

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Book

Books are one of the learning media that play an important role in supporting children's learning processes, particularly in young learners education. Books function not only as sources of information but also as educational tools that facilitate children's cognitive and language development. In the learning context, books help present materials in a structured manner, making it easier for children to understand the concepts being taught. Furthermore, books can stimulate children's interest in learning through attractive visual displays and content that is appropriate for their developmental stage.

The use of picture books in young learners education has been proven to have a positive impact on children's language development and vocabulary acquisition. Picture books can increase children's interest in learning and help them understand new vocabulary (Putri et al., 2021). This is because the illustrations presented in books help children directly associate words with objects, making the learning process easier and more meaningful. Children tend to be more interested in materials accompanied by visual elements than by text alone.

In addition, books as visual media play a significant role in improving children's attention and concentration during the learning process. Sari and Rahman (2022) stated that the use of visual media, including books, can enhance children's focus because attractive visual presentations stimulate their attention. Books designed with appealing colors and appropriate illustrations can increase children's engagement in learning activities. Therefore, books serve not only as tools for delivering information but also as media for increasing children's participation in the learning process.

In language learning, storybooks have also been found to be effective in helping children understand vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Ledy (2023) showed that storybooks help children learn vocabulary because the words are presented within interesting and easily understandable stories. As a result, children do not merely memorize vocabulary but also understand how it is used in everyday life. Moreover, engaging stories can enhance children's motivation to learn. Visual elements in books

help children remember new vocabulary and understand word meanings more effectively. Children tend to recognize and retain new vocabulary more easily when it is accompanied by clear illustrations. This demonstrates that the combination of text and visuals in books is highly effective in supporting children's language learning. Research conducted by Hidayatullah (2024) revealed that book-based learning media combined with visual elements and interactive activities can improve children's learning outcomes. Children become more actively involved in the learning process and can understand the material more easily. This finding indicates that books are not merely passive learning tools but can also function as active and engaging educational media.

As learning media, books are available in various forms and functions depending on their intended purposes. In young learners education, selecting the appropriate type of book is essential to match children's cognitive, social, linguistic, and motor development. The following are several types of books commonly used in English language learning:

1. Storybooks

Storybooks contain narratives, either fictional or non-fictional, presented in simple language and supported by attractive illustrations. These books are used to stimulate language development, enrich vocabulary, and enhance children's imagination. In English language learning, English-language or bilingual storybooks are highly effective in introducing sentence structures and proper pronunciation from an early age (Susanto et al., 2022).

2. Picture Books

Picture books are designed with illustrations as the dominant feature and only a small amount of text, making them highly suitable for young learners. The visual elements help children understand the content more easily. In addition, picture books introduce children to objects, shapes, colors, and English vocabulary visually, facilitating vocabulary acquisition (Rahmadani & Sudarni, 2018).

3. Interactive Books

Interactive books encourage children to actively participate in the learning process through activities such as sticking, playing games, or using technological features such

as QR Codes and Augmented Reality (AR). Examples include smart books equipped with buttons, felt materials, shoelaces, and other simple activities. These books are beneficial for developing fine motor skills while introducing language through hands-on experiences (Octaviani & Setiyono, 2022).

4. Activity Books

Activity books contain various exercises such as coloring, matching, letter writing, and counting activities. These books are particularly popular among children aged 4–6 years because they stimulate hand-eye coordination and support school readiness. In English language learning, activity books often include writing exercises, picture-word matching tasks, and simple puzzles.

5. Bilingual Books

Bilingual books present content in two languages, such as Indonesian and English. These books are highly effective as transitional media for children learning English as a second language. They also encourage parental involvement in home learning because the Indonesian text helps parents understand the context and support their children's learning process.

6. Sensory Books

Sensory books are made from various materials designed to stimulate children's senses, such as felt fabric, crinkly plastic, or textured elements. These books are beneficial not only for children with special needs but also for supporting sensory development and fine motor skills in young learners. Additionally, they provide opportunities to introduce vocabulary and simple English instructions through sensory experiences (Pangesti et al., 2020).

