

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

In this era of globalization, English is one of the languages that must be mastered in the 21st century. English has become one of the languages that need to be learned because it is considered a universal language and is the primary language in most countries around the world (Darma & Widiastuty, 2023). Most people worldwide use English as their main communication tool when interacting with people from different countries. Therefore, learning English will help students communicate with people from other countries with different cultural backgrounds (Mahendra, 2020; Sugiarta et al., 2021). Through systematic exposure to English, young learners gain opportunities to better understand meaning, language use, and spelling, which supports both linguistic and cognitive growth (Artini, 2017). In a wider context, mastery of English also opens wider access to knowledge and technology, since most scientific publications, digital resources, and global information are presented in English. This makes English not only a tool for communication but also a gateway to academic and professional opportunities. It will help people to face the 21st century challenges.

To face the demands of the 21st century, the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology implemented the Merdeka Curriculum on December 2019. The Merdeka Curriculum is an enhancement of the 2013 curriculum that is based on the principle of student-centered learning (Mulyasa, 2023). The government designed the Merdeka Curriculum to be a curriculum with varied intramural learning and optimized content, allowing students sufficient time to delve into concepts and strengthen competencies.

Teachers also have the freedom to choose various teaching tools so that they can be tailored to the interests and learning needs of the students (Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan, 2024). With its principles, the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning, flexibility, and alignment with the needs of learners. These principles indicate that mastery of foreign languages, particularly English, is one of the important aspects promoted through this curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum provides opportunities for children to learn English from an early age. This change can be seen from the position of English in elementary schools, which is no longer just a local content subject but can be chosen as a subject from grades 1 to 6, according to each school's policy (Oktavia et al., 2023). The Merdeka Curriculum provides space for students to develop global competencies, including English language skills, which are essential in facing the challenges of the globalization era. According to Gumilar et al. (2023), the Merdeka Curriculum is also designed to help students acquire 21st-century skills commonly referred to as the 4Cs, namely Critical Thinking, Creativity, Communication, and Collaboration. This orientation aligns with the national vision of preparing Indonesia's Golden Generation 2045 through 21st-century education, which underscores the importance of English proficiency as a fundamental competence for Indonesians to actively participate and thrive in the modern global society (Padmadewi et al., 2023).

4C skills are very important for students in the 21st century (Stanikzai, 2023). In the context of English language learning, teaching 4C skills to students requires an approach that emphasizes experiential learning and has relevance to students' lives. The main factor that contributes more to students' mastery of 21st-

century skills is the teacher (Padmadewi et al., 2020). Teachers are urged to adopt more participatory teaching methodologies than those previously used in the context of English language teaching. One teaching method that teachers can employ to create lessons that will broaden students' horizons is the integration of technology in learning (Haleem et al., 2022). Not only that, integrating technology into English language learning can also benefit children's literacy from an early age, as they will become more accustomed to using all digital gadgets, including computers and smartphones. Therefore, one of the creative approaches in English language learning is by utilizing digital media (Zarifsanaiey et al., 2022).

Along with the strengthening of language learning and the acquisition of 4C skills, the Merdeka Curriculum also emphasizes the importance of character education. Moreover, there are growing concerns that character education, moral values, and the affective aspects of students are increasingly marginalized in this era (Putra et al., 2022). In the previous curriculum, character education in Indonesia still faced many challenges, as many teachers in Indonesia focused only on cognitive aspects and neglected character development, resulting in the ineffectiveness of building positive character in students (Indrayani et al., 2017). Therefore, the Merdeka curriculum pays attention to character education for students to achieve a balance between mastery of knowledge and the moral development of students. This is realized through graduate profiles, which are one of the frameworks of deep learning. The Merdeka Curriculum promotes deep learning, one of whose frameworks is graduate profile.

