

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an introduction of the study. It consists of background of the study, research questions, the purpose of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, definitions of related terms, and the organization of the paper.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The development of literacy learning in Indonesian setting faces challenges to improve the quality of student's literacy skills. In 2005, Indonesian poet and activist, Taufiq Ismail has dubbed the situation as *tragedi nol buku* (the zero book tragedy) due to the students' lack of interest in reading (Irsyad, 2015). In 2012, *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO) reported that Indonesian reading index was 0.0001 which indicates that out of 1000 people, there is only one person who can seriously participate in reading (Anggraini, 2017). The result of *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS) in 2011, an international assessment of reading literacy for children shows that Indonesian children remained at the rank 41 out of 45 countries (Mullis, et al., 2012). It was also reported that Indonesian children received such a low rank and scored below average. Furthermore, Indonesian students rank at 64<sup>th</sup> in *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) 2015 (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016). Meanwhile, the latest study conducted by Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, reveals that Indonesia is the second-least literate nation in the world out of 61 countries (Central Connecticut State University, 2016). Together with Botswana, Indonesia remains at the lowest level according to the rate of literacy and literate behaviour characteristics.

The condition of Indonesian children's low reading interest is influenced by several factors. Hartadi (2009) says that governmental management issues, school environment, and parenting style become the main factors that influence

**Ni Kadek Heny Sayukti, 2013** INQUIRING INTO BALANCED LITERACY  
APPROACH IN TEACHING READING FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia | [repository.upi.edu](http://repository.upi.edu) |  
[perpustakaan.upi.edu](http://perpustakaan.upi.edu)

children's low reading interest. According to him, government needs to sponsor a development of public libraries and school libraries from the urban area to remove

area. However, the President of Indonesia has established a program to send books to regions across Indonesia on the 17<sup>th</sup> of every month (Deputy Assistant of Script and Translation, 2017). However, Hartadi (2009) believes schools and public librarians need to manage more strategies in order to promote those reading books for children. The condition is worsened by the lack of participation of the parents in promoting reading stories for early age (Santoso, 2011; Sudarmi, 1999). According to Sudarmi (1999, p. 25), there are four parental issues which hamper children's reading interest; 1) parents rarely set up family library at home; 2) parents rarely concern about the child's development in reading skill; 3) parents rarely remind children about studying/reading time; and 4) television tends to be always on during the studying time. Motivating students' habit for reading also requires reinforcement and teachers' strategies (Arisandi, et al., 2018). Based on a study in an elementary school in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, students need to be motivated by the role of teachers and school system in order to develop their self-initiative in reading (Benediktus, 2017). As a results, the condition of children's low reading interest is also affected by environment.

In the current era, *balanced literacy* has been frequently mentioned by educators and brought up into discussion of teaching literacy for children. It refers to a philosophical framework which utilises the practices of teacher's level of support and child control into the teaching of reading and writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). In the present world of globalization, literacy is no longer only seen as "three R's: reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic" but also a complex skills including analysis, evaluation, synthesis, and application (Murray, 2003, p. 1). It indicates that the current era demands contemporary literacy of reading and writing with the emergence of information technologies and media. It involves courage to change a teacher-centred classroom into a student-centred classroom where children can discover and build their knowledge (Reis, 2015). Despite the fact that the information age makes it possible for teachers to conduct student-centred class and purposefully access information from variety of sources independently, balanced literacy practice also faces several problems. A study conducted in one university in Bandung, Indonesia shows how internet significantly affects students' reading interest but the problems were in the quality

of reading (Nugraha, 2015). Another common problem is students' collaboration. Traditionally, Indonesian students have been taught to finish assignments individually, but nowadays collaboration is becoming increasingly important in the era of globalization. Having no model or guidelines to teach about leadership and collaboration, teaching might become overwhelming. The practice of balanced literacy seemed to be an ideal concept that rarely put into a full practice in the Indonesian classrooms. Therefore, this phenomenon awakens a need of reformation on the contemporary literacy in Indonesian education.

Regarding extra reading program, Indonesian government has been establishing many programs to improve literacy development. One of the programs is *Gerakan Literasi Sekolah* (School Literacy Movement) which attains to embrace character building education at school through 15 minutes reading activity before starting the class in the morning (*Permendikbud*, 2015). However, several problems still occur during the implementation. For instance, most of students tend to show low interest toward reading activity due to lack of comprehensive guidance from teachers, meanwhile most of libraries still lack of reading literacy program (Andi, 2017). A considerable majority of students admit to do the 15 minutes reading by working on their homework or summarising textbook without precise assistance and guidance from teachers (Sayukti, 2018). For those reasons, teachers or educators need to reassess teaching strategies used in the classroom to fit the approach that promotes content and skill, especially for teaching young learners.

Young learners come from various backgrounds with different learning strategies. Tomlinson (2014) proposes a concept of differentiated instruction which supports instructional strategies for student's individual need through learning in the same classroom. In the classroom of balanced literacy, it may require students to work in the same material with groups or individually and teachers to deliver the same material with various level of reading difficulty (Fountas & Pinnell, 2016). However, researchers argue that differentiated instruction could be time consuming due to its preparation time and multiple needs during the implementation in the actual classroom (Tomlinson, 2014). Therefore, this study also concerns on the teacher's method in using differentiated

instruction to support balanced literacy approach in teaching reading during an English class for young learners, particularly fifth graders.