7. Busy Books

Busy books are educational books made of fabric that contain physical activities such as opening zippers, buttoning clothes, and tying shoelaces. Also known as smart books, they are highly beneficial for kinesthetic learning. Their content can be customized to include alphabet recognition, number learning, and thematic English vocabulary development (Octaviani & Setiyono, 2022).

Based on the studies discussed above, it can be concluded that books are effective learning media for young learners, particularly in English language learning. Well-

designed books can help children understand vocabulary, increase their interest in learning, and support their language development. Therefore, the development of learning materials such as the English Smart Book is important to provide content that is appropriate for the needs and characteristics of children aged 4–6 years.

2.1.1 English Smart Book

A Smart Book is defined as a printed learning medium in the form of a large-sized educational book that utilizes colorful texts and illustrations, as well as repeated words and simple sentence patterns designed to stimulate children's developmental abilities (Oktaviani & Setiyono, 2022). As a learning medium, a Smart Book aims to motivate and enhance children's enthusiasm for learning in various areas, including language, arts, and emotional development. Furthermore, the English Smart Book is an innovative learning medium specifically designed to support the introduction of English to young learners in an enjoyable, interactive, and developmentally appropriate manner. In general, children's learning books function not only as sources of information but also as effective tools for cognitive, linguistic, and social stimulation (Tomlinson, 2011). In the context of English language learning, specially designed books can help children understand vocabulary, language patterns, and language use in meaningful and concrete contexts. Therefore, the English Smart Book was developed by considering vocabulary selection, themes, and language levels that are appropriate for children aged 4–6 years.

In terms of vocabulary selection, the English Smart Book emphasizes the use of concrete vocabulary that is easy for young learners to understand. This is consistent with Cameron's (2001) view that children learn language more effectively through words that have clear references and can be visualized. Therefore, the vocabulary included in the English Smart Book generally consists of familiar objects such as banana, cat, and ball. In addition, repetition and reinforcement through illustrations serve as important strategies for helping children remember new vocabulary.

Regarding themes, the English Smart Book is developed using an integrated thematic approach. The themes selected are not only engaging but also

relevant to children's daily lives, such as animals and fruits. This thematic approach enables children to learn language within a meaningful context, thereby helping them understand concepts more deeply and effectively. In terms of language level, the English Smart Book is designed using simple sentence structures that match the linguistic abilities of children aged 4–6 years. The sentences generally follow basic patterns such as “I like bananas,” “It is a cat,” and “Yellow pear.” The use of simple sentences is intended to help children gradually understand and imitate language use.

Conceptually, the English Smart Book is based on principles of language-material development that emphasize meaningfulness, engagement, and developmental appropriateness. According to Tomlinson (2011), effective learning materials should provide authentic, engaging, and relevant learning experiences. Therefore, the English Smart Book presents content that is closely related to children's world, including themes such as family, animals, colors, and daily activities, making it easier for children to connect new language with their existing experiences.

The English Smart Book also integrates visual elements and activities as part of its learning strategy. Colorful illustrations, attractive images, and textured features are important components of the book. This is supported by the theory that young learners learn more effectively through direct experiences and visual stimulation (Piaget, 1964). Consequently, the English Smart Book functions not only as a reading medium but also as a tool for exploration and interaction that can increase children's engagement in the learning process.

In addition, the English Smart Book takes into account the role of teachers and parents as facilitators of learning. The book is designed to be used flexibly in both school and home environments. Teachers and parents can guide children in understanding the content, reviewing vocabulary, and developing additional learning activities. This is consistent with Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding, which emphasizes the importance of adult support in helping children achieve optimal development.

In conclusion, the English Smart Book is a learning medium that has been systematically designed by considering vocabulary selection, themes, and language levels that are appropriate for young learners' development. Through an interactive, contextual, and enjoyable approach, the English Smart Book is expected to enhance children's interest and ability in learning English from an early age.

2.1.1.1 English Smart Book for Young Learners

English Smart Book for Young Learners is an English learning book specifically designed for children aged 4–6 years by considering their cognitive, linguistic, and social developmental characteristics. At this age, children are in the golden age period, during which brain development progresses rapidly, and they possess a remarkable ability to acquire new languages. Therefore, the provision of appropriate learning media is essential to support the process of learning English from an early age.

