# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Background of the Study

English language learning has become increasingly crucial in the globalized world, particularly in non-native English-speaking countries such as Indonesia. English proficiency is vital for global communication and academic advancement, yet many students in Indonesia continue to face significant challenges in mastering the language. This issue is particularly pronounced in rural areas such as Mandailing Natal, where students struggle with English reading comprehension, a fundamental skill for academic success (Yapp et al., 2023) . Despite English being a compulsory subject in the national curriculum, students in these regions face considerable obstacles due to limited access to engaging, culturally relevant, and technologically enhanced learning materials.

At Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) Mandailing Natal, an Islamic senior high school in North Sumatra, the students' difficulties with English reading comprehension are exacerbated by linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical challenges. The reading materials provided are predominantly Western-oriented, making it difficult for students to relate to the content. This cultural mismatch between students' backgrounds and the material hinders engagement and comprehension (Neisi et al., 2019). Moreover, traditional, teacher-centered methods of instruction have been shown to be less effective in promoting active learning and engagement (M. A. Alam, 2023), while the lack of interactive multimedia tools further restricts students' learning potential. These issues underscore the need for a Mandailing Culture-Based English Language Learning (MCBELL) model enhanced with interactive multimedia that is tailored to the unique cultural context of MAN Mandailing Natal.

The integration of local cultural content into English language instruction has been shown to improve students' engagement and comprehension. Culture-based learning allows students to connect new knowledge to their existing cultural

frameworks, making the learning process more meaningful and relatable (Mustafa et al., 2025). By incorporating the rich cultural heritage of Mandailing Natal such as local folklore and oral traditions into English reading materials, students are more likely to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the language.

Additionally, the role of technology in education has become paramount in the 21st century. Interactive multimedia, which combines text, audio, video, and interactive elements, has been shown to enhance motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes (Yu et al., 2021). In the context of English language learning, multimedia tools can provide dynamic, immersive experiences that facilitate better comprehension and retention of language skills. However, despite the proven benefits of multimedia in language education, its use in Indonesian schools, especially in rural areas, remains limited due to resource constraints and a lack of teacher training (Kusuma, 2022).

The combination of culture-based learning and interactive multimedia presents a promising solution to the challenges faced by students at MAN Mandailing Natal. By developing a learning model that integrates local cultural content with multimedia tools, this study aims to create a more engaging and effective English language learning environment. This approach not only aims to improve students' reading comprehension but also fosters pride in their cultural heritage and enhances their connection to the language.

However, despite the potential benefits of a culture-based and multimedia-enhanced learning model, there exists a significant gap in the literature concerning the development and implementation of such models, particularly in the Indonesian context. Most existing studies have focused on urban settings or general language learning strategies, leaving rural areas like Mandailing Natal underrepresented in the discourse (Askolani Nasution, 2019; Nasution et al., 2025). Furthermore, there is a theory gap in the application of culture-based language learning models enhanced with interactive multimedia, with few studies exploring how these

approaches can be specifically tailored to rural settings where resources and infrastructure are limited.

Additionally, a phenomena gap exists, as Mandailing Natal has not yet seen the development of an English language teaching model that incorporates both local cultural elements and modern technological tools. This study seeks to fill these gaps by designing and testing a Mandailing Culture-Based English Language Learning model with interactive multimedia specifically tailored to the needs of students at MAN Mandailing Natal. The proposed model aims to bridge the cultural gap in English reading materials while integrating interactive digital tools to enhance student engagement and comprehension.

The challenges of reading comprehension are significant, as they directly affect students' overall academic performance and language proficiency (Neisi et al., 2019). Research shows that reading comprehension is not merely about decoding words but constructing meaning through engagement with the text (Neisi et al., 2019). EFL learners often struggle with interpreting English texts, particularly when the materials lack familiarity in terms of language structure, cultural context, and background knowledge (Bijani et al., 2022; Shadiev et al., 2022). Studies have emphasized that students' ability to understand texts improves when the materials are culturally relevant (Thongrin, 2025). Unfortunately, much of the current English reading content in Indonesia remains dominated by Western cultural references, which create barriers to engagement for students whose cultural backgrounds differ from those presented in the texts (Yuliantari & Huda, 2023).

