Developing Picture Storybook in English with Wetlands Theme for Young Learners

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ABSTRACT

Stories encourage young learners to understand concepts and vocabulary while expanding their background knowledge about their surroundings. Therefore, providing young learners with a variety of storybooks to develop their understanding of their environment is important to be done by considering their interests and the content of the books. Based on this view, this research aimed to design a picture storybook written in English and with a wetlands environment. Simultaneously this research and development (R&D) referred to development procedures by Borg and Gall (2007) that simplified the process to only seven procedures: prelim approach methods data collection, research planning, early product development, expert validation, revision, field testing, and the last is disseminating and implementing the final product. The instruments used to collect data were a questionnaire, an interview with 15 kindergarten teachers on the need analysis stage and field testing stage, and two validation sheets validating the content and design stage. The results from data analysis showed that it is important to name some animals and plants that live specifically in South Kalimantan wetlands as the main characters of the storybook, such as *timpakul, haruan, papuyu, bekantan,* mangrove trees, and *kasturi*. Next, the developed picture storybook was feasible to be used as media for introducing English and wetlands since it was proven to be valid, practical, and effective.

Keywords: English, picture storybook, wetlands, young learners

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Introducing English formally in education from a young age is still controversial among many education experts (Nufus, 2018). Also, since there are no regulations mandating that English be given as a subject in schools from kindergarten to primary school, many researchers study the

advantages and disadvantages of introducing a second language to young learners. However, many still believe that a child who learns a foreign language at an early age (from birth to about age 10) will gather the language much easier and can speak like a native since young children have the tremendous potential to absorb and reproduce new sounds so that they can imitate pronunciation like a native speaker. This is based on the premise that English skills can be sufficiently trained in an environment where English can be used socially, especially if one has been familiar with English since childhood. Therefore, many parents send their children to international and bilingual schools early, while others choose English courses to improve their skills.

Meanwhile, the learning outcomes in *Kurikulum Merdeka* provide a learning framework that guides educators in PAUD units (TK/RA/BA, KB, SPS, TPA) in providing the stimulation needed by early childhood. The stimulation is designed by enriching the environment that will foster children's interaction with the surrounding environment, including the presence of educators and parents. The stimulation is carried out on all aspects of children's development, both from the moral and religious aspects, physical aspects, emotional and social, language, and cognitive through playing activities. It is hoped that the stimulation process will have an optimal impact on improving children's character, skills, and knowledge. Concerning the stimulation which should be provided to young learners especially linked to their language development and interaction with the surrounding environment, educators should provide the correct input, such as good English storybooks, which include the two previously mentioned as media for teaching and learning.

Everyone loves stories. For young learners, stories are appreciated for being attractive and educative, containing skills and Language aspects, and addressing the personalities of young learners. They can be a vehicle for entertainment and enjoyment, as stories generate a lot of entertainment and interest (Al Harrasi, 2012). They know what kind of storybooks young learners like is important to encourage them to listen and read, though the language is not their mother tongue. Therefore, motivating them to learn English through stories from an early age allows them to broaden their horizons and stimulate their initial enthusiasm and awareness of the usefulness of the English Language. This is because young learners naturally have a high curiosity and enthusiasm for exploring the world around them, which can be utilized by giving them much information in the stories being read. Therefore, it is undoubtedly that having much exposure to stories is an important part of developing young learners' literacy skills (Mart, 2012). Cameron (2001) mentions that stories can motivate young learners and create a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment since writers and storytellers compose stories to entertain by using persuasive language to captivate audiences, especially young learners. Furthermore, Astuti (2014)

shows that the availability of additional English reading material, mainly in the form of stories, triggered young learners to have an interest in reading itself. Moreover, by listening to stories, young learners can pick up new English words easily since the storybooks provide them with many repeated words and a combination of expressive words which contribute significantly to children's vocabulary development and is believed to offer a core key for an endless source of language experience to young learners (Cameron, 2001; Collins, 2005; Sudartini, 2006).