Children aged 4–6 years learn differently from adults. They tend to acquire knowledge through direct experiences, repetition, and engaging visual stimulation. Therefore, the English Smart Book is designed as a learning medium that accommodates these needs through the use of illustrations, colors, and simple activities that help children understand language more easily. Books that are designed according to children's developmental characteristics can increase their interest in learning and enhance their understanding of educational materials more effectively (Kurniawati, 2020).

One of the most important aspects in developing an English Smart Book for young learners is vocabulary selection. The vocabulary used should be concrete, simple, and familiar to children. Children aged 4–6 years can more easily understand words that are directly related to their daily lives, such as the names of animals, fruits, objects, and common activities. Research has shown that children are more likely to remember vocabulary when it is connected to their real-life experiences

(Malik, 2024). Therefore, the vocabulary selected for the English Smart Book should reflect children's everyday world, making the learning process more meaningful and effective.

2.2 English Language Learning

English language learning in young learners is an essential process that significantly contributes to the development of communication skills, cognitive abilities, and children's readiness to face formal education and future challenges. As a global language, English plays an important role in providing children with access to worldwide information and broadening their perspectives from an early age. Therefore, introducing English to young learners can serve as an important first step in preparing them for life in the modern era (Hui & Zeng, 2025).

At this stage, children experience rapid development, particularly in brain function and language abilities. This period is often referred to as the golden age of development, during which the brain is highly receptive to various forms of stimulation, including language-related input. During this period, language learning is not merely an academic task but a natural part of children's growth that occurs through interaction, play, and exploration of their surrounding environment (Alotaibi, 2024).

To gain a comprehensive understanding of how children acquire English, it is important to first examine how they learn a second language during the early stages of development. Understanding the processes involved in language acquisition and second-language learning can help educators and parents determine the most appropriate approaches to support children's language development effectively (Mironova, et al., 2024).

2.2.1 CEFR Level

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international standard used to measure language proficiency. In the context of English language learning for young learners, the most relevant levels are A1 and A2, as these levels represent the early stages of language development.

A1 is the most basic stage of language learning. At this level, children begin to recognize simple vocabulary and basic expressions related to their

daily lives. Learning activities primarily focus on introducing words through visual aids, repetition, and concrete experiences. According to Pinter (2017), young learners acquire language more effectively through simple vocabulary supported by illustrations and real-life contexts. This suggests that at the initial stage, children are not yet ready to understand complex language structures; therefore, the primary focus should be on vocabulary acquisition.

At the A1 level, children begin to understand and use everyday expressions as well as simple sentences. At this stage, they not only recognize vocabulary but also start to understand how words are used in sentences. Children learn language more effectively when learning materials are presented in a simple and contextualized manner (Butler, 2019). Therefore, instruction at the A1 level employs short and clear sentences, such as “It is a durian.” The use of simple language helps children understand meaning without being burdened by complex grammatical structures.

The A2 level represents the elementary stage in which children begin to understand a wider variety of sentence structures and use language in broader, although still simple, contexts. At this level, children are able to use sentences to describe daily activities, respond to simple questions, and understand basic information related to what they have learned. According to Enever (2018), children's language development should progress gradually from vocabulary acquisition to language use in broader communicative contexts. This indicates that A2 serves as a continuation of A1, where children begin to develop basic communicative competence. Furthermore, Copland, Garton, and Burns (2014) argue that English language learning for children should focus on language use in authentic contexts rather than on complex grammatical rules. This perspective is particularly relevant to the A2 level, where children begin to use language for simple communication in everyday situations.