At MAN Mandailing Natal, students come from Mandailing and Melayu ethnic backgrounds, rich in oral traditions, folklore, and cultural storytelling. However, these local cultural elements have not been integrated into English reading instruction, limiting students' ability to relate to and understand the texts. The cultural gap in reading materials is one of the significant barriers to improving English reading comprehension at MAN Mandailing Natal. Culturally adapted texts have been shown to improve student engagement and comprehension (Tan &

Mante-Estacio, 2021), yet no structured culture-based learning model has been implemented at the school.

Moreover, traditional teacher-centered methods remain the dominant mode of English instruction at MAN Mandailing Natal. Research shows that these methods are less effective in improving reading comprehension because they fail to encourage active learning or critical thinking (Busa & Chung, 2024). Digital-native students in rural areas like Mandailing Natal are eager for more interactive and engaging learning experiences (Almeida et al., 2016), yet these are rarely provided in the current teaching environment, which remains largely text-based and passive.

The underutilization of interactive multimedia is another critical challenge. Multimedia-based learning has been shown to enhance language learning by offering dynamic, interactive experiences that make learning more engaging and memorable (Alyusfitri et al., 2024; Yi et al., 2024). However, the integration of multimedia in EFL classrooms at MAN Mandailing Natal is hindered by resource constraints, lack of teacher training, and reliance on traditional teaching methods. Despite these challenges, the integration of multimedia in schools across Indonesia has been shown to improve student outcomes (Samodra et al., 2014), yet rural Islamic schools like MAN Mandailing Natal remain behind in implementation. The combination of culture-based content with interactive multimedia has not yet been explored as a pedagogical approach in Indonesian EFL instruction.

Lesti Kaslati Siregar, Ilza Mayuni, and Yuli Rahmawati (2023) studied Culturally responsive English teaching: Developing a model for primary school EFL teachers in Indonesia, they developed Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) to specifically English teaching namely Culturally Responsive English Teaching (CRET), this model was implemented to the three schools of primary students in Medan, they designed and developed the content of the student handbook and assessment related to the most ethnic existing such as Batak, Malay, Mandailing , etc. The book consists of 5 topics such as Alip Brondok, Ulos, Mie balap, and 2 others (Siregar et al., 2023) Therefor, the researcher would like to do this study as

there is no specific design or development of a teaching model yet for English lessons, especially for Islamic high school students which is combined with technological advances such as interactive multimedia and there is not only no integrated curriculum to the latest one "*Merdeka* Curriculum" but also to the specific major "Islamic discussion" which become the foundation of madrasah schools. particularly implemented it in Mandailing Natal which has become one of the remote districts in North Sumatra.

Given these challenges, there is an urgent need for the development of a Mandailing Culture-Based English Language Learning Model with Interactive Multimedia that: (1) incorporates local cultural narratives into English reading materials to enhance comprehension and engagement, (2) utilizes interactive multimedia tools to make reading more engaging and accessible, and (3) encourages student-centered learning that promotes active participation and critical thinking. This approach aligns with schema theory (Kieran & Anderson, 2019), multimedia learning theory (Mayer, 2021), and constructivist learning approaches (Vygotsky, 1978), all of which emphasize the importance of cultural familiarity and active learning in improving language comprehension.

Hence, this study aims to bridge the existing research, theory, and phenomena gaps by developing a Mandailing Culture-Based English Language Learning model that integrates local cultural elements with interactive multimedia tools, specifically designed for the students at MAN Mandailing Natal. This model seeks to create a more engaging and effective English learning environment that enhances students' reading comprehension and fosters a deeper connection with both the language and their cultural heritage.

## 1.2 Identification of Problems

Based on the above research context, several issues can be identified, including:

1. Cultural irrelevance of English reading materials, the majority of English reading materials used at MAN Mandailing Natal are Western-oriented,

making it difficult for students to relate to characters, settings, and themes besides it lacks of local Mandailing cultural elements in reading materials results in low student engagement and comprehension.

2. Traditional teacher-centered teaching methods, the teacher-based approach dominates English instruction, limiting student participation and interaction of teacher, moreover minimal use of active learning strategies like collaborative reading, questioning techniques, and critical thinking exercises, which are essential for comprehension improvement.

3. Low student motivation in reading comprehension, many students find reading English texts boring and difficult due to a lack of connection with the material the absence of interactive and engaging learning experiences reduces their interest in reading activities.

