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Inserting Collaboration Values into a Digital Bilingual Storybook for Teaching English in Grade 5

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Abstract

This research is motivated by persistent limitations in the integration of collaborative values within English learning in elementary schools, where instructional practices remain largely teacher-centered and the use of interactive learning media is still minimal. Such conditions hinder students' opportunities to develop essential social and character values, particularly collaboration, alongside their language competence. In response to this gap, the present study aims to analyze the integration and development of collaboration values—specifically caring, sharing, and cooperation—within bilingual digital storybooks designed for elementary-level English instruction. This research employs a Design and Development (D&D) approach, combining document analysis techniques with expert evaluation to ensure both content validity and pedagogical relevance. Data were analyzed using a combination of descriptive qualitative and quantitative approaches, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of how collaborative values are embedded within the narrative and instructional structure of the storybooks. The findings reveal that the value of collaboration has been systematically integrated through two complementary strategies: implicitly, through storytelling narratives that model cooperative behavior among characters, and explicitly, through interactive tasks that require students to practice sharing, caring, and cooperating directly. Furthermore, the integration of these values is developed progressively, moving from a developing level toward a more advanced level as students engage further with the storybook content. These results indicate that bilingual digital storybooks serve as an effective medium not only for enhancing English language proficiency but also for strengthening students' collaborative character. This study contributes theoretical and practical insights for educators and developers seeking to design interactive, character-based digital learning materials for young learners.

Keywords: Digital Storybooks, Collaboration, English Learning, Elementary School, Character Education

1. Background

English language learning at the elementary school level plays a strategic role in supporting the development of students' communication skills in the 21st century (Gawi, 2012; Cameron, 2001). At an early age, students require engaging, contextual, and interactive learning experiences to facilitate optimal language acquisition, as children's cognitive, social, and emotional abilities enable them to learn more effectively through interaction and practical activities (Nur Laila et al., 2023; Fitri et al., 2023). Early exposure to English has been found to support not only linguistic competence but also learners' confidence and motivation to participate in communication activities, which is essential in a globalized world where English serves as a lingua franca (Gawi, 2012). The implementation of structured literacy activities, including reading response tasks and storybook-based learning, has been found to enhance students' engagement and improve their reading comprehension in English learning contexts (Padmadewi et al., 2020). Various literacy initiatives have been implemented in primary schools through structured school programs such as the School Literacy Movement, which emphasizes the importance of reading activities and classroom-based literacy practices (Prawira et al., 2023).

In addition to developing linguistic competence, the education system in Indonesia emphasizes character development, particularly through the internalization of values outlined in the Pancasila Student Profile. Among these, collaboration, defined as the ability to work together, share roles and responsibilities, and support peers in achieving common goals, serves as a core competency that supports both social and cognitive growth (Lukiyanto & Wijayaningtyas, 2020; Directorate of Elementary Education Teachers, 2025). Collaboration is particularly significant in English language learning because language acquisition inherently relies on communication and interaction. Through collaborative activities, students are able to practice authentic language use, negotiate

meaning, and develop social skills that support lifelong learning (Mardiana et al., 2023). Character development and literacy improvement require consistent and structured implementation processes involving planning, monitoring, and reinforcement of positive behaviors in learning environments (Padmadewi et al., 2018).

Despite the importance of collaboration, classroom practices in many Indonesian elementary schools often remain teacher-centered and dominated by textbook-based instruction, which limits opportunities for students to engage in collaborative learning (Harmer, 2007; Fitri Nur Laila et al., 2023). Observations and interviews with Grade 5 teachers indicate that while group work is occasionally applied, it is rarely structured in a way that systematically develops collaborative competence (Nur Laila et al., 2023). In classroom practice, English literacy instruction in primary schools involves various structured activities such as Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA), guided reading, and reading aloud, which aim to enhance students' reading comprehension and engagement (Puspitasari et al., 2021). Additionally, variations in students' English proficiency, such as difficulties in pronunciation, speaking fluency, and reading comprehension, further constrain meaningful interaction and the effective internalization of collaboration values. These findings point to the urgent need for innovative learning media that integrate language development with explicit, structured opportunities for practicing collaboration (Mardiana et al., 2023). However, the successful implementation of such technology-based learning media is also influenced by teachers' readiness and their ability to utilize digital instructional tools effectively (Padmadewi et al., 2023).