In the context of English language learning for children aged 4–6 years, A1 and A2 are the most appropriate CEFR levels, with A2 being introduced in a limited manner as a progression from A1. This is because children's language abilities at this age are still at an early stage of development. Therefore,

learning materials should continue to emphasize simplicity in language use (Council of Europe, 2020; Butler, 2019). The development of the English Smart Book content is aligned with the characteristics of the A1 and A2 levels. The A1 level focuses on the use of vocabulary in simple words, phrases, and short sentences, while the A2 level introduces language use in familiar and meaningful daily contexts (Council of Europe, 2020). Recent studies have also shown that vocabulary materials designed according to learners' language proficiency levels improve vocabulary acquisition and language comprehension among young learners (Meisuri et al., 2025; Varisca et al., 2025). Consequently, the application of CEFR levels in this study ensures that the vocabulary, themes, and language levels incorporated into the English Smart Book are appropriate for the developmental characteristics of children aged 4–6 years.

2.2.2 Vocabulary Learning for Young Learners

Vocabulary learning is one of the most fundamental aspects of language learning, particularly for young learners. Vocabulary serves as the foundation for understanding and using a language, as children with limited vocabulary knowledge will encounter difficulties in both comprehending meaning and expressing themselves. Therefore, vocabulary acquisition is considered a crucial first step in English language learning for children aged 4–6 years (Nation, 2013; Varisca et al., 2025).

At this age, children demonstrate unique characteristics in language learning. They tend to learn through direct experiences, repetition, and interaction with their surrounding environment. Young learners acquire vocabulary more easily when words are presented in meaningful contexts and supported by visual aids. This suggests that vocabulary instruction for children should not be conducted in an abstract manner but should instead be connected to real-life experiences that are familiar to them (Meisuri et al., 2025; Varisca et al., 2025). According to Nation (2013), vocabulary knowledge is a key component of successful second-language learning. The larger a child's vocabulary repertoire, the easier it becomes for them to understand and use the

target language. In the context of young learners education, the vocabulary taught should consist primarily of high-frequency words that are relevant to children's everyday lives.

Recent studies also indicate that contextual vocabulary instruction supported by interactive learning materials significantly improves young learners' vocabulary mastery and language comprehension (Hidayatullah et. al., 2024; Meisuri et al., 2025).

In teaching vocabulary to young learners, several important considerations should be taken into account (Cameron, 2016; Pinter, 2017; Shin & Crandall, 2019):

1. Vocabulary should be concrete. Words should be easy to visualize, such as cat, banana, ball, and pink, because young learners understand language more effectively through tangible objects and visual representations (Cameron, 2016).
2. Vocabulary should be familiar. The selected words should be closely related to children's daily experiences, such as fruits, animals, objects, family members, and classroom objects (Pinter, 2017).
3. Vocabulary should be simple. Words should be short, easy to pronounce, and appropriate to children's cognitive and linguistic development (Shin & Crandall, 2019).
4. Vocabulary should be contextualized. Vocabulary should be introduced through meaningful themes and real-life situations so that children can understand and remember new words more effectively (Cameron, 2016; Shin & Crandall, 2019).

These considerations are important because they enable children to understand and retain vocabulary more effectively. The selection of inappropriate vocabulary, such as words that are overly abstract or rarely used, may create difficulties in the learning process. Furthermore, vocabulary learning should be introduced gradually. Children cannot be expected to master a large number of words within a short period; therefore, repetition and consistent exposure are essential. According to Ledy et al. (2023), vocabulary

taught through repeated and meaningful contexts can significantly improve children's comprehension and retention.

In this study, vocabulary learning serves as one of the primary focuses in the development of the English Smart Book. The vocabulary selected for the book is tailored to the characteristics of children aged 4–6 years by incorporating simple, familiar words that are closely related to their daily lives.

In addition, the vocabulary is presented through attractive visual representations and organized around specific themes to facilitate understanding. It can therefore be concluded that vocabulary instruction for young learners should be carefully designed by considering their developmental characteristics. The use of appropriate vocabulary, supported by visual aids and meaningful contexts, can help children learn English more effectively. This principle serves as the foundation for the development of the English Smart Book content in the present study.

