

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the fundamental framework and the rationale of the study. It provides a comprehensive overview of the research, which is systematically divided into six main sections: (1) Research Background, (2) Problem Identification, (3) Research Limitation, (4) Research Questions, (5) Research Objectives, (6) Research Significance.

1.1 Research Background

Reading comprehension is a central component of literacy development and plays an essential role in shaping students' academic success. It involves more than recognizing words; it requires constructing meaning, interpreting ideas, and connecting new information with prior knowledge (Mancilla-Martinez, 2020). As stated by Noordan and Yunus (2022), comprehension skills are necessary across subjects such as science, social studies, and mathematics, where students must frequently process written information. This aligns with Dewantara et al. (2022), who emphasize that strengthening reading comprehension at the elementary level is crucial in building critical thinking and lifelong learning skills. However, in Indonesia's English Foreign Language (EFL) context, reading comprehension remains a persistent challenge. Students often struggle with limited vocabulary, complex sentence structures, and unfamiliar cultural concepts, which hinder their ability to identify main ideas and understand text details (Ramadhianti & Somba, 2023). The lack of sufficient background knowledge further complicates meaning-making, as learners frequently rely on visuals or teacher explanations to interpret

texts (Smith et al., 2021; Ferdiyanto, 2025). These challenges highlight the need for contextualized, meaningful, and engaging reading media for elementary learners (Uçak & Kartal, 2022).

In response to these difficulties, teachers and researchers have increasingly explored the potential of multimodal media to support comprehension, one of which is digital comics. Comics provide visual scaffolding that helps young readers process and interpret language, making them an effective tool in EFL learning (Nishonova, 2024). With digital advancements, comics can now be equipped with interactive features such as animations, audio, clickable vocabulary, instant digital glossaries, and simple quizzes, which foster reading motivation and facilitate comprehension (Anggraeni, 2024; Putra et al., 2024; Putri & Sukasih, 2025). Digital comics also offer opportunities to embed character values aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which promotes inclusive and equitable quality education. Specifically, this study adopts the indicators from SDG Target 4.7, which emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge and skills needed to promote a culture of peace, non-violence, and global citizenship. In the context of this research, these global indicators are translated into practical character values for elementary students, such as empathy, cooperation, and anti-bullying behaviors. Through meaningful storylines, students can engage with these values, supporting both literacy and character development (Siahaan et al., 2023; Asmayawati et al., 2024). This potential positions digital comics as a relevant medium for supporting reading comprehension while cultivating positive attitudes and moral values.

The design of effective learning media requires a systematic needs analysis. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), students' needs consist of necessities, lacks, and wants, while Brown (1995) emphasizes that needs analysis should clearly

identify learners' goals and gaps in order to design appropriate instructional media. Nation and Macalister (2019) further explain that needs analysis must consider the present situation, the skills learners must achieve, and how they can best reach those goals. Teacher needs are equally important, as Richards (2001) notes that teaching media must be practical, accessible, and aligned with the curriculum. These principles underline the importance of understanding the real conditions in each school before selecting or developing media for English reading instruction.

A preliminary observation conducted at SD Negeri 1 Tukad Mungga, a public elementary school in Singaraja, indicates opportunities to strengthen English reading comprehension in alignment with the principles of the Kurikulum Merdeka. In Grade 5, which consists of 26 students, English learning is facilitated by one homeroom teacher who manages all subjects. Based on the analysis of the latest report cards, 16 students (approximately 62%) have met or slightly exceeded the Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM) of 70 in the English literacy component, while 10 students (approximately 38%) are still in the process of achieving the expected standard, resulting in an overall class average score of 71. These results suggest that, although most students have achieved the minimum learning targets, their reading comprehension skills are generally at an emerging level and have not yet developed optimally. According to the homeroom teacher's observations, many students are able to decode and pronounce English words correctly, yet they require further guidance to comprehend text meaning, particularly in identifying main ideas and locating explicit information. This condition reflects the need for more meaningful and contextualized learning experiences, as emphasized in the Kurikulum Merdeka, which encourages the development of literacy skills through engaging learning media and differentiated support. Therefore, the current learning context presents a

strong potential for pedagogical enrichment by introducing instructional media that support students' reading comprehension development while accommodating their learning characteristics and promoting active engagement.

The school's limited access to practical learning media further contributes to this issue. Due to unstable internet and complicated setups for devices like Chromebooks, teachers typically rely on a single LCD projector that is shared among all classes, and there are no interactive digital reading media. While the teacher occasionally uses game-based platforms like Wordwall, which generate enthusiastic responses from students, the school still lacks media that combine visual support, interactivity, and character values. The teacher expressed a strong need for reading media that are both engaging and capable of helping students understand texts more independently, while also supporting the school's emphasis on character education. This need is further strengthened by the gap between the Capaian Pembelajaran (CP) Fase C of the Kurikulum Merdeka which requires students to interpret multimodal texts, identify main ideas, and reflect values and the current reality where most students still struggle to comprehend even short English passages.

A review of existing studies shows that although comics and digital media have been used to support reading skills, several gaps remain. Studies such as Khoirunisa and Sukardi (2025) used printed comics without interactive features or value-based content, while Dewi et al. (2023) developed digital comics focused only on science topics. Muhaimin et al. (2023) conducted literature-based validation without producing a digital product, and Kadoli et al. (2025) focused solely on reading fluency rather than comprehension or moral values. None of these studies addressed

the specific needs of students at SD Negeri 1 Tukad Mungga or integrated SDG 4 values into digital comics.