There are many types of storybooks; one is a picture storybook. Gonen (1989) in Gonen and Guler (2011) says that books designed for children aged between one and seven are classified as picture storybooks as they involve more pictures than words. Meanwhile, Wolfenbarger and Sipe (2007) define picture storybooks as the representation of a unique visual and literary art form in which the story in picture storybooks is contingent on the written text and images that appeal to young and even old readers on many levels for learning and pleasure. Additionally, Malu (2013) states that picture storybooks are books filled with images and words composed to tell a story on a theme suitable for children. Sometimes, there may even be no words at all. Words and images complement each other when text is present. Images should be powerful enough to tell a story by themselves to a child who yet cannot read or write. Such books develop children's learning and interpretation to help them be familiar with and aware of their environment. Therefore, using picture storybooks as a media to teach English to young learners, specifically as they provide authentic use of language and rich vocabulary related to their surroundings, can draw their attention and interest to learn. This happens because picture storybooks can do so much more than what teachers can do or what cannot be done in a classroom. For instance, children afraid of snakes can read books about snakes without having nightmares and perhaps will better understand the animals.

South Kalimantan is famous for its identity as 'The City of a Thousand Rivers', which was obvious to call it as a city with many wetland areas. Nevertheless, the availability of reading materials or literature to introduce both English and the environment to children at an early age in Indonesia, especially in South Kalimantan, is not easy to find. The need to publish English picture storybooks covering themes about nature and the environment is urgently needed to introduce children to the world they live in. Apart from introducing English through stories to early childhood, at the same time, it also introduces wetlands, especially animals and plants in wetland habitats in South Kalimantan. In line with this view, designing an English picture storybook written in English and including wetlands is essentially required.

Moreover, the picture storybook is designed by considering the students' language proficiency, using simple words, terms, and sentences, and animals and plants as the main characters. This picture book sets in the animal habitat of living and indirectly describes the wetlands environment. The introduction of English through children's story books supports Universitas Lambung Mangkurat (ULM) to become a wetland research center due to the availability of materials for children to recognize animals and the environment in South Kalimantan written in English.

1.2. Research question

Following the problem and theories discussed above, the writers are interested in developing a picture storybook in English text and relating it with the animals and plants living in wetlands as the story's main characters to build young learners' awareness about their environment. This book is intended for young kindergarteners aged 4 - 7 years. The picture storybook developed in this study is originally designed with interesting stories and images and provides understandable English vocabulary to help young learners learn English and be aware of their environment simultaneously. Since the objective of this study is to develop a picture storybook written in English and to enlighten young learners about wetlands; therefore, the research question of this study is as follows: How is an English picture storybook with a wetlands theme developed for young learners?

1.3. Significance of the study

The significance that can be drawn from this study is that the developed picture storybook can be used as a source for the introduction or teaching of English to young learners and, at the same time, introducing animals and plants that live in the wetland areas of South Kalimantan. In addition, the picture storybook can be used as a reference and appropriate English teaching materials regarding wetlands at different levels of education. In addition, this picture storybook is made to support ULM in introducing wetlands to the world since the storybook will be available online.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study aims to produce a product in the form of a picture storybook. Therefore, the research design suitable for this study is the development model according to Borg and Gall (2007). The development design called Research and Development (R & D) by Borg and Gall (2007) contains a systematic guide to the steps taken by researchers so that the products they design have

appropriate standards and are able to be used by others. This research design involves the process of researching consumer needs and developing products to meet those needs. This study is conducted to meet the needs of teachers and young learners about a book that can aid them in teaching and learning English, and facilitate them in acknowledging the wetlands.

The adapted implementation of research and development proposed by Gustiani (2019), whereas the researchers can design the procedure and development model, varied due to the need and context of their research. Therefore, the researchers implemented the process into seven procedures: 1) preliminary study and data collection, 2) research planning, 3) early product development, 4) expert validation, 5) revision, 6) field testing, and last 7) disseminating and implementing the final product. The flow of the procedures done in this study can be seen in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. The flow chart of R and D of the study
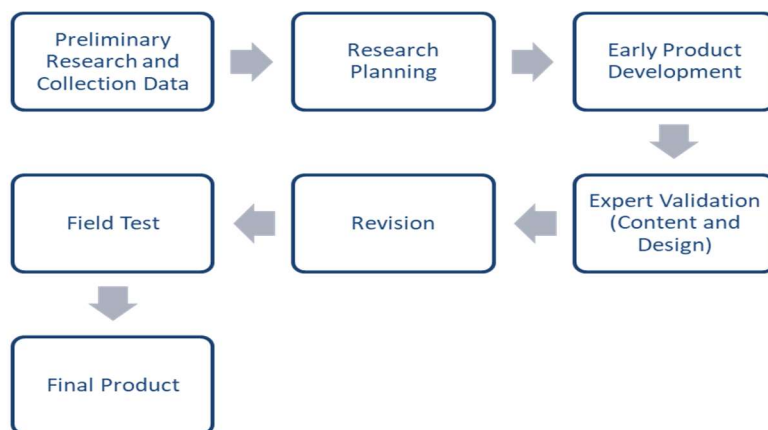
2.2. Samples/Participants