4. Limited use of interactive multimedia in EFL learning, traditional reading instruction relies on printed texts and simple worksheets, with little to or no integration of digital tools such as videos, animations, and gamified exercises, students lack multisensory engagement, which research has shown can enhance reading comprehension and retention.

5. Poor reading comprehension skills among students, students struggle with decoding, analyzing, and understanding English texts, particularly those with complex sentence structures and unfamiliar vocabulary in addition limited exposure to reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, and inferencing further contributes to low comprehension levels.

6. Lack of teacher training in culture-based and multimedia learning models, teachers at MAN Mandailing Natal lack adequate training and resources to integrate cultural content and multimedia tools into their English instruction as a result, they continue to rely on conventional teaching methods, which do not fully support students' learning needs.

7. Limited availability of digital learning resources, the school has insufficient access to computers, internet facilities, and interactive educational software, making it difficult to implement technology-based learning solutions, rural

schools like MAN Mandailing Natal face challenges in adopting modern learning approaches, despite their potential benefits.

## 1.3 The Problems of the Study

Regarding the background, there are four problems formulated as the following:

1. How was the Mandailing culture-based model for English language learning (MCBELL) with interactive multimedia in English language learning at MAN Mandailing Natal developed?

2. How was the validity level of the MCBELL model to meet the students' needs in English language learning at MAN Mandailing Natal from the experts' point of view?

3. How was the practicality level of the MCBELL model to meet the students' needs in English language learning at MAN Mandailing Natal from the users' point of view?

4. How was the effectiveness level of the MCBELL model to meet the students' needs in English language learning at MAN Mandailing Natal?

## 1.4 The Objectives of the Study

In relation to the problems of the study, the objectives of this study are:

1. to develop the MCBELL model to meet the students' needs in English language learning at MAN of Mandailing Natal,

2. to investigate the validity level of the MCBELL model to meet the students' needs in English language learning at MAN of Mandailing Natal,

3. to investigate the practicality level of the MCBELL model to meet the students' needs in English language learning at MAN of Mandailing Natal,

4. to investigate the effectiveness level of the MCBELL model to meet the students' needs in English language learning at MAN of Mandailing Natal.

## 1.5 The Scope of the Research

This study focuses on developing, implementing, and evaluating a Mandailing Culture-Based English Language Learning (MCBELL) Model that

integrates interactive multimedia to enhance students' reading comprehension skills. The key areas of investigation include: Material culture by incorporating Mandailing cultural artifacts (e.g., local folklore, traditional food/ house, tradition etc.) into English materials, interactive multimedia integration by designing and using digital tools such as interactive e-books, animations, and gamified exercises to support reading comprehension, pedagogical approaches by implementing student-centered learning strategies to promote active engagement, critical thinking, and motivation in reading activities, and effectiveness measurement by assessing the impact of the developed model on students' reading comprehension performance. These are implemented for the students of MAN 2 and MAN 4 Mandailing at the 1$^{st}$ grade of Senior High school, odd semester 2024/2025.

## 1.6 The Significances of the Study

This study on the development of a Mandailing Culture-Based English Language Learning model with interactive multimedia to enhance reading comprehension at MAN Mandailing Natal holds both theoretical and practical significance. This study contributes to the advancement of language learning theories, technology-enhanced education, and culturally responsive pedagogy while providing practical benefits for students, teachers, schools, and policymakers.

1. This study strengthens Schema Theory (Anderson, 1972) by demonstrating how students' cultural background knowledge facilitates text comprehension in a foreign language.

2. It provides empirical evidence supporting Carrell (1987) findings that culturally familiar content enhances students' ability to understand and retain information in reading activities.

3. The research aligns with (Vygotsky, 1978) Sociocultural theory highlights the role of cultural context and social interactions in cognitive development and language acquisition.

4. This study contributes to (Mayer, 2021) Multimedia Learning Theory, emphasizing the effectiveness of visual and auditory elements in enhancing students' comprehension and engagement.

5. It supports Cognitive Load Theory by proposing multimedia materials that reduce extraneous cognitive load and enhance students' focus on meaning-making.

6. The study also adds to Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) research by proving how interactive digital tools can scaffold students' learning and boost motivation.

