

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Books as Learning Material

Books are one of the most fundamental learning materials in education. In educational contexts, books can be categorized into several types based on their purpose and format. Textbooks serve as the primary instructional resource, providing structured curriculum content. Reference books such as dictionaries and encyclopedias support independent inquiry. Supplementary books, including novels, anthologies, and reading materials, enrich students' learning beyond the core curriculum. Among supplementary materials, storybooks occupy a particularly significant role, especially in language learning, as they combine narrative, visual, and linguistic elements that support literacy development in engaging and culturally meaningful ways.

Given these affordances, this study focuses specifically on storybooks as the chosen learning material. Storybooks are widely recognized as effective EFL resources because they provide comprehensible, contextualized language input while simultaneously (Ratminingsih and Budasi 2018). Their narrative structure offers natural models for both reading comprehension and written expression, making them especially suitable for learners at the early stages of English literacy acquisition.

2.2 Theoretical Foundations: Literacy, Multiliteracies, Translanguaging

Literacy has been reconceptualized beyond the decoding of written text to encompass social, multimodal, and multilingual dimensions of meaning-making (Maamujav, 2025). Building on this expanded understanding, the multiliteracies framework positions students as active constructors of multidimensional texts within increasingly digital and globally interconnected environments (Huot et al., 2025). For multilingual learners in particular, translanguaging theory offers a complementary lens, proposing that students draw on an integrated linguistic repertoire, rather than switching between discrete languages, to navigate reading and writing with flexibility and agency (Donley, 2022). Within literacy instruction,

this approach is employed to enhance text comprehension, encourage diverse writing outputs, increase learner confidence, and develop critical metalinguistic awareness.

a. Literacy as Language, Reading, and Writing Development

A growing body of research into reading mechanics has substantially advanced our understanding of how literacy develops (Petscher Sonia et al., 2020). Contemporary literacy research views reading and writing as closely related to language development. Research by Snowling et al (2025), the model of reading as a means of language development proposes that spoken language is the basis for reading words, reading comprehension, and written expression, and that strengthening vocabulary and discourse skills supports all aspects of literacy. Also mentioned is the Simple View of Reading, which emphasizes the interaction between decoding, which involves understanding language and meaning, and highlights that high-quality literacy instruction is a key determinant of educational equity and well-being (Duke and Cartwright, 2017).

b. Multiliteracies: Multimodal, Multilingual, and Culturally Situated

Multiliteracies pedagogy fundamentally reimagines literacy as a plural, multimodal, and culturally embedded phenomenon, emerging in response to global linguistic diversity and rapidly shifting communication technologies. It advocates for closing the gap between in-school literacy practices and the broader communicative worlds students inhabit (Álvarez-valencia, 2025). Recent work emphasizes the language classroom as a multilingual, multicultural, and multiliterate space that integrates students' existing language and cultural repertoires and engages them (Skerrett, 2015). Studies in Indonesian EFL contexts show that using literary works and multiliteracies practices (e.g., novels, extensive reading) can foster cultural understanding, critical thinking, and language development when linked to students' own experiences and identities (Mandarani et al., 2024).

c. Translanguaging as a Resource for Trilingual Literacy

The theory of translanguaging views reading and writing for multilingual learners not as a switch between different languages, but as a flexible use of their entire combined linguistic knowledge (Liu and Fang, 2022). In a translanguaging literacies framework, multilingual students draw on all their languages to interpret texts, compose diverse written products, deepen comprehension, and develop confidence and critical metalinguistic awareness (Hamman-Ortiz et al., 2025). Translanguaging pedagogies optimize multilingual learning materials to support literacy development, moving beyond traditional monolingual approaches. These pedagogies enable students to use multiple languages in reading and writing, fostering metalinguistic awareness, confidence, and deeper engagement with texts by connecting languages rather than keeping them separate. Research shows that translanguaging practices enhance conceptual understanding while encouraging reading and writing skills in multilingual contexts like “Sekolah Rakyat” (Wulandari et al., 2023).

2.3 Storybooks as Cultural and Linguistic Resources of EFL

Storybooks are widely recognized as rich cultural and linguistic resources for EFL literacy. Using Indonesian storybooks in English classes improves students' reading skills, vocabulary, and cultural awareness while creating a more enjoyable learning environment. Local culture-based picture storybooks adapt traditional stories into high school-friendly texts with illustrations that show local characters and practices, helping students connect reading with their own lives and traditions (Ratminingsih and Budasi, 2018). Such storybooks are not only entertaining but also function to enhance cultural values by adapting local stories, deepen children's understanding by reading the book, promote interactive learning, and broaden their knowledge of local traditions from an early age.

