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The Influence of Indonesian-English Bilingual Subtitling in *Laskar Pelangi* on EFL Students' Comprehension of Character Values

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ABSTRACT
Bilingual subtitling can be a useful resource in language learning because it allows learners to connect the target language with their first language while watching a film. This study examines the influence of bilingual subtitling in Laskar Pelangi *on EFL learners' understanding of character values. Adapted from Andrea Hirata's novel,* Laskar Pelangi *presents various educational and moral messages, including perseverance, cooperation, respect, creativity, and friendship. These values are closely related to the development of character education in Indonesia. With bilingual subtitles, students can follow the English in the film while also gaining a better understanding of the messages and values conveyed through the story. This study employed a quantitative pre-experimental design using a one-group pretest-posttest model. The participants were 30 eleventh-grade students at SMA Alfaqih Muqaddam who were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through pretests and posttests administered before and after the students watched* Laskar Pelangi *with bilingual subtitles. The results showed an improvement in students' comprehension of character values. The mean score increased from 93.3 in the pretest to 107.2 in the posttest, resulting in a mean difference of 13.9 points. The paired-sample t-test indicated that the difference was statistically significant ($t(29) = 10.5$, $p < 0.05$). Among the character values presented in the film, perseverance and cooperation were the values most successfully understood by the students, followed by creativity, respect, and friendship. These findings indicate that bilingual subtitling can support students' understanding of character values while also providing meaningful exposure to English through an engaging and culturally relevant film. Therefore, the use of films such as* Laskar Pelangi *may offer a practical way to combine English language learning with character education in the EFL classroom.*

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INTRODUCTION

The use of audiovisual media has become increasingly common in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Learning English is no longer limited to textbooks and teacher explanations. Students also need learning materials that allow them to hear and see English as it is used in meaningful situations. Films can provide this kind of learning experience because they combine spoken language, visual information, sounds, and situations within a story. By watching films, students can learn new vocabulary and expressions while seeing how English is used in different contexts. A systematic review by Sánchez-Auñón et al. (2023) found that films can create meaningful opportunities for language learning and support different aspects of EFL instruction when they are combined with suitable learning activities.

Subtitles can offer additional help to students who find spoken English difficult to understand. With subtitles, students can connect the words they hear with their written forms while also following the visual information in the film. Bilingual subtitles can be particularly helpful because they show the English language together with its translation into the learners' first language. In this way, students can follow the story more easily through their first language while continuing to receive exposure to English. Wang and Pellicer-Sánchez (2022) found that bilingual subtitles can support learners' comprehension during audiovisual viewing. Their study indicates that presenting information in two languages can help learners understand and process the content while watching films or videos.

Subtitles may also support language development, especially vocabulary learning. When students come across unfamiliar English words in a film, subtitles can help them connect the words they hear with their written forms and meanings. Previous research on captioned and subtitled audiovisual materials has shown that learners can develop vocabulary knowledge through repeated exposure to words in meaningful contexts (Teng, 2022; Teng, 2023). Wang and Pellicer-Sánchez (2022) similarly reported that watching audiovisual materials with bilingual subtitles can support incidental vocabulary learning. In this sense, subtitles can provide language assistance without taking students' attention away from the story and content of the film.

Films can offer benefits beyond language learning. They can introduce students to social, cultural, moral, and educational messages through the characters and events presented in a story. While watching a film, students can see how characters deal with problems, interact with others, and make decisions in different situations. These elements make films useful for connecting English learning with character education. In the Indonesian educational context, character education plays an important role in developing students' attitudes and behavior, and character values can be incorporated into classroom learning activities (Hidayat et al., 2022). Therefore, films in EFL classrooms can be used not only to develop students' English skills but also to help them recognize and reflect on positive character values.

One Indonesian film that offers meaningful examples of character values is Laskar Pelangi (2008), directed by Riri Riza and adapted from Andrea Hirata's novel. The film tells the story of a group of students in Belitung who continue their education despite economic difficulties and various challenges. Through the experiences of the characters, the film presents values such as perseverance, cooperation, friendship, respect, creativity, and the importance of education. Since the story is closely connected to Indonesian culture and social life, many of the situations and values may be familiar to Indonesian students. Rumapea et al. (2022) also identified various character values in Laskar Pelangi and discussed their relevance to students' character development.

The use of films to connect language learning with character education has also received attention in EFL research. Safitri et al. (2023), for instance, examined the use of movies in an EFL writing class and showed how films can provide opportunities to combine language learning with character education. Research involving other films has similarly demonstrated that students can identify character values through the actions, relationships, and experiences of the characters. These studies indicate that films can become meaningful learning resources when teachers encourage

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students to look beyond the language itself and consider the messages and values conveyed through the story.

Although previous studies have discussed subtitles in language learning and character values in films, these two aspects have not been widely examined together. Research on subtitling has generally focused on language-related outcomes, including vocabulary learning, listening comprehension, and students' general understanding of audiovisual materials (Manurung et al., 2024; Wang & Pellicer-Sánchez, 2022). In contrast, research on Laskar Pelangi has mainly focused on the character values represented in the film (Rumapea et al., 2022). This leaves an opportunity to investigate whether Indonesian-English bilingual subtitles can help EFL students better understand the character values presented in an Indonesian film.