7. The research enriches Contextual Teaching Learning (CTL) and Constructivist Learning Theories by incorporating student-centered learning strategies that promote active engagement (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

8. It introduces an innovative framework for culture-based English instruction, which serves as a model for integrating local culture into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education.

   Several practical significances of the learning model development were:

   For Students

1. Enhances English language learning by integrating local culture into the curriculum, making learning more relatable and engaging.

2. Improves reading comprehension skills through interactive digital tools that provide visual, audio, and textual support.

3. Increases student motivation and interest in English learning by incorporating Mandailing cultural stories, folklore, and traditions.

4. Strengthens critical thinking and analytical skills by engaging students in interactive discussions, problem-solving activities, and comprehension exercises.

For Teachers

1. Equips teachers with a structured, culture-based learning model that incorporates technology and student-centered teaching strategies.

2. Provides innovative teaching resources, such as interactive e-books, multimedia lessons, and gamified reading tasks.

3. Helps teachers bridge students' prior knowledge and new language concepts using culturally relevant materials.

4. Encourages teachers to adopt blended learning approaches, combining traditional methods with digital tools to enhance student participation and comprehension.

For Schools and Educational Institutions

1. Supports curriculum innovation by introducing a contextualized approach to English language learning.

2. Encourages the integration of technology in English instruction, aligning with 21st-century learning competencies.

3. Strengthens cultural preservation efforts by incorporating local literature and oral traditions into English learning materials.

4. Promotes digital literacy among students and teachers, making learning more dynamic and interactive.

For Researchers and Policymakers

1. Provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of culture-based and multimedia-assisted learning models in EFL education.

2. Contributes to educational policy development by advocating for the inclusion of local culture in national English curricula.

3. Offers a replicable model that can be adapted for other culturally diverse learning contexts.

4. Supports further research on culturally responsive pedagogy, digital learning integration, and technology-based language instruction.

Theoretically, this research broadens existing language learning theories by proving the effectiveness of cultural relevance and multimedia tools in English language acquisition. Practically, it offers significant benefits for students, teachers, schools, researchers, and policymakers, fostering engaging, effective, and culturally responsive English education at MAN Mandailing Natal and beyond.

## 1.7 Terms Related to the Study

To provide a clearer understanding of the study on "Development of a Mandailing Culture-Based English Language Learning Model with Interactive Multimedia at MAN Mandailing Natal," the following key terms are defined:

1. **Culture-Based Learning** is an educational approach that integrates local culture, traditions, and values into the learning process to enhance students' understanding and engagement. Mandailing cultural elements (e.g., folklore, local history, artifacts, etc.) are incorporated into English language learning to make reading materials more relatable and meaningful.

2. **English Language Learning (ELL)** is the process of acquiring English as a second or foreign language, focusing on skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. It focuses specifically on reading comprehension in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction.

3. **Reading Comprehension** is the ability to understand, interpret, and analyze written texts in English which aims to enhance students' reading comprehension by using culture-based materials and interactive multimedia tools.

4. **Interactive Multimedia** is the use of digital tools and technologies that combine text, images, audio, video, and interactive elements to create an engaging learning experience which integrates interactive e-books, animations, videos, and gamified exercises to improve students' English learning experience.

5. **Learning Model** is a structured teaching framework that guides how learning activities are designed and implemented which develops a new learning model that combines culture-based learning with multimedia tools to improve English reading comprehension.

6. **English as a Foreign Language** (EFL) is the teaching and learning of English in a non-native English-speaking country where English is not the primary language of communication where students learn English as an additional language.

7. **Digital Learning** is the use of technology-enhanced educational resources, including online platforms, mobile applications, and multimedia content, to support learning which incorporates digital tools to enhance students' English reading comprehension through an interactive and engaging learning model.

8. **Contextualized Learning** is a learning approach that connects academic content with real-life experiences and cultural background to improve relevance and retention by embedding Mandailing culture into English learning, students can better relate to reading texts, making learning more effective and engaging.

9. **Student-Centered Learning** is an instructional approach that focuses on active student participation, collaboration, and critical thinking, rather than traditional teacher-centered methods which promotes student-centered learning by using interactive multimedia and culturally relevant materials to engage learners.

10. **Educational Technology** (EdTech) is the use of technological tools and digital resources to improve teaching and learning outcomes which aligns with EdTech innovations in language learning.