Kemendikdasmen (2025), stated that Graduate Profile consists of eight dimensions, namely faith and devotion to God Almighty, citizenship, critical

thinking, creativity, collaboration, independence, health, and communication. These eight dimensions emphasize not only cognitive aspects but also the development of character and skills needed in everyday life. Among these dimensions, critical thinking ability becomes one of the key competencies that must be developed from an early age, because critical thinking not only appears as one of the dimensions in Graduate Profile but also is part of the 21st-century 4C skills. Critical thinking is an individual's ability to think logically, analytically, and reflectively in understanding, processing, and evaluating information. Students are equipped with the skills to observe and understand problems, assess arguments, and connect related ideas. In the decision-making process, they are also able to reflect on their way of thinking. Students with critical thinking skills are usually able to solve problems systematically, see things from various perspectives, and find logical and evidence based solutions. These skills help them become careful, responsive individuals who are ready to face challenges with a mature and focused mindset. This skills are important to develop because, in everyday life, these skills will be useful for students in solving problems (Khasanah & Muthali'in, 2023).

In the modern world of education, critical thinking has become one of the skills that students must possess to face the challenges of the 21st century. According to Haryanti (2017), in 21st-century education, the expected learning outcomes are not only about mastering all learning materials but also require students to possess cognitive and social skills. To meet these demands, one of the skills that the next generation must master is critical thinking (Khairunnisa et al., 2024). Critical thinking skills are important to develop because, in everyday life, these skills will be useful for students in solving problems (Khasanah & Muthali'in,

2023). With critical thinking skills, Indonesian students will think fairly and openly, which will help them make or take the right decisions to overcome the challenges or problems they face. Both challenges in the school environment and in real life or daily life. However, critical thinking skills are not something instant, students need to be directly confronted with everyday life problems to train their critical thinking abilities (Hardiyanto & Thaib, 2017). According to Pebriana et al. (2017), students who are accustomed to facing and solving problems in daily life will be stimulated to think, thereby enhancing their critical thinking skills. Therefore, the critical thinking value of Graduate Profile needs to be taught to students from an early age, when children are still in the golden period of language acquisition (Ratminingsih et al., 2021). At the age of 3 to 12 years, children enter a period of highly dynamic cognitive, social, and emotional development. However, the learning process at this age cannot be equated with the approach used for adult learners. Children have unique characteristics that demand a tailored pedagogical approach.

In the aspect of language acquisition, one example of children's learning characteristics is those who are classified as fast achiever and those who are classified as slow achiever (Nurfadhillah et al., 2021). Children who are fast achiever are those who can quickly and well receive, understand, and master the lessons given to them, which is why they are known as fast achiever. On the other hand, slow achiever have slightly lower intellectual abilities than normal children, but they are not classified as mentally retarded. These slow achiever children experience obstacles in receiving and understanding lessons, and in some cases, they require more time to think, respond to stimuli, and adapt to new things. In the classroom, slow achiever students need more time to learn than other children.

Therefore, there is a need for learning material that can assist in accommodating the different learning styles of these children, especially to assist those who are slow achiever.

One of the learning material that can assist the learning needs of slow achiever is bilingual learning material. Bilingual learning material is a type of learning material that uses two languages as its medium of instruction, in this context, the two languages are English and Indonesian (Wulandari et al., 2025). Combining English with Indonesian can enhance students' understanding of foreign concepts and accelerate the processing of information received by students. This will help slow achiever students to receive information more quickly than if they only used one language. According to Riska et al. (2024) slow achiever students require learning material that supports bilingualism, bilingual learning material has a positive impact on students' understanding and makes bilingual learning material a solution for the learning needs of slow achiever students. Thus, the use of bilingual learning material becomes a relevant and potential approach to accommodate the learning needs of slow achiever in understanding the material more effectively. That is the importance of understanding the characteristics of students, so that educators can adjust teaching strategies that align with the child's characteristics and create effective learning. The implementation of an effective teaching and learning process depends on the components that play a role in the teaching and learning process. One important aspect or component to help achieve learning objectives is the utilization of relevant and appropriate learning media (Ratminingsih et al., 2021). To ensure that learning concepts are easier to understand and stick in students' memories, learning media must be relevant and

visually appealing when used as a means to convey lesson material. In this regard, learning materials delivered in the form of media play an important role in facilitating learning, as they not only present content but also influence learners' attention, understanding, and retention, especially among young learners. According to Tomlinson (2011), materials refer to anything used to facilitate language learning, including textbooks, videos, digital resources, and audiovisual tools. Therefore, learning materials can also take the form of instructional media, particularly when media are used to deliver content, engage learners, and support learning processes.