Digital literacy encompasses the ability to operate digital tools, evaluate information critically, and engage in collaborative and responsible use of technology in learning environments (Dharmayanti et al., 2024). Digital learning media, particularly bilingual digital storybooks, have emerged as a promising solution to address these challenges (Damarsari & Widodo, 2024; García et al., 2017). Such media combine text, visuals, and interactive tasks to create engaging and meaningful learning experiences, while providing scaffolds for understanding through both the students' first language and the target language (Muqit et al., 2023). Similarly, the use of picture storybooks in blended-based learning has been shown to significantly improve young learners' English literacy skills and increase their engagement in learning activities (Mastika et al., 2023). Story-based activities embedded in digital storybooks can be designed to promote collaborative behavior, including caring, sharing, and cooperation, by structuring tasks that require group participation, peer feedback, and joint problem-solving. Through this approach, students not only develop their English proficiency but also acquire practical experience in applying collaboration in authentic learning contexts (Lukiyanto & Wijayaningtyas, 2020).

Previous research has shown the effectiveness of digital storybooks in supporting character education and engagement in learning (Mardiana et al., 2023; Damarsari & Widodo, 2024). However, most studies tend to focus on the presence of character values in general, without elaborating on how collaboration is embedded systematically across narrative content, learning activities, and peer interactions. There is limited evidence on how collaborative competence develops progressively within such digital media, moving from emerging to proficient to advanced levels, as learners engage with structured and meaningful activities (Nur Laila et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the explicit reinforcement of collaborative behaviors is crucial for translating theoretical understanding into practice. Without deliberate scaffolding, students may recognize the concept of collaboration but fail to apply it meaningfully during interactions and problem-solving tasks (Lukiyanto & Wijayaningtyas, 2020; Directorate of Elementary Education Teachers, 2025). Structured integration in the storybook context ensures that learners can observe, practice, and internalize collaborative behaviors while simultaneously developing language skills. This dual focus on cognitive and social-emotional development aligns with the goals of the Pancasila Student Profile and the principles of deep learning in 21st-century education (Ellis, 2018).

Based on these considerations, the present study examines the systematic integration of collaborative values—specifically caring, sharing, and cooperation—within the bilingual digital storybook *The Sweetest Cooking Day* for Grade 5 English learning. The study also investigates how these values are developed progressively across three levels of collaborative competence: emerging, proficient, and advanced. By analyzing both narrative and task-based elements, this research provides insights into practical strategies for embedding collaboration in digital learning media while simultaneously supporting English language acquisition.

The central research question guiding this study is: How are collaborative values integrated and developed in bilingual digital storybooks for fifth-grade elementary school English language learning? By addressing this question, the study aims to contribute to the literature on digital media in language education and offer actionable guidance for integrating collaboration as a core educational value, thereby fostering both language proficiency and character development among elementary students.

2. Research Methods

This study employs a Design and Development (D&D) approach in the process of developing bilingual digital storybooks that integrate collaborative values (Richey & Klein, 2007; Huhta et al., 2013). This approach was selected because it offers a structured, systematic framework that allows researchers to design, create, and evaluate educational products with clear alignment to learners' needs and curriculum objectives, specifically tailored to Grade 5 English learning (Mardiana et al., 2023). The D&D framework facilitates iterative refinement, ensuring that each component of the storybook, from narrative, language content, to interactive tasks, supports both language acquisition and the internalization of collaboration values, reflecting the principles of the Pancasila Student Profile (Directorate of Elementary Education Teachers, 2025).