2.2.3 Themes in Young Learners' Learning

Themes are an important approach in young learners' education used to organize learning materials in an integrated and meaningful manner. In English language learning, the use of themes helps children understand vocabulary and language concepts within contexts that are real and relevant to their daily lives. A theme-based approach enables children to learn holistically by connecting various aspects of learning into a unified whole. Theme-based learning allows children to repeatedly encounter vocabulary in different activities, including storytelling, songs, games, and picture-based exercises. This repeated exposure supports vocabulary retention and promotes children's confidence in using English in meaningful situations (Meisuri et al., 2025).

Therefore, selecting themes that are relevant to children's interests and daily experience is essential in designing effective English learning materials. Theme-base materials not only facilitate vocabulary acquisition but also create

enjoyable and engaging learning experiences that support young learners overall language development.

Children aged 4–6 years are at a developmental stage in which they learn primarily through direct experiences and interactions with their environment. Therefore, contextualized learning is generally easier for them to understand than abstract instruction. According to Enever (2018), language learning for young learners becomes more effective when learning materials are linked to real-life experiences and presented in meaningful contexts. This highlights the importance of themes in supporting children's language comprehension. Furthermore, Cameron (2001) states that organizing vocabulary around meaningful topics or themes helps young learners make connections between new words and their everyday experiences, making vocabulary easier to understand, remember, and use in appropriate contexts. This is consistent with Nation (2013), who emphasizes that vocabulary is learned more effectively when it is encountered in meaningful contexts rather than in isolation. Therefore, presenting vocabulary through themes provides meaningful contexts that facilitate children's vocabulary acquisition and language development.

The use of themes in English language learning also contributes to vocabulary development. Vocabulary presented within a specific theme is easier for children to understand because they can associate words with particular situations and experiences. Shin and Crandall (2019) argue that a theme-based approach is highly effective in teaching English to children because it integrates vocabulary, language structures, and meaning within a single learning activity. This approach also supports the development of children's thinking skills and helps them understand relationships among the concepts they learn.

Familiar themes such as animals, food, family, and body parts are commonly used in young learners learning because they are closely related to children's everyday experiences. Cameron (2016) states that children learn

language more effectively when learning materials are directly connected to their world, as this enables them to construct meaning naturally.

In practice, themes should be familiar, contextualized, simple, and engaging in order to match children's developmental levels and enhance their interest in learning. Inappropriate themes may create difficulties in understanding vocabulary and language concepts. Therefore, theme selection should be carried out carefully to ensure its suitability for young learners.

The use of themes is one of the primary focuses in the development of the English Smart Book. The themes selected are based on the daily lives and experiences of children aged 4–6 years, enabling them to understand the vocabulary more easily. This contextual approach facilitates vocabulary comprehension and retention because children learn words that are meaningful and relevant to their everyday activities (Kemendikbudristek, 2022; Cameron, 2001). Furthermore, the themes serve as the basis for organizing vocabulary and simple sentence patterns in a systematic sequence, enabling meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences (Brewster et al., 2002)

In conclusion, the integration of themes, vocabulary, and language levels forms the fundamental basis for the development of the English Smart Book in this study. Through carefully selected themes, children can learn English in a meaningful, contextualized, and developmentally appropriate manner.

2.3 Challenge in Learning English

Learning English as a foreign language involves various challenges, particularly for young learners (Copland et al., 2014). Children aged 4–6 years are still in the early stages of language development; therefore, they have limitations in understanding and using a new language. These challenges may arise from language differences, limited vocabulary knowledge, and learning materials that are not fully aligned with children's needs and developmental characteristics (Varisca et al., 2025; Meisuri et al., 2025). In general, young learners acquire language through direct experiences, repetition, and interaction with their surrounding environment. However,

in English language learning, children often encounter difficulties when the materials presented are unfamiliar to them.

According to Varisca et al. (2025), young learners commonly experience difficulties in English vocabulary learning due to limited vocabulary mastery, problems with pronunciation, unfamiliar word meanings, and limited opportunities to use English in meaningful contexts. Similarly, Meisuri et al. (2025) reported that the use of engaging, contextual, and age-appropriate learning materials plays an important role in helping children overcome these challenges and improve their vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, English learning materials for young learners should be simple, contextual, visually attractive, and closely related to children's daily experiences in order to facilitate effective language learning.

