

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Developing a storybook as a learning tool for students at “Sekolah Rakyat” Gresik is intended to respond to the English literacy challenges experienced by students from marginalized backgrounds. Many students at this school face significant hurdles with English literacy, which clearly demonstrates their severe difficulties in both reading comprehension and basic writing composition. The root cause often comes down to something simple but profound, they do not have access to learning materials that feel meaningful or relevant to their lives. This condition often leads to low motivation to learn, limited language exposure, and uneven skill development, creating a persistent gap between what students are expected to achieve in English and the support and resources available to them. The development of English resources for everyday life significantly enhances students’ pragmatic competence (Zhao, 2025). However, there remains a shortage of culturally responsive, locally grounded English materials specifically designed for socioeconomically marginalized senior high school students, especially in “Sekolah Rakyat” in Gresik. Therefore, designing instructional materials based on a local storybook offers a culturally responsive alternative. Using stories that are familiar to students may help them to make language learning more relevant, encourage classroom participation, support their ability to write stories, and create more supportive conditions for comprehension and participation (Saad et al., 2025).

In recent years, education has increasingly emphasized not only academic achievement but also communication skills, critical thinking, and digital literacy. Schools are now expected to prepare students for a world that’s increasingly digital and globally competitive. As education continues to evolve, students are increasingly expected to develop not only academic knowledge but also communication, critical thinking, and digital literacy skills. In this context, English proficiency becomes particularly important for senior high school students. English is no longer viewed only as a school subject but also as an important thing for

accessing information, using digital resources, and supporting future educational and career opportunities (Maiboroda, 2024). In this context, integrating culturally responsive learning materials like storybook-based media isn't just a nice idea, it's a research-backed strategy that can promote literacy development while supporting students' long-term social mobility.

“Sekolah Rakyat” in Gresik (SRG) offers an ideal setting for this kind of intervention. This senior high school provides completely free education and holistic support for students living in extreme poverty. According to the principal during the interview, SRG was established as part of a presidential initiative to expand educational access and ensure that students from the poorest backgrounds can complete their secondary education. Unlike schools administered by the Ministry of Education, SRG operates under the Ministry of Social Affairs, highlighting its dual role as both an academic institution and a social empowerment program. With 75 enrolled students, SRG represents a focused and socially significant environment for developing inclusive and context-sensitive English learning resources. However, the questionnaire was completed by only 25 students due to time constraints.

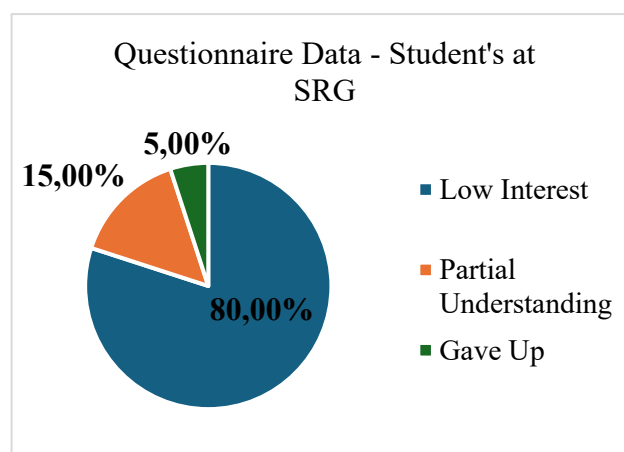


Figure 1. 1 Diagram Data Questionnaire

Despite strong institutional backing, English learning at SRG remains a major concern, particularly regarding student motivation and engagement. Questionnaire results, as shown in Figure 1.1, clearly indicate the students' actual language proficiency, which is significantly affected by their severely low motivation to learn

English. The data indicate that 80% of students experience significant difficulty with English, 15% demonstrate partial understanding but do not perceive it as useful in daily life, and 5% are fully disengaged and avoid using the language altogether. These findings suggest that the main challenge extends beyond linguistic competence alone. The deeper issues include students' perception of English as irrelevant, negative attitudes toward the subject, and learning materials that fail to reflect their lived experiences. As a result, students struggle to develop foundational literacy skills, particularly in reading fluency and writing organization, which depend heavily on teacher guidance and structured practice.