Based on this background, the present study examines the influence of Indonesian-English bilingual subtitling in Laskar Pelangi (2008) on EFL students' comprehension of character values. The study employs a quantitative pre-experimental design using a one-group pretest-posttest model. Students take a pretest before watching the film and a posttest after completing the learning activity. The results of the two tests are then compared to identify changes in students' comprehension of the character values presented in the film. Through this study, the researchers seek to provide further evidence of how bilingual subtitling can be used as a learning resource that brings together English language learning and character education.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design, using a one-group pretest-posttest design. This design was selected because the study aimed to see whether the use of Indonesian-English bilingual subtitles in Laskar Pelangi could help students better understand the character values presented in the film. The students took a pretest before the treatment and a posttest after the treatment. The results from both tests were compared to see whether there was a change in their comprehension.

The study was conducted at SMA Alfaqih Muqaddam, located on Jl. Poros Ambawang, Desa Durian, Kecamatan Sungai Ambawang, Kubu Raya. The research took place during the first semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The participants were eleventh-grade students who were learning English. One class was selected through purposive sampling, involving approximately 30 students. The class was selected because the students had basic English knowledge and were considered able to follow the learning activity using a film with bilingual subtitles.

The research was conducted in several stages. Before watching the film, the students were given a pretest to find out their initial understanding of the character values in Laskar Pelangi. After completing the pretest, the students watched the film using Indonesian-English bilingual subtitles. During the activity, they were asked to pay attention to the characters, their actions, the events in the story, and the values shown through those events. After watching the film, the students completed a posttest. The posttest was used to see their understanding of the character values after the treatment.

The data were obtained from the students' pretest and posttest scores. The scores were analyzed by comparing the results before and after the treatment. A paired-sample t-test was used to determine whether the difference between the pretest and posttest scores was statistically significant. The results of this analysis were used to examine whether watching Laskar Pelangi with bilingual subtitles had a significant influence on the students' comprehension of character values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Students' Comprehension Before and After Using Bilingual Subtitles

The results show a difference in students' comprehension of character values before and after they watched *Laskar Pelangi* with Indonesian-English bilingual subtitles. The pretest was conducted

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before the students watched the film, while the posttest was given after the learning activity. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Pretest and Posttest Scores

Test	Number of Students	Mean Score
Pretest	30	93.3
Posttest	30	107.2
Mean Difference	30	13.9

As shown in Table 1, the students' mean score increased from 93.3 in the pretest to 107.2 in the posttest, resulting in a mean difference of 13.9 points. This improvement indicates that the students demonstrated better comprehension of the character values presented in *Laskar Pelangi* after watching the film with bilingual subtitles.

One possible explanation for this improvement is the additional language support provided by bilingual subtitles. While watching the film, students could listen to the English dialogue and, at the same time, refer to the Indonesian translation to understand the meaning of conversations and situations. This combination may have made it easier for them to follow the storyline and pay attention to the behavior and experiences of the characters. Wang and Pellicer-Sánchez (2022) found that bilingual subtitles can support L2 viewing comprehension by helping learners process information from both subtitles and the audiovisual context.

The finding is also related to Teng (2022), who reported that captioned videos can support language learning and contribute to vocabulary development. Although the present study focused on students' comprehension of character values rather than vocabulary acquisition, both studies point to the usefulness of on-screen language support when learners are processing audiovisual materials.

The role of films in EFL learning has also been discussed by Sánchez-Auñón et al. (2023), who found that films can provide language input together with visual and contextual information. Pavithra and Gandhimathi (2024) similarly described English movies as useful audiovisual and multimodal resources for language learning. In the present study, these features may have helped students understand not only the dialogue but also the situations and actions through which character values were presented.

Overall, the increase in the mean score from 93.3 to 107.2 suggests that watching *Laskar Pelangi* with Indonesian-English bilingual subtitles was associated with improved comprehension of the character values presented in the film.

Statistical Difference Between the Pretest and Posttest

A paired-sample t-test was conducted to determine whether the difference between the students' pretest and posttest scores was statistically significant. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Paired-Sample t-Test Result

Comparison	Mean Difference	t-value	df	Significance
Pretest – Posttest	13.9	10.5	29	$p < 0.05$

The analysis produced a t-value of 10.5 with 29 degrees of freedom ($t(29) = 10.5$, $p < 0.05$). This result indicates that the difference between the pretest and posttest scores was statistically significant. The students' scores were therefore significantly higher after the learning activity than before it.

This statistical result supports the descriptive findings in Table 1. The increase in the mean score was not only observed in the overall scores but was also supported by the paired-sample t-test. The result indicates that there was a meaningful change in students' performance following their experience of watching the bilingual-subtitled film.

The finding is consistent with previous research on subtitled and captioned audiovisual materials. Manurung et al. (2024), for example, found that video subtitles could contribute to EFL

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students' listening comprehension. Haider and Al-Salman (2022) also reported that students who learned through intralingual subtitled videos showed improvement in areas such as listening comprehension, vocabulary, and spelling. These studies provide support for the idea that subtitles can make audiovisual input more accessible to language learners.