One of the primary challenges in learning English is the difference between language systems. English has distinct sound systems, vocabulary, and grammatical structures that differ from those of children's first language (Marilyn, 2015). As a result, children may experience difficulties in understanding and remembering new language forms. Furthermore, they require time to become familiar with the new sounds found in English. Another challenge is limited vocabulary knowledge. Young learners generally possess a restricted vocabulary repertoire, both in their first language and in English (Yowani, 2021). Consequently, they often struggle to understand instructions or learning materials that contain unfamiliar words. Vocabulary knowledge is widely recognized as a crucial factor in successful language learning (Nation, 2013), and recent research by Varisca et al. (2025) also identified limited vocabulary knowledge as one of the major factors contributing to difficulties in learning English. Therefore, if the vocabulary used is too difficult or inappropriate for children's developmental levels, the learning process becomes less effective.

In addition, pronunciation difficulties are a common challenge. Many English sounds do not exist in the Indonesian language, making it difficult for children to pronounce certain words correctly. For example, sounds found in words such as three and this are often challenging for young learners. These pronunciation difficulties may affect children's confidence in using English.

Another common challenge is the lack of familiar themes in learning materials. Young learners understand language more easily when the learning content is closely related to their daily lives. However, some instructional materials incorporate themes that are not relevant to children's experiences, making it difficult for them to understand the meaning of new vocabulary. According to Ledy et al. (2023), context-based or familiar-theme learning can significantly improve children's vocabulary comprehension.

An inappropriate language level also presents a barrier to English language learning. Learning materials that contain overly long or complex sentences may make it difficult for children to understand the meaning. Children aged 4–6 years generally comprehend simple and direct sentences more effectively. Therefore, the use of language that is not aligned with children's developmental levels may hinder the learning process.

Another influential factor is the lack of appropriate learning media. Learning materials that are uninteresting or non-interactive may cause children to lose motivation and interest in learning. Young learners require learning media that are visually appealing, engaging, and capable of involving them actively in the learning process. Research has shown that the use of appropriate learning media can enhance children's motivation and learning outcomes (Hidayatullah et al., 2024).

In conclusion, the challenges of English language learning for young learners include differences in language systems, limited vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation difficulties, unfamiliar themes, inappropriate language levels, and limited learning media. These challenges highlight the importance of developing learning materials that are tailored to children's needs and developmental characteristics. Therefore, this study develops the English Smart Book, which focuses on appropriate vocabulary selection, the use of familiar themes, and simple language levels to help overcome the difficulties young learners face when learning English.

2.3.1 Pronunciation

One of the main challenges in English language learning for young learners is pronunciation (Astina, 2020; Palupi et al., 2022). English has a sound system that differs significantly from Indonesian, causing children to

experience difficulties in pronouncing words accurately. These differences can be observed in certain sounds such as /r/, /v/, and final consonants, which are less common in the Indonesian language (Kelly, 2000; Gilakjani, 2016). Recent studies have shown that children often struggle to pronounce English phonemes due to the influence of their first language, a phenomenon known as mother tongue interference (Varisca et al., 2025). The influence of the first language often results in pronunciation errors because learners tend to transfer the sound patterns of their native language when speaking English (Lado, 1957).

Various studies on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning have found that children frequently encounter difficulties in producing certain sounds because of differences between the sound systems of their native language and English. A study conducted by Sari and Putra (2022) revealed that Indonesian children often have difficulty pronouncing sounds found in words such as three and this, as these sounds do not exist in the Indonesian phonological system. This finding indicates that pronunciation is a common challenge in learning English as a foreign language, particularly at the beginning stages of language learning.

Therefore, in the development of the English Smart Book, it is important to consider the pronunciation aspect by providing support that can assist children in producing words correctly. Such support may include repetition activities, simple pronunciation models, or integration with audio-based learning media. These features are intended to reduce pronunciation errors from the early stages of language learning and help children develop greater confidence in using English.

2.3.2 Limited Vocabulary Knowledge

Limited vocabulary knowledge is one of the most common challenges in English language learning, particularly because children possess a restricted number of words that they can understand and use. Children often experience difficulties in understanding word meanings, remembering vocabulary, and applying newly learned words in everyday contexts (Varisca et al., 2025).