This study was conducted at some kindergarten schools in Banjarmasin Utara district, Banjarmasin. Purposive sampling is applied to choose kindergarten schools that are located near rivers or wetlands. Then, there are 6 kindergarten schools selected and 15 teachers in these schools participated in this study. Here, the researchers collected the data from the participants about needs analysis concerning the lacks, wants and necessities about English and wetlands by giving them questionnaires and doing interviews.

2.3. Instruments

The instruments used to gather data in this study were a questionnaire and interview on the need analysis stage, which were given to the participants, and two validation sheets at validating the content and design stage. An open-ended questionnaire was applied so the participants can

write their answers based on their knowledge and understanding about their own situation. The questions being asked in the questionnaire were about their knowledge about wetlands and telling stories about wetlands, and whether they have taught wetlands and told stories about wetlands to their learners. In addition, they were also asked what kind of animals their learners like, and whether they have ideas about a story that will develop. Next, the answers from the questionnaires are validated by the researchers by doing interviews which are recorded and transcribed for later use. Then, a validation sheet is given to an expert to validate the story's content in English and one to validate the illustrator's design of the illustrations or images drawn by the illustrator at the product stage. Next, a questionnaire is also given to the participants at the field testing stage as the picture storybook has been validated and revised as suggested by the validators. The teachers' responses were gathered in a Likert scale questionnaire as their suggestions and comments were considered for finishing the final product.

2.4. Data analysis

The research results were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. In analyzing data qualitatively, researchers adopted the framework of data analysis developed by Miles and Huberman (1994): data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification. In relation to this study, data reduction is appropriate to analyze the data from needs analysis as a base for developing the picture storybook. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe this element as "the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions."

All data gathered from the instruments were gathered and collected under each number of questions and interpreted carefully, then checked and selected simultaneously to fit the study's purpose. Next, in data display, the researchers organized and displayed data that contained keywords such as the characters, the storylines, and the language features and structure as the basis to build a story in the picture storybook. The last step is conclusion drawing in which the researchers conclude the study results by doing some verifications included in developing a picture storybook.

Meanwhile, the data that were analyzed quantitatively were taken from validation assessment and field testing results. The product of this development would be proclaimed feasible as it is valid, practical, and effective (Plomp & Nieveen, 2013). Therefore, to find out whether the developed picture storybook is valid, practical, and effective, two expert validators are assigned to assess the content and design. The assessment validation used for this study ranged from 1 to 4

(low to very high). The assessment was calculated with the formula below, and the result was converted to the criteria in Table 1.

Table 1. Criteria of validity and practicality

Average Achievement (AA)	Criteria
$1 \leq$ AA < 1.9	Very Low
$2 \leq$ AA < 2.9	Low
$3 \leq$ AA < 4	High
AA = 4	Very High

Then, the scores from the results of teachers' responses in the questionnaire about the content and design of the developed picture storybook ranging from 1 to 4 (very negative to very good) are classified based on Table 2. The developed picture storybook would be said to be valid, practical, and effective when the teachers' response reaches a minimum achievement score of 3 with positive criteria.

Table 2. Teachers' response in the field testing stage and implementing final product stage

Achievement Average (AA)	Criteria
$1 \leq$ AA < 1.9	Very negative
$2 \leq$ AA < 2.9	Negative
$3 \leq$ AA < 4	Positive
AA = 4	Very Positive

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
3.1. Findings
3.1.1 Needs Analysis

The first stage of the findings is needs analysis was conducted to determine the needs of English for Young Learners teachers in Banjarmasin; it is related to knowledge of wetland materials. The finding in need analysis is related to the specific information about the material

taught about animals and plants in the wetland environment. Researchers distributed the questionnaire to 15 teachers from 6 Kindergarten schools. The results of this questionnaire are used as a basis for product development.

From the needs analysis results, it can be seen that teachers have various preferences regarding the appropriate way for students or children to introduce animals and plants to the wetlands environment. When asked about wetlands, the teachers mentioned wetlands in the form of swamps, rivers, lakes, and peatlands. Furthermore, all participants answered that they did not use wetlands materials about the material taught in the form of stories to children in kindergarten.