The primary data sources in this study include the developed bilingual digital storybook itself and expert evaluation data. The storybook serves as the main source for examining how collaboration values are integrated throughout the narrative, interactive activities, and visual representations (Damarsari & Widodo, 2024; Muqit et al., 2023). The expert evaluation was conducted with two specialists in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) and two experienced Grade 5 English teachers, who provided insight regarding the feasibility, relevance, and educational effectiveness of the product (Lukiyanto & Wijayaningtyas, 2020; Harmer, 2007). The combination of these data sources ensures triangulation, enhancing the validity of the findings by incorporating both theoretical and practical perspectives on the storybook's effectiveness.

Data collection was conducted using a combination of document analysis and structured expert evaluation forms. Document analysis involved a detailed examination of the storybook's content, focusing on story structure, language use, visual elements, and the design of learning activities that explicitly or implicitly foster collaboration among students (Mardiana et al., 2023; Damarsari & Widodo, 2024). This method allowed the researchers to systematically identify instances where students are expected to demonstrate caring, sharing, and cooperation through narrative scenarios and task-based interactions. Expert evaluation forms employed a five-point Likert scale to measure the quality and relevance of the storybook, particularly its alignment with curriculum standards and the integration of collaborative competencies (Fitri Nur Laila et al., 2023; Lukiyanto & Wijayaningtyas, 2020). The combination of qualitative content analysis and quantitative expert ratings provided a comprehensive assessment of both the process and outcomes of the storybook development.

The data analysis process employed in this study consists of qualitative content analysis and descriptive quantitative analysis. Qualitative content analysis focused on mapping the presence and progression of collaborative values across the storybook, categorizing these values into three subdimensions: caring, sharing, and cooperation (Lukiyanto & Wijayaningtyas, 2020). Each activity, dialogue, and visual representation in the story was coded according to these categories to identify patterns of collaborative learning. Furthermore, the study categorized student engagement with these values into three levels of collaborative competence: emerging, proficient, and advanced, following the framework for progressive character development outlined in prior research (Damarsari & Widodo, 2024; Mardiana et al., 2023). This level-based categorization enabled the researchers to trace how collaborative competence could be scaffolded within the storybook context.

In addition to qualitative analysis, the quantitative evaluation from expert assessments was analyzed descriptively to provide insight into the overall quality, feasibility, and potential educational impact of the product (Fitri Nur Laila et al., 2023). The combined qualitative and quantitative approach allows for a nuanced understanding of both the content integrity and practical applicability of the storybook, ensuring that it effectively supports English language acquisition while simultaneously fostering collaborative skills. This approach is consistent with recommendations from previous studies emphasizing the importance of multi-dimensional evaluation in educational media development (Huhta et al., 2013; Richey & Klein, 2007).

Overall, the methodological framework employed in this study provides a robust means of investigating how collaboration values can be systematically integrated and progressively developed within a bilingual digital storybook. By combining document analysis, structured expert evaluation, and the classification of collaborative competence, the study captures both the theoretical design intentions and practical implications of the media. This approach ensures that the storybook can serve as a pedagogically sound tool for promoting language proficiency and character education concurrently, addressing a key need in elementary English instruction (Mardiana et al., 2023; Directorate of Elementary Education Teachers, 2025; Muqit et al., 2023).

3. Results and Discussion

Results

The research findings indicate that the integration of collaborative values into bilingual digital storybooks has been carried out systematically, both through narrative elements and through structured learning activities. This integration is not only implicit in the storyline but is also explicitly embedded through various forms of interactive tasks that encourage active student engagement. Thus, students not only understand the concept of collaboration theoretically but also gain direct experience in applying these values within a learning context.

Analysis Stage

Integration of Collaborative Values

Furthermore, the integration of these collaborative values is manifested in three main subdimensions: caring, sharing, and cooperation. These three subdimensions are interrelated and consistently distributed throughout the storybook's content, both through interactions between characters and through activities involving the students. This indicates that the design of the digital storybook is not only focused on conveying language content but also on the deliberate development of collaborative character traits.