Furthermore, vocabulary learning can be challenging because it requires learners to simultaneously process pronunciation, spelling, and meaning.

In practice, many learning materials and textbooks present a large amount of vocabulary that is not always appropriate for children's developmental levels. Vocabulary that is too extensive or too difficult may cause children to feel overwhelmed and less motivated to learn. In addition, some learning materials introduce vocabulary without providing sufficient context, leading children to memorize words without understanding how they are used in real-life situations.

These conditions highlight the importance of careful vocabulary selection in educational materials. Therefore, the development of the English Smart Book content in this study focuses on selecting a limited yet relevant set of vocabulary items. By presenting vocabulary that is meaningful, familiar, and appropriate for children's developmental stages, the book is expected to help children understand, retain, and use new words more effectively.

2.3.3 Lack of Familiar Themes

The lack of familiar themes is a common challenge in English language learning, particularly for young learners. Themes play an important role in helping children understand vocabulary because they provide a clear context for learning. However, in practice, many learning materials and textbooks use themes that are not closely related to children's experiences. Themes that are too general, overly broad, or disconnected from children's daily lives may create difficulties in understanding the meanings of words. As a result, children may simply memorize vocabulary without fully understanding its use and significance.

Vocabulary learning is more effective when words are presented in meaningful and familiar contexts. Recent studies on theme-based learning have shown that the use of themes closely related to children's lives can significantly improve vocabulary comprehension and retention (Wiwiek et al., 2025). This is because children are able to connect new words with their own real-life experiences. When the themes presented in books or learning media are

unfamiliar, children may encounter several difficulties, such as failing to understand the context in which words are used, struggling to remember vocabulary, showing less interest in learning activities, and being unable to relate language to real-life situations.

Some learning materials still employ a less contextualized approach in which vocabulary is presented in isolation without a clear thematic framework. This can make the learning process less meaningful for children. Therefore, theme selection is a crucial consideration in the development of educational media, particularly smart books. By incorporating familiar themes, children are expected to understand vocabulary more easily, making the learning process both more effective and more enjoyable.

2.4 Learning Strategies for Young Learners through the English Smart Book as a Learning Medium

In English language learning for young learners, the success of the learning process is determined not only by the teaching methods employed by teachers but also by the extent to which children are able to receive and understand the learning materials presented to them. Therefore, learning strategies should focus on children's learning experiences as the primary recipients of instruction (learner-centered), particularly through the use of learning media that are appropriate for their developmental characteristics. In the context of this study, the English Smart Book serves as a learning medium designed to help children understand English in a way that is easier, more engaging, and more meaningful.

Children aged 4–6 years possess unique learning characteristics. They learn most effectively through direct experiences, visual stimulation, repetition, and enjoyable activities. Research has shown that children are more receptive to learning when materials are presented through attractive and interactive media (Hidayatullah et al., 2024). This suggests that specially designed learning materials, such as educational books, can serve as effective tools for helping children acquire a new language without feeling overwhelmed.

One learning strategy that is particularly effective for young learners is the use of strong visual support. Young learners tend to understand vocabulary more easily

when it is accompanied by clear and attractive illustrations. The use of picture books has been shown to significantly improve children's vocabulary comprehension because they can directly associate words with objects and concepts. Therefore, in the English Smart Book, each vocabulary item is presented alongside supporting visuals to help children understand its meaning concretely.

Another effective strategy is repetition. Children require repeated exposure to vocabulary in order to remember and understand new words. According to Nation (2013), vocabulary acquisition is highly dependent on the frequency with which words appear during the learning process. For this reason, the English Smart Book is designed to provide consistent repetition of vocabulary across different pages and contexts, enabling children to develop stronger retention and understanding of the target words.

Furthermore, the use of familiar themes plays an important role in facilitating children's language learning. Children can understand language more easily when learning materials are related to their everyday experiences. Recent studies have demonstrated that theme-based learning can significantly improve children's vocabulary comprehension and retention because language is presented within meaningful contexts (Wiwiek et al., 2025). Therefore, themes such as gardening are incorporated into the English Smart Book to provide learning experiences that are closely connected to children's daily lives.