When asked which wetlands could be used as teaching materials for children, Teacher A replied that what he could tell the children was about the wetlands themselves, such as their function and the types of animals or animals and plants. Meanwhile, Teacher B talked about the wetland's ecosystem, plants, or environment in that place. Similar to Teachers A and B, Teacher C said that what they could tell the children was the life of the community in the wetlands and their interactions with the wetland ecosystem. Furthermore, regarding animals that have the potential to be used as story material, the majority of participants answered that fish live in rivers or swamps in South Kalimantan. Then, the participants mention some animals and plants that live specifically in South Kalimantan wetlands as the main characters of the storybook, such as *Timpakul, Haruan, Papuyu, Bekantan,* Mangrove trees, and *Kasturi.*

The fishes that are mentioned by participants such as Mudskipper *(Timpakul)*, is a unique fish which can both swim in the river and walk and climb on land. Next is Sneakhead (*Haruan*) and Climbing Perch or *Anabas testudineus* (Papuyu) are freshwater fish that usually consumed by local people who live in the South Kalimantan province, then Proboscis Monkey (*Bekantan*) is long-tailed arboreal primate found along rivers and in swampy mangrove forests of South kalimantan (Britannica, 2020). Those animals that were mentioned by teachers, due their familiarity to them. Next question, it is related to the storyline of the English picture storybook, the participants mentioned several responses, such as stories about fish or ducks, stories about types of animals that can live in wetlands, ducks, Legend of the Barito River, Timpakul: the shy mudskipper, and the prince of the frog.

3.1.2 Content Expert Validation

The second stage after the needed analysis is content or Material Validation. The story developed based on the survey and interview with the teachers. The researchers drafted the

storyline where the main character is the mudskipper. The mudskipper is the amphibian that can introduce all the characters, as the validators checked and commented on the draft. The validators checked the content or the dialog from the picture storybook with a wetlands theme. The validators focused on three aspects: language features, general information, and the meaning of the words. The presentation of process revision were displayed: before and after, and feedbacks or suggestions (see table 3).

Table 3. Validation Process by the Expert

Indicator	Before	Feedback/ Suggestions	After
Language Features	"Be careful, Jempi! It is time to eat. Lots of yummy treats in water for us. Oi, don't just looking around! " says Ma	What are the treats? Who or What? 'Who' includes human features? What à does not include human features.	"Be careful, Kepi! It is time to eat. Lots of yummy food in water for us. Oi, don't just looking around! "says Ma.
General Information	"What are those, Ma?" whispers Jempi. "It has many roots." "Oh, those are mangrove trees. Many of us need them to survive," explains Ma.	Perhaps you can tell briefly why mangroves help mudskipper to survive.	"What are they, Ma?" whispers Kepi. "They have so many roots." "Oh, they are mangrove trees. We can build a home among them," explains Ma.
Meaning of words	"And what are those, Ma?" says Jempi. "It has a Their fruits are small, round and purple." "They are *Kasturi*. They only live in our area. The fruits are sweet."	Instead of "what are those" should replace with the 'trees'	"And what trees are those, Ma?" Kepi wonders. "Their fruits are small, round and purple." "They are *Kasturi*. They only live in our area. The fruits are sweet."

After revising the product based on the expert's feedback and suggestions, particularly simple vocabulary and sentence structure, using grammatically structured language, and free from mechanic errors. In addition, the content was added for the introduction to the main character apart from the draft. the validators assessed the dialog through the Lickert scale. The results of validation scores (see table 4) by the experts in language feature was 3.25; it is categorized as a high score.

Then, the meaning of words was 3.38; it is categorized as a high score and the last aspect, general information, was 3.38, also a high score. The total average score was 3.42; it is categorized as a high score. Overall, the validators' score is high or good, and the product is valid with revision.

Table 4. The validation results from the experts

Aspect	TI	Score		AA	Criteria
		Validator 1	Validator 2		
Language Features	4	12	14	3.25	high
Meaning of Words	4	15	12	3.38	high
General Information	4	13	14	3.38	high
Total	**12**	**40**	**40**	**3,42**	**high**

Note: TI = Total item; AA= Average Achievement

3.1.3 Design Expert Validation

In the third stage, the researchers consulted the illustrator based on the already validated draft. The characters in the picture storybook were developed from a needs analysis survey, and there were nine characters (the Mudskipper or *Timpakul, Haruan, Papuyu, Bekantan, Jelawat, Sparrow,* mangrove trees, shrimps, and *Kasturi*. The drawing was handed to the validators of the design; the Validators focused on three aspects: Color, Font Style, and the Illustrations of the characters. The drawing had a calm background that was the opposite color of the fonts; the font had a clear and bright color. The font position was located as the balancing of the drawing characters on the page of the picture storybook. The proportional font size of the dialogs on one page was approximately one-third of the page area (see figure 2).

