

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consist of background of the study, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, scope and limitation, and definition of key terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

The position of English in today's world is no longer limited to a school subject; it has become a gateway to knowledge, culture, and global interaction. In many EFL contexts, including Indonesia, students are expected not only to understand the mechanics of the language but also to be able to use it meaningfully in real-life situations. However, one persistent issue in English language learning is that classroom practices often remain overly focused on textbook-based instruction, leaving students with limited exposure to authentic language use and meaningful contexts.

This gap has encouraged educators to explore alternative learning media that are more engaging and context-rich. One medium that continues to gain attention is film. Unlike traditional teaching materials, films present language in motion—embedded in emotions, relationships, and cultural settings. As Sánchez-Auñón and Férrez-Mora (2023) argue, films offer a multidimensional learning experience where linguistic input is interviewed with visual cues, social interaction, and cultural representation. This combination allows learners to grasp meaning not only from words, but also from context, tone, and gesture.

What makes films particularly compelling is their ability to simulate real communication. Conversations in films are rarely as structured as textbook dialogues; instead, they reflect how language is actually used sometimes messy, often expressive, and always contextual. Studies by Albiladi, Abdeen, and Lincoln (2018) show that learners perceive films as a “rich linguistic environment,” where they can encounter new vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and natural pronunciation. Similarly, Maulida and Warni (2024) found that students who regularly engage with English films tend to develop better listening comprehension and vocabulary retention, largely because the language is tied to memorable scenes and narratives.

Beyond linguistic gains, films also carry something that is often overlooked in language classrooms: values. Stories are never neutral; they are always shaped by beliefs, conflicts, and choices made by characters. Through these elements, films quietly communicate ideas about responsibility, courage, empathy, and resilience. Research on film analysis consistently shows that characters serve as mirrors of human behavior, making abstract values more concrete and relatable (Simanjuntak, 2020; Fuad et al., 2024). In this sense, films do not only teach language, they also tell learners something about how people live, decide, and interact.

This is where film becomes especially relevant to education. Modern educational paradigms emphasize that learning should not stop at cognitive development; it should also address affective and moral dimensions. Qoyyimah

(2016) highlights that character education can be effectively integrated into EFL learning, as language itself carries cultural and ethical meanings. In practice, this means that analyzing dialogues and actions in films can help students reflect on values while simultaneously improving their language skills.

Interestingly, several studies have shown that students are more responsive to value-based learning when it is presented through narratives rather than direct instruction. Arumsari and Hudha (2019) note that films, especially those with strong character development, can function as subtle yet powerful tools for moral learning. Instead of being told what is right or wrong, students observe characters navigating dilemmas, making decisions, and facing consequences. This process encourages critical thinking and personal reflection.

Another important dimension is cultural awareness. Language does not exist in isolation, it is deeply connected to culture. Films expose learners to different ways of thinking, behaving, and communicating. Chao (2013) explains that watching foreign films allows learners to experience intercultural encounters indirectly, helping them understand perspectives beyond their own. In EFL settings, where direct interaction with native speakers is limited, this exposure becomes particularly valuable.

Within this broader context, *Avatar: The Way of Water* stands out as a film rich in both narrative depth and educational potential. The film does more than entertain; it presents a layered story about family, survival, identity, and coexistence with nature. The main characters Jake Sully, Neytiri, and their

children—are portrayed in situations that require them to make difficult choices, adapt to new environments, and protect what they value most. These experiences naturally give rise to learning values such as responsibility, leadership, cooperation, respect, and perseverance.

What makes this film especially relevant for analysis is how these values are not simply stated, but enacted. They are visible in the way characters speak, respond, and behave in different situations. For example, responsibility is not just mentioned it is demonstrated through decisions and sacrifices. This aligns with findings from Agustini and Winarta (2023), who emphasize that moral values in films are most effectively understood when analyzed through both dialogue and action.

Despite the growing body of research on films in language learning, a closer look reveals several critical gaps that remain insufficiently addressed. First, many studies tend to emphasize the linguistic benefits of films such as vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and speaking skills while paying comparatively little attention to the exploration of learning values embedded within film narratives (Sánchez-Auñón & Férrez-Mora, 2023; Albiladi et al., 2018). As a result, films are often treated merely as supplementary tools for language exposure rather than as meaningful sources of value-based learning.

Second, although a number of studies have investigated moral or educational values in films, these analyses are frequently conducted in isolation from language learning contexts. For instance, studies by Fuad et al. (2024) and Simanjuntak

(2020) focus primarily on identifying moral values in film characters without extending the discussion toward their pedagogical application in EFL classrooms. This creates a conceptual gap between value analysis and language pedagogy, where the potential integration of both remains underexplored.

Third, previous research rarely provides a detailed examination of how learning values are constructed through both dialogue and action simultaneously. Most analyses tend to focus on either verbal expressions or general narrative themes, overlooking the dynamic interplay between what characters say and what they do. In fact, understanding values in audiovisual media requires attention to multimodal elements, including speech, behavior, and situational context.

Finally, there is a noticeable lack of studies that utilize recent and globally influential films, such as *Avatar: The Way of Water*, as objects of analysis within EFL research. While earlier works have explored more conventional or classic narratives, fewer studies engage with contemporary films that offer complex character development and rich thematic layers. This indicates an empirical gap, particularly in examining how modern cinematic texts can contribute to both language learning and character education.

Therefore, this study attempts to address these gaps by not only identifying the learning values reflected in the main characters of *Avatar: The Way of Water*, but also analyzing how these values are expressed through both dialogue and action, and more importantly, exploring their practical application in English language learning contexts. By doing so, this research seeks to bridge the divide

between film analysis and pedagogical practice, offering a more integrated and meaningful approach to EFL learning.

In short, learning English through films is not just about understanding what characters say it is also about understanding why they say it, how they act, and what can be learned from them. This perspective opens up a more meaningful and engaging approach to language learning, one that speaks not only to students' minds, but also to their awareness and values.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What learning values are reflected in the main characters of *Avatar: The Way of Water*?
2. How are these values expressed through the characters' dialogues and actions?
3. How can these learning values be applied in English language learning?

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To identify the learning values reflected in the main characters of the film
2. To analyze how these values are expressed through dialogues and actions
3. To explore the application of these values in English language learning

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions:

- **Theoretical Significance**

Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the discussion of film analysis,

learning values, and English language learning, especially in qualitative research related to films as educational media.

- **Practical Significance**

- 1. For Students**

This study can help students improve their English skills and understand positive learning values reflected in films.

- 2. For Teachers**

This study can provide references for using films as learning media in English language teaching.

- 3. For Future Researcher**

This study can become a reference for future studies related to film analysis, learning values, and EFL learning.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on analyzing the learning values reflected in the main characters of *Avatar: The Way of Water*. The analysis is limited to the characters' dialogues and actions that represent learning values. Furthermore, this study discusses the possible application of these values in English language learning using a qualitative descriptive approach.

1.6 Definition of Key Term

To avoid misunderstanding, several key terms used in this study are defined as follows:

1. Learning Values

Learning values refer to positive educational, moral, and social values reflected through the characters' dialogues and actions in the films, such as responsibility, cooperation, bravery, empathy, and leadership.

2. Main Characters

Main characters are the central figures in *Avatar: The Way of Water* who significantly influence the development of the story.

3. Film Analysis

Film analysis refers to the process of examining dialogues, actions, and character representations in order to identify learning values reflected in the film.

4. English Language Learning

English language learning refers to the process of learning English as a foreign language, particularly through media such as films to improve language skills and character understanding.