The material in the form of media plays an important role in the learning process. Moreover, students need to be more enthusiastic about using learning media. Digital media can be an appropriate facility for understanding and reinforcing students' memory (Parwati et al., 2022). The use of digital media has a positive influence on learning compared to print media. Therefore, teachers are expected to employ appropriate digital learning media to enhance instructional effectiveness and respond to learners who are already familiar with technology from an early age (Ramendra et al., 2025). The use of technology makes learning more interesting because the media used is a combination of text, images, and sound effects that can make the content of the story more concrete and real. This can increase students' attention during learning and encourage them to concentrate and engage their senses in understanding the story they are watching and reading (Ratminingsih & Budasi, 2020). One of the digital media that can be used as a learning medium in the classroom is digital storytelling clip. Using digital storytelling in the form of video clip in learning can be expected to create an

enjoyable learning atmosphere, because digital storytelling clip are presented in an attractive digital combination. Digital storytelling clip will be suitable for teaching young learners, as they match the characteristics of children who easily get bored and enjoy stories (Suyanto, 2014). The use of stories in learning also can create enjoyable learning for young learners (Ratminingsih & Budasi, 2018). Digital storytelling clip also provides other benefits in the learning process, it helps students understand the material more quickly because it incorporates emotional elements in storytelling (Kogila et al., 2020). By using digital tools, digital storytelling clip creates an interactive learning environment. Additionally, this method allows students to engage in integrated learning through electronic media, thereby enhancing their engagement and understanding. As stated by Robin (2008), digital stories can enhance insights, encourage discussions, and simplify complex concepts into easily understandable ones.

The use of digital storytelling clip is also in line with the principles of deep learning adopted by Merdeka Curriculum. Deep Learning is defined as an approach that honors by emphasizing the creation of a learning atmosphere and a learning process that is mindful, meaningful, and enjoyable through holistic and integrated thinking, emotional, sensory, and physical activities (Kemendikdasmen, 2025). Through storytelling, students are invited to actively engage in the learning process by listening, analyzing, and reflecting on the content of the story, which aligns with the mindfulness principle of deep learning. When the story conveyed is linked to real-life situations or the values of character education, students experience meaningful learning that aligns with the principle of meaningfulness. The emotional and sensory appeal of digital storytelling clip also creates an enjoyable learning

atmosphere that can motivate students and help improve their concentration and memory, in line with the principle of joyful. Thus, digital storytelling clip not only serves as an engaging visual medium but also as a means of applying the deep learning approach that encourages critical thinking skills, emotional engagement, and contextual understanding.

This is also supported by previous research stated that digital storytelling has many benefits if used to teach English to young learners. Research by Tabieh et al. (2021) shows that digital storytelling significantly improves students' active listening skills, confirming that digital storytelling is an effective strategy in language learning, particularly in enhancing students' listening skills. By combining engaging visual and audio elements, this method can enhance student engagement and strengthen the language acquisition process. In addition, another study by Tamimi (2024) also shows that DST is a promising approach to enhancing English language skills, learning motivation, and critical thinking among secondary school students. Similarly, the research conducted by Wiwikananda and Susanti (2022) also shows that DST increases students' learning motivation, as they feel more confident in using English through technology-based interactions. By combining visual, audio, and text aspects, DST helps students better understand word meanings and sentence structures, thereby accelerating the language acquisition process.

In addition to benefiting the improvement of students' English skills, one study conducted by Asmawati and Asmara (2023) shows that the use of digital storytelling also received a positive response from students. Students were given a two-stage digital storytelling, pre-step and post-step. The first stage was to

introduce vocabulary to the students, and the second stage was used to encourage students to be able to create simple sentences using oral text. From the research, most of the students said that they liked learning English using digital storytelling because they had the opportunity to learn English in an enjoyable way. Moreover, research conducted by Arrifa and Khosiyono (2024) shows that digital storytelling can promote character based on Pancasila. This research emphasizes the importance of inserting Pancasila values into learning through Digital Storytelling. By presenting folk tales rich in moral messages, this medium helps students understand and internalize values such as noble character more effectively. However, this research uses digital storytelling in the form of Google Slides (images), not in the form of clip. From those studies, no researcher has yet developed a digital storytelling clip that incorporates the dimension of critical thinking from Graduate Profile education to teach English to 4th-grade elementary school students. Previous researchers also encourage future researchers to continue exploring the potential of Digital Storytelling (DST) in various learning contexts to enrich students' learning experiences.