However, the statistical result needs to be interpreted in relation to the design of the present study. The research used a one-group pretest-posttest design without a control group. Therefore, the significant increase in scores demonstrates a change between the two testing occasions, but it does not completely rule out the influence of other factors, such as students' previous knowledge, familiarity with the test, classroom interaction, or general learning during the study. Thus, the result provides evidence of improvement following the treatment, but it should not be interpreted as definitive evidence that bilingual subtitles alone caused the improvement.

Students' Comprehension of Character Values

The study also examined the character values that students were able to identify after watching *Laskar Pelangi*. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Character Values Identified by Students

No.	Character Value	Number of Students	Percentage
1	Perseverance (Never Give Up)	21	70%
2	Cooperation / Solidarity	18	60%
3	Creativity	12	40%
4	Respect for Teachers and Others	9	30%
5	Friendship	8	25%

Table 3 shows that perseverance or never giving up was the character value most frequently identified by the students. A total of 21 students, or 70%, recognized this value in the film. This finding may be related to the repeated challenges faced by the characters as they tried to continue their education despite difficult circumstances. The students appeared to recognize the characters' efforts and persistence in dealing with these challenges.

The second most frequently identified value was cooperation or solidarity, which was recognized by 18 students (60%). This value can be observed in the relationships among the students and in the ways they support one another throughout the story. The relatively high percentage suggests that students were able to recognize character values through social interactions and situations that were clearly presented in the film.

Creativity was identified by 12 students (40%). The value can be seen in the different ways the characters respond to problems and situations. Meanwhile, respect for teachers and others was identified by 9 students (30%), while friendship was identified by 8 students (25%). The differences in these percentages indicate that some values were more easily recognized by students than others.

These findings are consistent with the study by Rumapea et al. (2022), which identified character values in *Laskar Pelangi* and discussed their potential contribution to students' character development. The findings of the present study further show that students were able to recognize several of these values through the film's characters and storyline.

The use of films for character education has also been discussed in research involving other audiovisual materials. Zega et al. (2023), for example, found that students could identify moral and character values in *Upside-Down Magic*, including perseverance, discipline, and courage. Such findings demonstrate that stories presented through films can provide concrete examples through which students encounter and discuss character values.

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This approach is relevant to the Indonesian educational context, where character education is considered an important part of students' development. Hidayat et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of developing and applying character values in Indonesian education. Noprianto et al. (2022) also discussed the role of English teachers in integrating character education into classroom learning.

The Role of Bilingual Subtitles in Understanding the Film

The findings indicate that bilingual subtitles provided students with additional support while they followed the storyline and interpreted the events in *Laskar Pelangi*. The subtitles allowed students to connect the English dialogue with its Indonesian meaning, which may have been particularly helpful when they encountered unfamiliar expressions or dialogue that was difficult to understand through listening alone.

Bilingual subtitles can create a useful connection between spoken language, written language, and meaning. Xu, Jordan, and Li (2022) reported that EFL teachers viewed bilingual subtitles as useful for supporting English comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. In the context of the present study, this type of support may also have helped students focus on the meaning of the story rather than concentrating only on understanding individual English words.

Understanding the character values in the film required more than simply translating the dialogue. Students needed to consider the situations, relationships, decisions, and actions of the characters. The Indonesian translation may therefore have helped reduce some of the language-related difficulties and allowed students to pay greater attention to what the characters were doing and why they were doing it.

Positive perceptions of subtitled audiovisual materials have also been reported in recent Indonesian studies. Siahaan et al. (2024) found that students responded positively to English-subtitled films and viewed them as useful for language learning, vocabulary development, and listening comprehension. Amalia (2025) similarly reported positive EFL student perceptions of subtitled videos as a resource for vocabulary learning.

The present findings add another perspective to this discussion. Rather than focusing only on language outcomes, the study indicates that bilingual subtitles may also support students as they interpret the social and character-related messages conveyed through a film.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the findings, this study shows that using bilingual subtitles in Laskar Pelangi helped EFL students at SMA Alfaqih Muqaddam better understand the character values presented in the film. The students' mean score increased from 93.3 on the pre-test to 107.2 on the post-test, for a mean difference of 13.9 points. The paired-sample t-test also showed a significant improvement in the students' scores, with $t(29) = 10.5$ and $p < 0.05$. Among the character values, students understood perseverance the most (70%), followed by cooperation (60%), creativity (40%), respect (30%), and friendship (25%). This suggests that bilingual subtitles can make it easier for students to understand both the English language and the positive values shown in a film.

For classroom practice, teachers can consider using bilingual subtitles as one of the learning media for teaching English and introducing character values at the same time. Films with bilingual subtitles can give students a more meaningful learning experience because they can follow the story while also learning new language and values. For future research, similar studies could be conducted with more participants, different films, or other types of subtitles. These variations may provide a wider understanding of how subtitled films can be used to support EFL learning and character education.

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