Thus, the bilingual digital storybooks developed serve not only as a language learning medium but also as an effective tool for instilling collaborative values through contextual and meaningful learning experiences

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the process of integrating collaborative values, a systematic mapping was conducted on every page of the digital storybook. This mapping covers several key aspects, namely the story context underpinning the learning activities, the types of activities presented to students, and the level of collaborative competence targeted in each section.

Through this approach, the integration of collaborative values can not only be identified generally but also analyzed in detail based on its distribution throughout the story's narrative flow. Furthermore, this mapping enables researchers to examine the relationship between narrative elements and learning activities in supporting the gradual and structured development of students' collaborative competencies.

Based on this description, a more structured presentation of data is needed to clarify the distribution and form of the integration of collaborative values throughout the entire storyline. Therefore, the results of the mapping are presented in the following table:

Pages	Story Focus	Sub-dimensioned collaboration	Achievement Level	Description / Part of the Story	Picture
0	Pre-reading activity: matching flavors and pictures	Cooperation	Developing (Expanding)	Students matched vocabulary words related to taste (sweet, salty, sour, bitter) with the corresponding pictures. Before reading the story, they were given the opportunity to discuss their answers as a group, so this activity encouraged initial interaction and the exchange of ideas among the students.	

1	Introduction to "Cooking Day" and Teacher Instructions	-	-	This page serves as an orientation phase in the story arc. At this stage, the learning context and group activities are introduced, but there is no evidence yet of collaborative behavior among the students.	
2	Rani and Lusi prepared a fruit salad by dividing up the tasks	Cooperation	Competent (Talk)	The students demonstrated collaboration by dividing responsibilities—such as cutting fruit and mixing syrup—in order to complete the task together.	
3	Rani shared some sugar with Wina's group	Sharing	Mastery (Skilled)	Students independently demonstrate a willingness to share resources with other groups, reflecting initiative and generosity without any guidance from the teacher.	
4	Bimo helped Mira open the milk bottle	Caring	Competent (Talk)	The students demonstrated care and empathy by helping their classmates who were struggling during the activity.	
5	Sisi and Hana discussed the flavor and worked on the jam together	Cooperation	Competent (Talk)	Students communicate and make decisions together in an effort to improve the quality of their dishes through effective collaboration.	
6	Worksheet: Underline the sentences that show cooperation	Cooperation	Competent (Talk)	Students analyze sentences that illustrate teamwork. This activity aims to help them develop their ability to identify collaborative behaviors, such as helping classmates and sharing tasks.	
7	All the groups put their food together on one table	Cooperation	Developing (Expanding)	Students participate in class activities as a group by combining their group work into a single collaborative display as a form of collective contribution.	

8-9	Teachers and students tasted the food together	Caring	Developing (Expanding)	The students showed respect and appreciation for the work of other groups throughout the tasting activity.	
10	Worksheet: Describing the taste of each food	Cooperation	Developing (Expanding)	Students identify the various food flavors mentioned in the story. This process can be carried out through discussions with classmates, thereby fostering collaborative learning.	
11	Students shared food and celebrated teamwork	Sharing	Competent (Talk)	The students voluntarily shared food with their classmates, demonstrating strong collaborative behavior as the culmination of the series of activities.	
12	Worksheet: Identify sentences that demonstrate cooperation	Cooperation	Competent (Talk)	Students evaluate statements related to cooperation and mutual assistance, thereby strengthening their understanding of collaborative behavior.	
13	Assignment: My Team's Recipe	Cooperation, Sharing	Mastery (Skilled)	Students work together with their peers to select types of food, describe their flavors, and divide up the tasks to be completed. This activity clearly exemplifies collaboration because it requires effective teamwork to complete the task.	

The table shows that the values of collaboration are consistently integrated throughout the storyline. For example, the aspect of cooperation is demonstrated through the division of roles among students during cooking activities; the aspect of sharing is illustrated when characters exchange resources with one another; and the aspect of caring is shown through students helping one another.