Another strategy that supports children's learning is the use of simple and gradually progressing language. Young learners are not yet capable of understanding complex language structures; therefore, learning materials should be organized from basic to more advanced levels. Butler (2019) argues that children learn English more effectively when it is presented through simple and clear sentences. In this study, the content of the English Smart Book is developed based on language proficiency levels ranging from A1 to A2, allowing children to progress gradually without experiencing excessive difficulty.

In addition, active participation is an important factor in children's learning. Young learners tend to understand materials more effectively when they are directly involved in learning activities, such as pointing to pictures, pronouncing words, or following simple instructions. Research conducted by Shin and Crandall (2019)

indicates that learning activities involving active participation can improve both comprehension and learning motivation. Therefore, the English Smart Book contains not only text but also simple activities designed to encourage children to interact with the learning materials.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that effective learning strategies for young learners include the use of attractive visuals, vocabulary repetition, familiar themes, simple and progressively structured language, and active learner participation. All of these strategies are integrated into the development of the English Smart Book as a learning medium that is tailored to the needs and developmental characteristics of young learners. Through this approach, children are expected to receive and understand English language instruction more effectively and enjoyably.

2.5 Previous Studies

Numerous studies have been conducted on English language learning for young learners, particularly those focusing on learning media, vocabulary acquisition, and theme-based approaches. However, there remains a limited number of studies that specifically integrate vocabulary selection, themes, and language levels into a single learning medium such as the English Smart Book.

A study by Shin and Crandall (2019) found that the use of visual-based learning strategies and interactive activities is highly effective in improving language comprehension among young learners. Children tend to understand vocabulary more easily when it is presented through pictures and activities that actively involve them in the learning process. This study highlights the importance of engaging learning media; however, it does not specifically discuss the systematic development of educational book content.

Furthermore, Enever (2018) emphasized that language learning for young learners is more effective when it is connected to real-life contexts and everyday experiences. This study supports the use of contextual approaches in English language learning. Nevertheless, its focus is primarily on language learning policies and practices rather than on the development of book-based learning media.

Similarly, Ledy et al. (2023) demonstrated that a theme-based learning approach can significantly improve children's vocabulary comprehension. Children

who learn through familiar themes tend to understand and retain vocabulary more effectively than those who learn without contextual support. However, the study did not develop a learning product that specifically integrates themes with other aspects such as language level.

Research conducted by Hidayatullah et al. (2024) revealed that book-based learning media combined with visual elements and interactive activities can increase children's engagement and learning outcomes. Children become more active during the learning process and are able to understand the material more easily. However, the study focused primarily on the use of learning media rather than on analyzing the content of the books themselves.

In addition, Varisca et al. (2025) found that vocabulary mastery remains a major challenge for young learners, particularly in pronunciation, understanding word meanings, and using vocabulary in everyday contexts. While this study emphasizes the importance of appropriate vocabulary selection, it does not examine the integration of vocabulary, themes, and language levels within a single learning medium.

Moreover, Oktaviani and Setiyono (2022) investigated the use of smart books as interactive learning media capable of enhancing children's motor skills and engagement. Their findings indicated that smart books effectively increased children's interest in learning. However, the study focused more on activity-based and interactive features and did not explore language-related content in depth, such as vocabulary selection, themes, and language levels.

Based on these previous studies, it can be identified that a research gap still exists. There is a lack of studies that specifically develop English learning book content tailored to the characteristics and needs of children aged 4–6 years. Existing studies tend to focus on individual aspects separately, such as vocabulary development, thematic learning, or interactive activities, rather than integrating these elements into a single educational product.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by developing an English Smart Book specifically designed based on three key aspects: vocabulary choice, themes, and language level, all of which are adapted to the developmental characteristics of children aged 4–6 years. Through the integration of these three components, the

resulting product is expected to serve as a more effective, contextualized, and developmentally appropriate learning medium for young learners learning English.