Preliminary interviews were conducted to understand the actual practices of teaching English for young learners. Based on the interview conducted at SD Negeri 1 Banjar Jawa, teachers already utilize technology-supported facilities such as LCDs, laptops, and projectors in English learning. However, the teaching materials used in the classroom still mainly rely on conventional learning resources, particularly the student textbook *My Next Word Grade 4*, supplemented by videos from YouTube and educational applications such as Quizizz. Although these support classroom activities, they tend to function as separate and limited resources

rather than integrated instructional materials designed for young learners' needs. Existing materials also provide limited opportunities to combine storytelling, bilingual content, and the integration of Graduate Profile character values within a single learning experience. As a result, English learning materials in the form of media still need to be developed to provide more contextual, engaging, and value-integrated learning experiences for 4th-grade students.

From the results observing the previous studies, interview the English teacher and also observing the characteristics of the students and their current English language needs, ideally the developed material would be a learning media in the form of bilingual digital storytelling with the insertion of Graduate Profile to teach 4th-grade elementary school children. Thus, this research is directed towards developing a learning material in the form of a bilingual digital storytelling clip that not only aligns with the characteristics and needs of young learners but is also integrated with character values based on the Graduate Profile, particularly in the aspect of critical thinking. It is hoped that this clip can serve as an alternative solution in providing holistic, engaging, and meaningful English language learning at the elementary school level.

1.2 Problem Identification

The use of engaging material will increase students' learning motivation. Teachers must understand media and new learning models so that our students do not easily get bored with lessons (Kogila et al., 2020; Suyanto, 2014). New teaching material in the form of media integrated with technology is one of the ways that teachers can undertake. The use of stories integrated with technology is considered engaging, especially for young learners (Asmawati and Asmara, 2023). Related to

character education, in the independent curriculum, character education is one of the topics of concern. In practice, based on the results of an interview with an English teacher at SD Negeri 1 Banjar Jawa, the teacher admitted that bilingual digital storytelling clip with the insertion of critical thinking values have not been used for teaching English in grade 4 elementary school. English learning in grade 4 does not fully support contextual and enjoyable learning, as the teaching materials used are mostly theoretical. Even though the use of bilingual digital storytelling clip is one of the material that can be easily combined to teach character education to students naturally, the teacher also said that the development of bilingual digital storytelling clip with the insertion of critical thinking values needs to be done. The researchers conducted this study to develop a learning material in the form of a digital bilingual storytelling clip with the insertion of a critical thinking dimension of Graduate Profile. Storytelling clip will be easy to integrate with character education in their application. Researchers believe that this product will be an effective solution to address the lack of engaging learning material for teaching English to young learners.

1.3 Limitation of the Research

Due to time and resource constraints in this research, the researcher focuses on the development of a bilingual storytelling clip with the insertion of a critical thinking dimension of Graduate Profile as a learning material for teaching English in elementary school, especially for 4 grade students. The researcher was focused to develop only one clip and relate to one unit in the student's textbook. The specific unit is unit 10 "He always gets up at 5 o'clock", the unit is about the use of adverb of frequency related to daily activities. This unit was chosen because the topic is

closely related to students' everyday lives, making it easier for young learners to understand, relate to, and apply the language in meaningful contexts. In addition, daily routines provide broad opportunities to develop storytelling content, encourage students' critical thinking through reflection on habits and actions, and naturally integrate character values within English learning. Preliminary interviews were only conducted at a specific school, namely SD N 1 Banjar Jawa, therefore the results of this research cannot be generalized broadly. Beside focusing on product development this research also focuses on determining the quality of the product, not on actual implementation and finding out its long-term impact on students. The product was evaluated through expert judgment. The target of this research is young learners, so the product was adjusted to their level of understanding and learning needs in English.

1.4 Research Questions

From those explanations, the research questions can be concluded as follows:

1. How to design bilingual digital storytelling clip that insert the value of critical thinking for teaching English in fourth grade elementary students?
2. What are the relevant tasks that need to be developed that are relevant for teaching English and the value of critical thinking for young learner through bilingual digital storytelling clip?
3. What is the quality of the developed bilingual digital storytelling clip for teaching English in 4th grade elementary school students with the insertion of Graduate Profile value of critical thinking?