The Development of Collaborative Values

Another key finding of this study indicates that collaborative values are not static but are progressively developed throughout the digital bilingual storybook. This development is structured into three levels of competence: emerging, proficient, and advanced (Lukiyanto & Wijayaningtyas, 2020; Directorate of Elementary Education

Teachers, 2025). At the emerging level, students engage in foundational collaborative activities, such as participating in group discussions, sharing ideas, and providing initial peer support. These activities allow students to recognize the importance of teamwork and start practicing cooperative behaviors in a guided context (Fitri Nur Laila et al., 2023). At the proficient level, students demonstrate more active and intentional collaboration by dividing tasks, making joint decisions, and communicating effectively with group members to complete shared assignments. This stage emphasizes mutual accountability and problem-solving within a social learning environment (Mardiana et al., 2023). At the advanced level, learners are capable of independently initiating collaborative actions, such as volunteering to assist peers, sharing learning resources, and coordinating group efforts without teacher prompts. This level reflects a deeper internalization of collaboration values, where students can transfer these behaviors to new contexts beyond the immediate storybook tasks (Damarsari & Widodo, 2024; Muqit et al., 2023). Overall, this progression demonstrates that the digital storybook not only introduces collaborative values but also provides a systematic, structured framework for developing students' collaborative competencies in alignment with the Pancasila Student Profile.

Supporting Language Learning and Interaction

The integration of collaborative values in the digital bilingual storybook is closely intertwined with language learning, highlighting the dual benefits of cognitive and social development (Lukiyanto & Wijayaningtyas, 2020; Directorate of Elementary Education Teachers, 2025). By employing a bilingual format, the storybook allows students to process information through both their first language (L1) and the target language (English), thereby reducing cognitive load and enhancing comprehension (García et al., 2017; Muqit et al., 2023). This scaffolding effect helps students gradually acquire vocabulary, grammatical structures, and functional expressions in English while maintaining a clear understanding of the context.

Moreover, the incorporation of interactive, task-based activities encourages students to actively use the target language in authentic social interactions. For instance, group discussions, peer-to-peer problem solving, and collaborative tasks embedded in the storybook prompt learners to practice speaking, listening, and negotiation skills in a meaningful context (Mardiana et al., 2023; Damarsari & Widodo, 2024). These activities not only reinforce language acquisition but also provide opportunities for students to enact the values of caring, sharing, and cooperation in real-time, supporting both character and social development.

Such findings align with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, which emphasizes that learning is most effective when students actively interact with peers and co-construct knowledge. In addition, Mayer's (2001) cognitive theory of multimedia learning supports the use of combined textual and visual input, as it enhances understanding and retention. Taken together, these results demonstrate that integrating collaborative values into bilingual digital storybooks promotes a more holistic approach to language learning, wherein cognitive, linguistic, and social competencies develop simultaneously in an engaging and meaningful manner.

Evaluation Internship

The results of the evaluation conducted by experts indicate that the bilingual digital storybook developed falls into the "very good" category. All evaluators gave high ratings for content relevance, appropriate language use, visual design, and the integration of collaborative values in the product.

These findings indicate that the resulting product has a good level of validity and is suitable for use in fifth-grade elementary school English language learning. Nevertheless, the main contribution of this study lies not only in the quality of the resulting product but also in the systematic process of integrating collaborative values into the digital storybook.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that collaborative values can be effectively integrated into digital learning media through a careful combination of narrative design and interactive task-based activities (Lukiyanto & Wijayaningtyas, 2020; Directorate of Elementary Education Teachers, 2025). Story-based learning provides a framework in which students are not only cognitively exposed to the concept of collaboration but also observe collaborative behaviors demonstrated by characters in the narrative. By modeling actions such as sharing resources, assisting peers, and making joint decisions, characters serve as social exemplars that students can

emulate in their own learning experiences (Vygotsky, 1978; Harmer, 2007). This observation allows students to internalize collaborative behaviors in a meaningful and contextualized manner rather than perceiving them as abstract concepts.

