

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Research

English language learning for young learners has received increasing attention in the field of education, particularly because English has become one of the most important international languages for global communication. Children aged 4–6 years are in a developmental stage often referred to as the golden age, a period during which cognitive and language development progress rapidly. Language development is one of the essential developmental aspects that needs to be stimulated during young learners (Susanto, 2012). At this stage, children possess a high capacity to absorb new information, including a second language, when provided with appropriate stimulation through engaging learning experiences that are suitable for their developmental level (Uce, 2017).

In teaching English to young learners, vocabulary introduction is one of the most important initial steps because vocabulary serves as the foundation for understanding and using a language. Children need to learn simple words before they can understand sentence meanings or use the language more broadly. According to Cameron (2001), vocabulary mastery is a crucial foundation in language learning as it helps learners understand meaning and gradually develop communication skills. Furthermore, language learning materials for children should use simple, short, and clear sentences that match their language abilities (Brewster, Ellis, & Girard, 2002).

The main reason for choosing this research topic originated from observations of several English learning books currently available for young learners. Based on these observations, it was found that some books still contain vocabulary that is relatively difficult for children aged 4–6 years. In addition, some learning materials use themes that are not closely related to children's daily lives. As a result, children may have difficulty understanding the vocabulary being taught because it lacks direct relevance to their experiences. Besides observing existing books, the researcher also found that the language structures used in some learning materials are often too complex for young learners. Children aged 4–6 years generally understand short and simple sentences more easily. When the language used is too lengthy or difficult,

children may struggle to comprehend the learning materials. Therefore, it is important to consider the language level used in English learning materials for young learners education.

Based on these conditions, the researcher considers it necessary to develop a learning medium that is not only visually attractive but also contains content tailored to the language development needs of young learners. One form of learning medium that can be developed is the English Smart Book, a learning book specifically designed to help young learners learn English vocabulary through illustrations, familiar themes, and simple language use.

This research specifically focuses on developing book content that includes three main aspects: vocabulary choice, themes, and language level. The selection of these three aspects is based on the developmental needs of young learners in learning a language gradually. The vocabulary included in the book is designed to relate to children's everyday lives, making it easier for them to understand. In addition, the themes are selected based on topics that are familiar to children, such as family, animals, and food. Meanwhile, the language level is designed using simple and easily understandable sentences suitable for children aged 4–6 years.

The target users of the product developed in this study are children aged 4–6 years who are at the initial stage of learning English. By considering the developmental characteristics of children at this age, the book content is designed using attractive illustrations, simple vocabulary, and short sentences to facilitate understanding. In addition to developing the product, this study also involves gathering opinions from teachers and parents to determine their responses to the developed content. Therefore, the research employs questionnaires as the research instrument, which are distributed to teachers and parents as respondents. The questionnaires aim to collect feedback regarding the appropriateness of the vocabulary, themes, and language level used in the developed English Smart Book.

Through this research, it is expected that an educational product in the form of an English Smart Book can be developed with content that is more suitable for the needs of children aged 4–6 years. It is hoped that this book will help children learn

English vocabulary in a way that is easier, more engaging, and more appropriate to their stage of development.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of the study, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What is the process of developing the content of the English Smart Book, including vocabulary selection, theme determination, and language level adaptation for children aged 4–6 years?
2. What are the responses of teachers and parents toward the developed English Smart Book content in relation to vocabulary selection, theme determination, and language level adaptation?

1.3 Research Objectives

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of this study are:

1. To develop the content of the English Smart Book, including vocabulary selection, theme determination, and language level adaptation appropriate for children aged 4–6 years.
2. To identify and analyze the responses of teachers and parents toward the developed English Smart Book content.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of English language learning for young learners through the application of the Research and Development (R&D) method.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of knowledge regarding the design of English learning materials for young learners, particularly in terms of appropriate vocabulary selection, relevant themes, and suitable language levels for children aged 4–6 years. Furthermore, this study supports the application of language acquisition theories in developing structured learning content that is aligned with children's developmental stages.

Practically, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a guide for teachers in selecting and developing English learning materials that are appropriate for

children's cognitive and linguistic development. The English Smart Book content developed through this study may also serve as a practical learning resource for parents who wish to introduce English vocabulary to their children in an engaging and age-appropriate manner at home. For children, this English Smart Book is expected to support vocabulary development through the use of simple language, familiar themes, and meaningful learning experiences. In addition, this study may serve as a reference for future researchers interested in developing innovative English learning media for young learners education.

1.5 Output of the Research

This study produces a developed product in the form of English Smart Book content specifically designed for children aged 4–6 years. The content is developed by considering appropriate vocabulary selection, relevant themes, and suitable language levels based on children's cognitive and linguistic development. The product includes carefully selected concrete vocabulary, themes closely related to children's daily lives, and simple sentence structures that are appropriate for the developmental stage of young learners.

In addition to the main product, this study also generates validation results from experts as well as feedback from teachers and parents as part of the evaluation process. Therefore, the outcomes of this study are not limited to an educational product but also include English learning materials that have undergone validation and revision. As a result, the developed content can serve as a practical reference for English language learning in young learners education.