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

1. To design storytelling clip that insert the value of critical thinking for teaching English in fourth grade elementary school student.
2. To develop the relevant tasks needed for teaching English and the value of critical thinking for young learner through bilingual storytelling clip.
3. To evaluate the quality of the developed bilingual storytelling clip and task for teaching English in 4th grade elementary school students with the insertion of Graduate Profile value of critical thinking.

1.6 Significance of the Research

This study will give some significance that can be divided into two parts such as:

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

This research is expected to contribute theoretically to the understanding of the use of bilingual digital storytelling clip with the insetion of critical thinking dimensions of Graduate Profile as an innovative learning medium for teaching in elemntary school. This research provides insights into how technology-based material in the form of media and character education can enhance English language learning, especially for young learners.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

a) For Students

Through this research, students are expected to gain an engaging and meaningful learning experience using bilingual storytelling clip. This material in the form of media is designed to enhance students' interest and

motivation to learn while instilling character values and critical thinking skills. The use of digital sclip in two languages aims to make the process of learning English more enjoyable and contextual for young learners.

b) For Teachers

This research is expected to provide teachers with an example overview of innovative digital learning material that incorporate character education. Teachers can learn about how to develop teaching material in the form of media that utilize technology while also inserting the critical tinkling dimension of Graduate Profile. In addition, this research is also expected to provide teachers with teaching material that ready to use for teaching English in elementary schools, making the learning process more enjoyable and tailored to the needs of the students.

c) For Other Researchers

This research is expected to serve as a reference for other researchers interested in the development of digital learning material with the insertion of character values. This research opens up further exploration opportunities on how bilingual storytelling infused with Graduate Profile values, especially critical thinking, can be an effective approach in education. The results of this study are also expected to serve as a foundation for further research in developing similar educational material in the form of media with a broader scope.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

1.7.1 Conceptual Definition

a. Digital Storytelling Clip

Digital storytelling is the integration of storytelling with digital multimedia elements such as images, audio, video, text, and animation to present meaningful stories (Robin, 2006). In this study, digital storytelling is presented in the form of a short video clip lasting approximately three to five minutes, combining visual and audio elements to deliver educational content in an engaging and interactive way (Erliana & Arbain, 2020).

b. Critical Thinking of Graduate Profile

Critical thinking is one of the eight dimensions of the Graduate Profile in the Merdeka Curriculum. It refers to an individual's ability to think logically, analytically, and reflectively in understanding, processing, evaluating information, solving problems, assessing arguments, and making evidence-based decisions (Kemendikdasmen, 2025). This competency enables learners to approach challenges systematically and from multiple perspectives.

c. Bilingualism

Bilingualism refers to the use of two languages in communication and learning. In educational contexts, bilingual learning materials present information in both the learners' first language and the target language, allowing students to understand content more effectively while simultaneously developing proficiency in both languages (Ulwiyah, 2019). Exposure to bilingual materials also supports cognitive development, language acquisition, and communication skills (Ariantini et al., 2024).

1.7.2 Operational Definition

a. Digital Storytelling Clip

In this study, a digital storytelling clip refers to a researcher developed instructional video of approximately three to five minutes that combines narration, illustrations, text, sound effects, music, and animation to present English learning materials for fourth-grade elementary school students. The clip is developed by integrating critical thinking values into the storyline and is used as the instructional media during the implementation of the learning activities.

b. Critical Thinking of Graduate Profile

In this study, the critical thinking dimension of the Graduate Profile refers to the values embedded in the bilingual digital storytelling clip and the accompanying learning tasks. These values encourage students to identify problems, analyze information, evaluate evidence, compare ideas, draw logical conclusions, and provide reasons for their answers. Students' critical thinking is measured through the learning tasks developed based on the indicators of the Graduate Profile's critical thinking dimension.

c. Bilingualism

In this study, bilingualism refers to the use of both English and Indonesian within the digital storytelling clip. English functions as the target language and present as the audio in the clip, while Indonesian serves as learners' first language and present as the subtitle in the clip to facilitate comprehension of the story, vocabulary, and learning content. The bilingual presentation is

intended to support English language acquisition without reducing students' understanding of the instructional material.