Meanwhile, the storybook is supplemented with contextually designed interactive tasks that encourage students to enact these collaborative behaviors directly. These tasks include group problem-solving activities, cooperative decision-making exercises, and discussions that require negotiation and mutual support (Mardiana et al., 2023; Damarsari & Widodo, 2024). By engaging in such structured activities, students move beyond passive understanding and experience collaboration as an applied skill, supporting the notion that character education and language learning can be integrated effectively (Lukiyanto & Wijayaningtyas, 2020; Fitri Nur Laila et al., 2023).

Moreover, the progressive development of collaborative values within the storybook aligns with social learning principles, emphasizing observation, interaction, and active participation as critical components of behavior formation (Vygotsky, 1978). Students do not simply receive information; instead, they participate actively in collaborative processes, learning to navigate social roles and responsibilities while practicing English communication. The use of multimedia elements, combining visual and textual information, further strengthens learning by presenting concrete, engaging, and easily interpretable examples of collaboration (Mayer, 2001; Sweller, 2011). Visual depictions of cooperative tasks and contextual cues reduce cognitive load and facilitate the transfer of collaborative skills from the story to classroom practice (García et al., 2017; Muqit et al., 2023).

Compared to prior research on digital storybooks and character education, this study provides a more in-depth and systematic analysis of how collaborative values are embedded and progressively developed (Mardiana et al., 2023; Damarsari & Widodo, 2024). While previous studies have demonstrated the presence of values such as teamwork or cooperation, they rarely detail how these values are integrated into narrative structures, interactive tasks, and peer-to-peer interactions in a measurable way. By explicitly mapping collaborative values across narrative and activity sequences, this study clarifies not only what values are present but also how students' collaborative competence evolves through emerging, proficient, and advanced levels (Lukiyanto & Wijayaningtyas, 2020; Directorate of Elementary Education Teachers, 2025).

Furthermore, this research highlights the dual benefit of bilingual digital storybooks in supporting both linguistic competence and character development. The integration of collaborative tasks provides authentic opportunities for students to use English in real communicative contexts while practicing prosocial behaviors, thereby linking language acquisition with social-emotional development (García et al., 2017; Muqit et al., 2023). By bridging theory and practice, students are encouraged to apply collaborative skills deliberately, reinforcing the notion that digital storybooks can function as holistic learning media rather than solely language-focused resources (Harmer, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978).

In summary, the study demonstrates that bilingual digital storybooks, when intentionally designed with narrative and interactive components that emphasize collaboration, can effectively nurture students' collaborative competence. This approach not only supports the internalization of caring, sharing, and cooperative behaviors but also facilitates meaningful practice in authentic social and language contexts (Lukiyanto & Wijayaningtyas, 2020; Directorate of Elementary Education Teachers, 2025; Mardiana et al., 2023). The findings underscore the potential of such media to serve as a model for integrating character education and language learning in elementary classrooms, providing a comprehensive framework for future educational design and research in the Indonesian context.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that collaborative values, including caring, sharing, and cooperation, have been successfully and systematically integrated into bilingual digital storybooks for Grade 5 English learning. This integration is achieved through thoughtfully designed narrative elements and interactive learning activities, providing students with multiple opportunities to engage in meaningful collaborative experiences within the context of language learning. The storybooks enable students to not only observe collaborative behaviors but also practice and internalize them through structured tasks and peer interactions, reinforcing both social and academic competencies. Furthermore, the findings indicate that collaborative values develop progressively across different proficiency levels, ranging from emerging to proficient. At the emerging level, students begin to participate in basic collaborative activities, while at the proficient level, they are able to engage in more complex teamwork and take

initiative in supporting peers. This structured progression highlights the storybooks' capacity to nurture students' collaborative competence in a systematic and measurable way. Overall, the results of this study confirm that bilingual digital storybooks have significant potential as an effective learning medium for integrating character education with language learning at the elementary school level. By combining engaging narratives, bilingual support, and interactive tasks, these storybooks promote the holistic development of students, bridging the gap between theoretical understanding of collaboration and its practical application in real-life learning contexts. These findings also provide valuable insights for educators and instructional designers seeking to develop media that foster both linguistic proficiency and essential social-emotional skills.

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