through students' activeness, enthusiasm, and persistence when participating in big book-based reading sessions.

f. Behavioral Engagement

Behavioral engagement refers to TK Lab Undiksha students' behavior that demonstrate active participation in learning and academic activities. This includes students' effort, attention, perseverance, and

cooperation in the classroom context where in this study, behavioral engagement measured through indicators such as (1) the level of student attention during reading, (2) their willingness to participate in class discussions, and (3) their independence and perseverance in completing reading assignments using big book.