Studies on local storybook picture show that using culturally familiar stories in literacy instruction improves children's engagement, reading interest, and cultural pride, as it supports early reading development more effectively than

decontextualized materials (Kustyamegasari, 2025). Integrating local storybooks in English learning also positions indigenous narratives as legitimate content for school literacy, countering the domination of foreign stories and supporting identity formation (Saad et al., 2025). Children's storybooks operate simultaneously as cultural artefacts and rich linguistic input, making them ideal resources for young learners' literacy development. Local culture and diglot picture books based on local content and values that contextualize English input, reducing cognitive load while preserving local traditions and strengthening student identity (Ratminingsih and Budasi, 2018). Previous research indicates that when these texts are designed multilingually, they allow learners to scaffold new English forms using familiar languages, which enhances vocabulary, reading self-efficacy, and overall proficiency (Diprossimo et al., 2023).

2.4 Developing Local Storybooks as Learning Material

A critical global issue in English language teaching is the limited availability of culturally relevant learning materials. Research indicates that local storybook-based storybooks significantly improve student engagement, comprehension, and literacy (Ratminingsih and Budasi, 2018). Picture storybooks rooted in local culture improve reading proficiency by providing visual frameworks and promoting collaborative dialogue. Beyond literacy, these storybook texts connect classroom content to children's life experiences, preserving local culture while transmitting moral values such as honesty and cooperation, thereby strengthening character education and cultural identity. Folktales in the Indonesian primary curriculum deliver moral and cultural education, enhance the awareness of ethics, and preserve their national identity through culturally relevant content (Miranda et al., 2025).

Fitriani (2025) further confirms that students and educators desire English materials rooted in local culture (e.g., Dayak folktales) to increase motivation and cultural awareness. The researchers are developing Indonesia–Javanese–English storybooks to fill the gap in multilingual materials, providing a tool that supports both narrative learning and building intuitive character. By providing illustrated narratives in English, these projects offer a powerful precedent for this work,

demonstrating how multilingual resources can effectively enrich narrative learning. Typically, the development of these materials follows Research and Development (R&D) models, such as Borg and Gall, involving needs analysis, product design, expert validation, and trials to ensure content, language, and graphics are feasible and valid (Ratminingsih and Budasi, 2018).

2.5 Trilingual Storybook Resources

Developing trilingual storybooks supports language learning by integrating multiple languages and cultural contexts, which enhances literacy engagement. By combining languages within a story, these resources do more than teach vocabulary; they acknowledge the learner's cultural identity while scaffolding new language acquisition. Global initiatives, such as Storybooks Canada (a platform designed to foster multilingual literacy among youth), demonstrate that multilingual narratives with audiovisual components effectively support diverse learners. This precedent is particularly relevant to GIRI, which similarly employs a multilingual format (English, Indonesian, and Javanese) to bridge students' familiar linguistic repertoire with English literacy demands. In these settings, storybooks help preserve heritage language while facilitating English learning, aligning with educational standards, and meeting the needs of linguistically diverse students (Gilman and Norton, 2020).

Furthermore, using trilingual storybooks creates 'Translanguaging Spaces' instructional environments where the boundaries between languages are dissolved. By establishing these spaces, multilingual storybook initiatives allow communities to build communication tools collectively, increasing local participation in literacy efforts (Kim et al., 2021). The design of these resources relies on the semiotics of translation, specifically the relationship between visual cues, typography, and text placement across three languages. Hartmann (2021) highlights that for a trilingual book to be effective, visual elements must anchor the meaning, helping readers understand the text even as linguistic complexity increases. This is particularly relevant for the GIRI project, where the Damar Kurung or other local iconography acts as a semiotic bridge, helping "Sekolah Rakyat" students decode English and Javanese scripts through familiar visual metaphors.

Interactive trilingual teaching books featuring engaging stories have been shown to improve the students' vocabulary, cognitive abilities, and foreign-language skills by making learning enjoyable and accessible (Kristianto et al., 2023). In conclusion, the GIRI project is not merely an addition to the library of “Sekolah Rakyat”, it is an evidence-based intervention. These findings support the development of GIRI as a trilingual storybook that can enhance English reading and writing skills among “Sekolah Rakyat” students by leveraging local culture within a multilingual framework.

2.6 Storybooks as a Reading and Writing Development

The role of storybooks in language acquisition is significant in developing children’s writing skills by providing structured narrative models that help learners organize events and ideas systematically, which is especially beneficial for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students facing lexical challenges (Pérez-gómez and Daza 2019). Through collaborative storybook projects that combine illustration, students can link their abilities with written language development into the storybook experience and potentially enhance paths to literacy (Holm, 2024). Using storybooks as a medium encourages meaningful writing experiences that are engaging and culturally relevant, supporting both language development and student needs.

Storybook reading enhances language skills such as vocabulary acquisition and comprehension, which are foundational for writing development through reading with interactive and appropriate storytelling (Parvin, 2025). Completing this view, previous researchers suggest that digital storybooks equipped with multimedia features and paired so that they can further accelerate vocabulary learning, while maintaining a story-to-story continuity. By utilizing translanguaging, the GIRI project allows students to use Javanese and Indonesian as ‘conceptual springboards’ to reach English proficiency. Incorporating a trilingual storybook like GIRI into writing instruction can thus provide culturally rich, scaffolded opportunities for “Sekolah Rakyat” students to develop English reading and writing skills through familiar narratives presented in multiple languages.