To tackle these interconnected challenges, this study proposes GIRI, a trilingual storybook specifically designed to support students' English reading and writing development. Integrating storybooks is selected as the primary content because story-based learning can provide students with language input in a more engaging and understandable way (Ivan et al., 2025). Empirical studies also show that the use of traditional narrative materials can significantly improve students' narrative writing ability in EFL contexts, both in terms of creative expression and language accuracy, by increasing average scores in a study (Novita et al., 2024). Therefore, story-based materials are considered suitable for supporting students' literacy development, especially in reading and writing activities (Ratminingsih et al., 2025)

From a narrative text perspective, understanding narrative elements such as setting, characters, problems, and resolutions can help students identify important information in a story and improve their ability (Suzanne et al., 2020). These features help students improve reading comprehension while internalizing grammatical patterns. At the same time, storybooks offer clear models for writing, guiding students in organizing ideas into narratives that include setting, characters, conflict, and resolutions. Using storybooks to create narratives helps learners sequence events, enrich vocabulary and grammar, and structure stories with context and resolution (Pérez-gómez and Daza, 2019). Thus, reading and writing are closely connected skills because students can use what they read as a model for developing

their own ideas for writing. Therefore, combining reading and writing activities into a single instructional material may help students develop literacy skills more consistently over time.

One of the main characteristics of GIRI is its trilingual learning tool, which combines Javanese, Indonesian, and English. This design reflects the language environment of SRG students, who mainly use Indonesian and Javanese in everyday communication. English is often viewed as unfamiliar and difficult by students. Therefore, presenting stories in three languages is expected to help students understand the content more easily, feel more confident when learning English, and connect new language knowledge with the languages they already know. In addition, this study adopts a participatory development model involving multiple stakeholders, in which students act as the primary authors of the stories, while the researcher serves as an editor who helps refine the students' drafts, guiding linguistic accuracy, narrative coherence, and language organization. This approach also ensures that the instructional product aligns closely with their language level, cultural background, and learning needs. Consequently, GIRI is designed to function both as a literacy-supporting instructional medium and as a culturally grounded educational resource suitable for the "Sekolah Rakyat" context.

## 1.2 Research Questions

1. How is GIRI (Gresik Inspirational Rakyat Illustrated Stories) developed and refined to meet the English learning needs of students at "Sekolah Rakyat" Gresik?
2. What are the responses of students and teachers at "Sekolah Rakyat" Gresik toward the development of the GIRI storybook?

## 1.3 Purposes

1. To design and develop trilingual storybooks (Indonesian, English, and Javanese) that meet pedagogical standards and technical requirements for community-based education.

2. To examine how the integration of local storybooks and illustrations in GIRI helps students improve their English reading and writing skills.

#### 1.4 Benefits

##### 1.4.1 For Students

This study helps the students as a scaffolded linguistic bridge, facilitating reading comprehension and productive writing skills through a ‘translanguaging’ framework. By engaging with familiar local narratives presented in English, Indonesian, and Javanese, students can enhance lexical and syntactic acquisition by systematic exposure to English vocabulary and sentence structures within a meaningful context, refine narrative competency to develop the ability to organize ideas logically and identify structural story elements, such as characterization, setting, and didactic moral themes, and reduce students’ anxiety and help them feel more confident when learning English

##### 1.4.2 For Teachers

The trilingual illustrated storybook serves as an innovative instructional resource that supports contextual and culturally responsive learning. It assists teachers in integrating contextualized learning by merging language instruction with character education and the preservation of local cultural values, especially reading and writing, and encourages an interactive classroom environment where the visual and multilingual nature of the book stimulates discussion and creative expression.

##### 1.4.3 For Future Researchers

This study serves as an empirical reference for scholars investigating the intersection of multilingual instructional materials, culturally based teaching approaches, and Research and Development (R&D) in language education. It contributes to the academic discourse by providing a systematic Research and Development (R&D) archetype to offering a clear procedural model for how local storybook can be systematically transformed into validated foreign language learning materials, advancing multilingual pedagogy by serving as a

foundational case study for researchers exploring the efficacy of trilingual resources in non-formal educational settings, and expanding local to global narratives by offering a framework for how regional cultural heritage can be leveraged to achieve global linguistic competencies.

### 1.5 Output

This study results in the development of a 40-page trilingual illustrated storybook entitled GIRI (Gresik Inspirational Rakyat Illustrated Stories), designed as an instructional medium for English learning among students at “Sekolah Rakyat” Gresik. In terms of physical production, the book is formatted in portrait orientation, measuring 21 cm x 29.7 cm (A4). The interior pages are printed on AP120 paper, while the cover is crafted from AP230 paper with glossy lamination for durability and aesthetic appeal. The book presents local Gresik stories in three languages: Indonesian, English, and East Javanese (Jowo Suroboyoan/Gresikan), and is supported by illustrations intended to increase reading interest and facilitate comprehension. The stories are written and translated by students under the guidance of the researcher, thereby supporting the development of English vocabulary and writing proficiency, particularly in sentence construction and narrative organization. Additionally, this study collects data through questionnaires and interviews to examine students’ and teachers’ perceptions of the book’s effectiveness in improving English literacy while also promoting awareness of local culture.