

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Literacy is still an essential skill in an era of rapid technological advancement. It significantly affects the quality of a country's human resources. Indonesian students' reading habits and comprehension levels are still a big problem, even though access to education has increased. Literacy is not just the ability to read texts but also the ability to comprehend, interpret, and critically evaluate information. Literacy is essential for students' cognitive and emotional development.

Nevertheless, studies have shown that literacy levels in Indonesia are very low, which suggests that educational strategies that encourage learners' interest in reading and understanding better are needed. The 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results released in December 2019 placed Indonesia 80th out of 85 countries with low science literacy rankings. In addition, according to the Reading Literacy Activity Index (Alibaca), released in 2019 by the Center for Policy Research, Ministry of Education and Culture, the National Alibaca Index is only 37.32%, which is a low level. According to Solihin, Utama, Pratiwi, and Novirina (2019), this index consists of four dimensions: skills, access, alternatives, and culture. Out of 61 countries surveyed, a literacy index survey published by Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) in March 2016 ranked Indonesia 60th. According to ccsu.edu conducted among children under 18, the reading comprehension ability of Indonesian children is very low. This alarming statistic not only demonstrates the national problem of low literacy levels, but also highlights the urgent need to explore the underlying causes of this phenomenon. Therefore, understanding why reading skills are still low among Indonesian students is

crucial to developing effective solutions that can address the root of the problem and its manifestation in everyday learning environments.

In addition, study by Rusti (2023) mention that several things can cause poor reading skills. These include low interest in reading, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, family relationships affected by cell phones and television, and the lack of effective reading teaching models implemented by teachers. Students' reading habits and comprehension skills are hampered by these components collectively. Interest in reading is a person's natural inclination to engage in activities related to reading. Reading, which is a language-based skill, is the ability to understand concepts, ideas, and feelings conveyed in a literary work. In this process, people perform cognitive activities to understand concepts and ideas in depth, a process called divergent thinking (Irhandayaningsih, 2019).

The development of these cognitive and comprehension skills is very important, especially for early childhood students. This is especially true for reading materials that are engaging and visually supported. Picture storybooks combine reading text with engaging illustrations that capture children's attention, enhancing message delivery. Visual elements increase comprehension and engagement, making it easier for young readers to absorb the information presented in the text. Picture storybooks usually feature narratives that reflect aspects of daily life that children are familiar with, helping them connect with the content on a deeper level and instilling character values (Amril and Pransiska, 2021).

To maximize the effectiveness of such storybooks in supporting both cognitive development and moral education, it is essential to align the language used with the learners' proficiency level. This storybook use English tailored to the language proficiency level of elementary school students, specifically at the A2 CEFR level, as it employs a storybook approach that combines

illustrations and narration. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), students at the A2 level can understand sentences and expressions commonly used in relevant areas, such as personal information and everyday situations. They can also communicate in routine tasks that require direct information exchange about familiar topics. Additionally, they can explain background aspects, their surroundings, and areas that require simple attention (Council of Europe, 2001). With easily understandable sentence structures and engaging narratives, this storybook will help A2 elementary school students learn English.

Consequently, the subjects of this research are children who are learning English. The aim of this research is to assist students in expanding their understanding of the English language, broadening their vocabulary, and improving their reading skills by using a storybook approach with simple and comprehensible language. In addition to providing engaging illustrations, this book will enhance the desire to read. Furthermore, the book includes fun games such as crosswords, picture guessing, word guessing, and word puzzles. A study conducted by Yunitasari, Santoso, and Sapto (2019) found that students who participated in word games and crosswords achieved better results than those who did not engage in such activities. In line with the vocabulary mastery indicators required, these word games contribute to the development and enhancement of students' vocabulary proficiency.

Similarly, storybooks can also be used as tools to teach children social intelligence. Muzzamil, Fatimah, and Hasanah (2021) state that social development is the process by which an individual forms their social self (one's identity in society) so that they can behave according to the norms and values present in their environment. Conversely, emotional development refers to the changes experienced by an individual undergoing various strong emotions, such as hatred, fear, anger, love, joy, and sadness. A child's socio-emotional

development consists of two distinct but interconnected components. In other words, discussions about emotional development always involve social development and vice versa. Emotional and social behaviors are related, although each has different patterns.

Given the importance of the relationship between social and emotional development, it is crucial to support various types of intelligence, particularly those related to social interaction, from an early age. Interpersonal intelligence is one of the important intelligences to be developed in early childhood education. Interpersonal intelligence differs from intellectual intelligence as it focuses on interactions and relationships with others. It includes the ability to understand social cues and signals, participate in verbal and non-verbal communication, and choose appropriate communication styles (Oviyanti, 2017). Strong interpersonal intelligence is often found among extroverts, who tend to be more sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others. They are usually better at collaborating and working in teams than others (Baharun, Wibowo, et al., 2021). Since childhood is a critical period for developing social and emotional skills, interpersonal intelligence should ideally be nurtured from an early age (Nurunnisa, 2017). Interpersonal intelligence is an intelligence that can be cultivated through a child's social environment.