Considering the low literacy scores, the observed comprehension difficulties, the limited availability of engaging digital media, and the gap between curriculum expectations and actual classroom performance, there is a clear need for developing an interactive, contextually relevant digital comic for Grade 5 students at SD Negeri 1 Tukad Mungga. Such a product is expected to support students' reading comprehension, foster motivation, and support character education through SDG-aligned story content. By incorporating teacher and student needs into the development process, this study aims to produce learning media that are both pedagogically appropriate and practically useful for classroom implementation.

1.2 Problem Identification

The concept of reading comprehension remains a significant challenge for elementary students in Indonesia, particularly within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Preliminary observations conducted at SD Negeri 1 Tukad Mungga revealed that many fifth graders are still at a foundational stage of reading comprehension. They frequently encounter difficulties in decoding texts, identifying main ideas, and making inferences. This challenge primarily stems from the prevailing instructional model, which is heavily textbook-based. Vocabulary is often taught through isolated word lists rather than contextualized storytelling, leaving students without the necessary contextual and visual clues to connect new words with prior knowledge.

Furthermore, these instructional challenges are compounded by practical constraints in the field. English is taught by general homeroom teachers who often

rely on standard translation methods due to a lack of accessible, visually engaging media. While teachers have occasionally utilized digital platforms like *Wordwall* which yielded enthusiastic student responses its consistent implementation is restricted by unstable internet connections and complicated device setups. Consequently, teachers heavily rely on functional offline resources, such as a single shared LCD projector. This highlights a critical need for interactive, visually appealing reading media that can be operated seamlessly offline to support both the teachers' delivery and the students' engagement.

In addition to pedagogical and facility constraints, there is a notable gap in the content of current English reading materials. The explicit integration of character education, specifically values aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) such as empathy, responsibility, and cooperation, is rarely found. While these values are typically taught in other subjects like Civic Education, integrating them into language learning presents a valuable opportunity to simultaneously develop students' linguistic and moral competencies.

Overall, the conditions at SD Negeri 1 Tukad Mungga indicate a clear need for supplementary learning media that is practical, visually engaging, and value-integrated. In this context, an offline digital comic emerges as a promising solution. It bridges the infrastructure gap by being easily projectable without internet access, while simultaneously merging visual storytelling, accessible language, and SDG 4 values to create a more impactful English learning experience.

1.3 Research Limitation

This research is specifically focused on developing and testing a digital comic designed to improve reading comprehension and promote educational values for fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 1 Tukad Mungga. Consequently, the findings are context-specific and may not be directly generalizable to schools with different learning environments or technological resources. The demographic scope is exclusively restricted to grade 5 students, as English instruction is not provided in the lower classes at this institution. In terms of language proficiency, the study strictly targets English reading comprehension, deliberately excluding other linguistic skills such as listening, speaking, and writing.

Additionally, the practical implementation of the product is bounded by the school's available infrastructure. With minimal technological access relying primarily on a single shared LCD projector individual student interaction with the media is constrained, meaning the full interactive potential of the digital comic may not be maximally realized during classroom sessions. Furthermore, although the comic integrates Sustainable Development Goal 4 values such as empathy, cooperation, and equality, the research only evaluates how these concepts are presented and understood within the reading activities; it does not measure or track long-term behavioral changes or character development in the students. Ultimately, the current study is confined to the initial design, development, and small-scale evaluation phases. Broader implementation, longitudinal effectiveness, and comparative studies with alternative learning media fall outside the present scope and remain areas for future scholarly investigation.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the problems identified, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the need of students in reading media to support their reading comprehension and awareness on Quality Education issue?
2. How is the development of digital comic as a reading media to support reading comprehension and awareness on Quality Education issue?
3. How do the students' and teachers' responses to the development of digital comics as reading media on students' reading comprehension and awareness of Quality Education issue?

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives this study are:

1. To identify the need of students in reading media to support their reading comprehension and awareness of Quality Education issue.
2. To develop a digital comic as a reading media that support reading comprehension and awareness on Quality Education issue.
3. To investigate students' and teachers' responses to the development of digital comics as reading media on students' reading comprehension and awareness of Quality Education issue.

1.6 Research Significance

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

This study is expected to contribute to the theoretical understanding of reading comprehension development in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the elementary level. It draws upon theories of reading, particularly

those that emphasize the importance of interaction between the reader, the text, and the context. By integrating visual storytelling and narrative-based formats through digital comics, the study supports the idea that multimodal input can enhance comprehension, especially for young learners with limited language exposure. In terms of media theory, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on the use of innovative learning media in primary education. It highlights how interactive digital tools such as comics enriched with illustrations, dialogues, and simple tasks can respond to various student learning styles and increase engagement, particularly in under-resourced classrooms. Furthermore, by embedding educational values aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) into the reading content, the study contributes to the theoretical integration of global competencies and character education within language learning. It shows how SDG-oriented education can be supported through engaging, student-centered reading media.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

a. For Teachers

The digital comic in this study acts as an engaging teaching tool for use during reading lessons. It also provides a way to blend character education into English language instruction so teachers can teach literacy as well as encourage good values.

b. For Students

Digital comics offer students ways to read that keep them interested and are simple to use. Using images to tell stories supports better understanding and increases a child's vocabulary. The comic promotes personal and character growth because it includes valuable moral lessons.

c. For Other Studies

This research is useful for other studies on digital learning media, with a focus on EFL. This way of thinking helps educators search for technology-based resources that support literacy while also teaching values, and it could inspire more new efforts to make learning resources more in line with different cultures.