In this study, the practice of balanced literacy in the research site indicates a possible distinctive case of teaching reading in Indonesian setting. Based on the preliminary observation, the English teacher develops a reading program in an elementary school which promotes balanced literacy learning for the past six years. From the preliminary interview, he exhibited a commitment to share his knowledge and experience about his teaching practice. Besides, the school invents a school-based curriculum to meet the need of the students. The elements of the national curriculum are reformed in a school-based curriculum which integrates English in every lesson and promotes reading literacy as the core of learning. Not only empowering students with daily reading activity at school, but also a home reading log where they can read books with or under the supervision of their parents. As previous study of Indonesian context reveals great interest of majority students in learning with storybooks, but the real implementation remains unclear (Sayukti, 2018). In line with the gap found in the study, the teacher of this study uses many storybooks for reading comprehension at the classroom and students are free to borrow storybooks at the library. The exposure of reading through consistent reinforcement such as class reward, certificate, point for reading activity, and free play time show how student's literacy ability improve and their enthusiasm on reading habit increase (Arisandi, et al., 2018). For these reasons, that research intends to highlight the importance of using non-course book such as children novel and picture storybook for teaching reading to young learners.

Concerning the problems, this study intends to describe the practice of balanced literacy approach based on a teacher's perspective in implementing reading literacy learning, especially in an English class. From that time to the present, researches and implementations of balanced literacy approach have been much developing in the United States (Frey, et al., 2005). In general, the fundamental theories of teaching methods used in balanced literacy in the classroom includes the use of varied features such as read-aloud, guided reading, guided writing, shared reading, shared writing, independent reading, and independent writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 2016; Frey, et al., 2005). Those features

were developed when the State of California Education Department began researching possible literacy programs to promote all fundamental aspects of literacy to produce quality readers and writers (Kaczanowski, 2008). Meanwhile, researches of balanced literacy approach for teaching young learners in Indonesia are relatively rare (Yuliyati, 2014). Therefore, it is important to address the issue in order to provide specific information about how balanced literacy is conducted in a real context of Indonesian classroom and its possibility to help establishing a reading program in other schools.

As past studies dominantly concerned on the perception of English teaching strategy and approach, this study intends to describe the implementation of balanced literacy approach as a part of classroom activity and non-classroom activity at elementary level. Since it is impossible for teachers to implement a literacy movement without the support of environment, the results of the study were expected to portrait an activity of reading routine in Indonesian classroom setting. With passion to create a meaningful lesson for children, teachers need to be mentally prepared over technology and information update. In other words, balanced literacy approach offer a vehicle for empowering collaboration skills with analytic and critical-thinking skills associated in reading and writing. It is clear that promoting storybook reading in the school library need to be developed in order to support a linguistic influence for young learner's language development and steady environment of literacy learning.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

Based on the background, this research intends to elaborate the answers of the following research questions:

1. How does the teacher implement the models of balanced literacy approach for teaching reading to young learners in the classroom?
2. What challenges does the teacher encounter while implementing the models of balanced literacy in teaching reading to young learners in the classroom?
3. How does the teacher's implementation of balanced literacy approach help students to maintain reading habit?

### **1.3 The Purpose of the Study**

This study attempts to investigate the implementation of balanced literacy initiative in teaching reading for young learners with the following purposes.

1. To be able to investigate the implementation of balanced literacy approach for teaching reading to young learners.
2. To be able to investigate the challenges encountered by the teacher during the implementation of balanced literacy for teaching reading to young learners.
3. To be able to describe the teacher's balanced literacy approach implementation in helping young learners' to maintain reading habit.

### **1.4 The Scope of the Study**

The study concerns on the teacher's experience in implementing balanced literacy for teaching reading to young learners, especially fifth grade students. The participant consists of an English teacher who was teaching in a private elementary school. The research setting takes place at private school in North Bali, Indonesia which established a school-based curriculum and bilingualism (English and Indonesian language) to teach reading literacy. Since literacy is a broad term, this single case study focuses on the case of English lesson, particularly the reading program at a private elementary school. The experiences include elaboration of teaching methods that he used in the classroom and his perception of the reading program.

### **1.5 The Significance of the Study**

As past studies dominantly concern on the practice of teaching reading and writing in the classroom, and the theory of balanced literacy approach, this study is intended to extend existing knowledge about the implementation of balanced literacy approach in a reading program for young language learners of English as foreign language. Practically, the study is expected to be one of references for teachers in teaching reading literacy and for educators to establish a reading program for children, especially in Indonesian setting.

## **1.6 Definitions of Related Terms**

There are several terms used in this study,

1. Balanced literacy approach is a philosophical framework which utilises practices in the area of word study, reading, writing, and content-area literacy through support of whole language and phonics instruction that assisted by level of teacher support and child control (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).
2. Reading is a selective process of constructed literacy practices on socio-cultures: values, beliefs, and power relations to language, ethnicity, religion, gender, economics, and geo-politics (Purcell-Gates, Duke, and Stouffer, 2016)
3. Young learners in this study refer to children aged five to twelve years old (Ellis, 2013).

## **1.7 The Organization of the Paper**

The organization of this paper is written in five chapters. The Chapter I present the background of the study, research questions, the purpose of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, definitions of related terms and the organization of the paper. The Chapter II provides review of literature concerning the importance of teaching reading, definition of balanced literacy approach, models of balanced literacy framework, factors of young learner's reading literacy development, the teaching of reading literacy in Indonesian setting, relevant studies of similar cases, and criticism to balanced literacy approach. The Chapter III outlines the research design, research site, the participant of the study, data collection, and data analysis. The Chapter IV discusses the results of the study and discussion of the results. Finally, the Chapter V reflects on the balanced literacy approach implementation during the field study, conclusions of the discussion, limitations of the study, and implications of this study for further research.