2.7 Illustrated Storybook

An illustrated storybook is a narrative text in which visual elements, such as drawings, paintings, or digital artwork. Unlike plain text, illustrations in storybooks do not merely decorate the page, they function as a primary meaning-making resource that supports comprehension, particularly for learners who are still developing their linguistic competence in a target language (Mastellotto, 2021). The development of a storybook using the 4D model (define, design, development, dissemination) resulted in a product deemed very suitable by experts, with high feasibility and suitability ratings (Pangestu, 2022). The interplay between image and text creates a dual-coding effect, where visual and verbal information are processed simultaneously, reinforcing vocabulary retention and narrative comprehension.

In EFL contexts, illustrated storybooks are especially valuable because visual cues provide contextual scaffolding that reduces cognitive load and allows learners to infer meaning from unfamiliar words or structures. Research confirms that picture-supported narratives improve reading engagement, vocabulary acquisition, and story comprehension (Parvin, 2025). From linguistic benefits, illustrations that reflect local characters, settings, and cultural practices strengthen students' sense of identity and belonging, making the reading experience both personally meaningful and academically productive.

2.8 Sekolah Rakyat Gresik (East Java)

“Sekolah Rakyat” is a national education program designed to serve children from extremely impoverished backgrounds. The program is grounded in Presidential Instruction Number 8 of 2025 concerning the Optimization of Poverty Reduction and Extreme Poverty Elimination. This initiative reflects a broader policy commitment to education as a structural intervention against intergenerational poverty. Prior research supports this approach, demonstrating that investment in education produces significant positive effects on poverty reduction, both in the short and long term ((Panduwinata et al., 2024).

At the local level, “Sekolah Rakyat” Menengah Atas 37 Gresik (SRMA 37 Gresik) was inaugurated on August 4, 2025, occupying a revitalized former facility of UPT SMPN 30 Gresik in Sidayu District. A total of 75 students from underprivileged families took up residence in the dormitory and commenced their studies in three prepared classrooms. The school operates on a fully residential model, providing not only academic instruction but also meals, healthcare, and family economic empowerment support, reflecting a holistic approach to breaking the cycle of poverty. Students entering SRMA 37 Gresik bring diverse linguistic backgrounds, primarily Javanese and Indonesian, before encountering English as a foreign language. This trilingual reality is not incidental; it is central to how literacy develops in this context. Prior research confirms that multilingual education policies must recognize the role of local languages in identity formation and cognitive development, while also promoting the national language for broader communication (Evans Dennison et al., 2025).

2.9 Previous Study

GIRI (Gresik Inspirational Rakyat Illustrated Stories) is purposefully designed as a culturally responsive pedagogical bridge, specifically addressing the uniqueness of the socio-educational landscape of “Sekolah Rakyat” students in Gresik. By weaving together localized narratives within a trilingual framework (English, Indonesian, and Javanese), GIRI moves well beyond the function of a conventional storybook. It operates as a learning tool in education, where students’ home language and heritage knowledge intersect with global literacy requirements. This positioning aligns with the idea that learning is most profound when it is rooted in the specific history and culture of the learner’s immediate community.

Several prior studies have employed Research and Development (R&D) methodology to produce storybooks as learning materials, providing a strong empirical foundation for the present study. Ratminingsih and Budasi (2018) developed local culture-based picture storybooks for EFL learners using the Borg and Gall model, demonstrating that R&D to produce storybooks rooted in indigenous narratives significantly improved students’ reading engagement and

cultural awareness. Building on these precedents, the present study develops GIRI as a trilingual storybook through the Borg and Gall R&D model, incorporating needs analysis, expert validation, and product refinement to ensure its feasibility and validity. GIRI is purposefully designed as a culturally responsive pedagogical resource that addresses the socio-educational landscape of “Sekolah Rakyat” students in Gresik. By weaving localized narratives, it operates as a structured learning tool where students’ home languages and cultural heritage intersect with global literacy requirements, empowering them to articulate their local identity while developing English reading and writing skills in a meaningful context.

Additionally, positioning GIRI within “Sekolah Rakyat” could complement government efforts toward inclusive and student-centered education programs that focus on active participation, collaboration, and multilingual competencies (Rohani et al., 2026). Incorporating local stories in multiple languages supports linguistic diversity and fosters a sense of belonging while promoting English reading and writing skills in a meaningful context. By anchoring English acquisition in Indonesian scaffolding and Javanese resonance, GIRI does not merely teach a foreign language; it empowers students to articulate their local identity to a global audience. Illustrations in storybooks function as a primary meaning-making resource, enhancing learning efficiency and comprehension (Hasanah et al., 2025). Thus, GIRI has the potential to serve as both a literacy tool and a cultural bridge that supports holistic educational goals in Gresik’s community schools.