Storytelling media can help teach children's social and emotional development. Research by Jazilurrahman, Widat, Tohet, Murniati, and Nafi'ah (2022) found that to enhance the social skills of early childhood children, a storytelling approach requires preparation, implementation, and assessment. The themes of the stories chosen as part of the planning process should focus on children's lives in their family and peer environments. This provides numerous opportunities to build social skills and instill awareness of the importance of teamwork and communal living as essential components of human interaction. The storyline is structured, expressions are adjusted, and

social values such as respect and empathy are incorporated into the implementation process. In the final stage, assessment is conducted, where the development of interpersonal intelligence is evaluated based on specific features such as prosocial behavior, empathy, and social insight.

Helmanita (2018) states that most children's translated stories sold in bookstores largely adopt stories from the West; however, translated children's stories from Arabic mostly narrate tales about prophets, messengers, and their companions. This research was also conducted due to the use of words, phrases, and sentences that are difficult for children to understand when translating children's stories. To date, there are not many illustrated children's storybooks adapted from classic literature, especially those containing moral values. Most circulating children's storybooks focus more on fables, fairy tales, or common modern fiction, without specifically exploring the richness of Islamic literature that is filled with character education messages. Nevertheless, books like *Akhlaq lil Banin* contain moral principles that are crucial for building children's character from an early age. This limitation indicates that there is room for improvement in developing reading materials for children that are spiritually and emotionally educational, using a visual approach and age-appropriate language.

Storybooks are excellent media for students to learn because they have an engaging approach and contain social values. This book adapts the work of Sheikh 'Umar bin Ahmad Baraja, which has been widely used in many *pesantren* and madrasahs in Indonesia, to support good social learning. Sheikh 'Umar bin Ahmad Baraja's significant book, *Akhlaq lil Banin* (الأخلاق للبنين), contains points about a child's etiquette through stories. In this research, the author examines Sheikh 'Umar bin Ahmad Baraja's thoughts on the stories in the book *Akhlaq lil Banin* and reflects on the moral education model. They also adjust the language level to meet the CEFR A2 standards.

The combination of English and Indonesian makes this book more appealing to children and easier to understand. Additionally, this book helps students master the language, especially for those who are just beginning to learn English. Children are more likely to build confidence, improve vocabulary retention, and enhance overall reading comprehension when provided with familiar vocabulary and concepts in both their mother tongue and the target language. This method not only helps individuals learn a new language but also fosters appreciation for both languages. Books for early childhood are usually filled with illustrations and bright colours. The emphasis on visual elements aims to encourage children's creativity and help them become more sensitive and aware of the world around them. According to Irhandayaningsih (2019), simple and enjoyable stories can help children understand values in a fun way.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

To ensure that the language is appropriate for the CEFR A2 level so that readers can clearly understand and comprehend it well. The following questions are the subject of this study:

1. How is the process of designing a Children's Storybook that is adapted from *Akhlaq lil Banin*?
2. How is the response of the teachers and students on the A2 CEFR level about the children's story book that is adapted from *Akhlaq lil Banin*?

1.3 Aims of the Study

This research has several aims, including the following:

1. To explain the process of designing a children's storybook that is adapted from *Akhlaq lil Banin*.

2. To identify and analyze feedback from teachers and students on the A2 CEFR level about the children's storybook that is adapted from *Akhlaq lil Banin*.

1.4 Advantages of the Study

This research provides a variety of benefits, both in terms of theoretical and practical:

1.4.1 Theoretical Benefits

1. Teaching moral values this research provides effective reading resources for teaching moral values to children, which is essential for their character building and ethical understanding. This can help children grow into ethical and responsible individuals.
2. Improvement of language skills by adapting the language in storybooks to the A2 CEFR standard, this research contributes to the systematic improvement of children's language skills. This includes reading, text comprehension, and vocabulary expansion, which are crucial for their academic development.
3. Integration of moral education in children's literature this study offers insights into how moral education can be effectively integrated into children's literature, assisting educators and parents in selecting appropriate materials to support children's character education.
4. Relevance of traditional moral stories the research also examines ways to make traditional moral stories more relevant to modern educational needs, allowing children to more easily relate moral values to their current life contexts.

1.4.2 Practical Benefits

1. Learning tool for moral values and language this storybook serves as a valuable learning tool for teachers and parents in teaching moral values and language skills to children. With materials tailored to the A2 CEFR

level, this book can be utilized in various contexts, both at school and at home.

2. Enhancing children's engagement with engaging illustrations and interactive elements, this book can increase children's engagement and motivation in reading. This makes the learning process more enjoyable and effective, which in turn can improve their learning outcomes.
3. Measurable improvement in language skills by targeting the A2 CEFR level, this storybook contributes to the structured and measurable improvement of children's language skills. This supports educators' goals of developing students' language competence in accordance with international standards.

1.5 Output

This research produced a systematically organized bilingual children's storybook titled *Little Hearts' Journey* book. The book adapts selected moral stories from *Akhlaq lil Banin* to suit the comprehension level of learners at A2 level based on CEFR standards especially for elementary school who has international curriculum. *Little Hearts' Journey* book consists of 36 pages containing three different moral-themed stories, supported by engaging educational games such as crosswords, word searches, and fill-in-the-blank activities. Additionally, the book includes a vocabulary section equipped with QR codes that provide pronunciation support, enhancing learners' listening and speaking skills in English.