Figure. 2 Illustration of Picture Storybook

Figure (2) above shows the contrast of background color with the illustration of the characters and the position and color of the font, which also has white color.

The results of teacher responses (see table. 5) showed that the average score in coloring was 3.17; it is categorized as a high score. Next, the illustration score was 3.33; it is categorized as a high score and the last aspect, font and the style, were 3.5 also a high score. The total average score was 3.33, categorized as a high score.

Table 5. The validation results from the experts

Aspect	TI	Score		AA	Criteria
		Validator 1	Validator 2		
Coloring	3	10	9	3.17	high
Illustrations	3	11	9	3.33	high
font and the style	3	11	10	3.5	high
Total	**9**	**45**	**39**	**3.33**	**high**

Note: TI = Total item; AA= Average Achievement

3.1.4 Field Test

The experts suggested the revision results in terms of content and design. Then the developer conveyed the revised product to 13 kindergarten teachers to review the product.

Table 6. Teachers' response in the field testing stage

Aspect	TI	Score	AA	Criteria
Content	4	226	3.7	Positive
Design	4	210	3.5	Positive
Presentation	2	108	3.6	Positive
Total	**15**	**101**	**3, 6**	**Positive**

Note: TI = Total item; AA= Average Achievement

The teachers' responses in the content of the picture story showed 3.7, categorized as a positive response. The design of the picture storybook score was 3.5, categorized as positive, and the last aspect, the presentation score, was 3.6, also categorized as a positive response.

3.1.5 Final Product

The last stage of this developing picture storybook is the final product, whereas, in the previous stage, the product received a positive response. Therefore, in the last stage, the researchers proceeded to the next stage to finalize the product. The table below shows the result of a questionnaire to the teachers.

Table 7. Teachers' responses towards the Final Product

Items	Score	AA	Criteria
I enjoy reading this picture storybook	59	3.92	Positive
I am interested in using the picture storybook as media in my class.	56	3.72	Positive
I need more stories about other local stories from my area.	56	3.72	Positive

I know the story from the picture storybook matches the one I know in my local area.	58	3.84	Positive
I understand the images displayed in the picture storybook.	56	3.72	Positive
I understand the text written in the picture storybook.	58	3.84	Positive
I am satisfied with the color in the picture storybook.	58	3.84	Positive
I like the picture storybook as whole.	59	3.92	Positive

Note: AA= Average Achievement

Table 7 shows the result of teachers' responses toward the final product, and it shows that 3.92 of teachers positively enjoy reading the picture storybook. Teachers' responses (3.72) answered positively that the picture storybook caught their interest in using it in class. 3.92 of the responses by teachers agreed to like the storybook picture.

3.2. Discussion

The research aims to produce a product in the form of a picture storybook with a wetlands theme. The research findings showed that the English picture storybook with the Wetlands theme is intended for young English learners, especially kindergarten students. The findings need analysis, content expert validation, and design expert validation. Then, the researcher gathers the necessary information from kindergarten teachers in need analysis. Teachers conveyed that 1) They never use the wetlands environment theme as part of their teaching material. 2) They recognize wetlands as lakes, rivers, peatlands, and swamps. 3) They gave several character suggestions that might be liked by the EYL students, such as mudskipper, frog, and fishes. Therefore, The setting of the picture storybook is in the river which surrounder an island. Then the main character is a mudskipper which is an amphibian animal. The mudskipper can explore not only fishes in the river but also on the river bank. The mudskipper can live both in the river and on the land; the stories of the mudskipper adventure introduce all characters mentioned, such as *timpakul, haruan, papuyu, bekantan,* mangrove trees, and *kasturi.* The next step was developing the storyline and drawing the characters through the draft as the early product.

The product is divided into two parts of validation by two experts, and the procedure is in line with Farih and Karimata (2022) to develop the learning materials; the first part is content

which focuses on language features, the meaning of words, and general information (Wegman, 1985 and Blass, 2007). Two validators assessed the content validation using a Likert scale (table 4). The total average score from the validators showed that the product of the picture storybook obtained a good score or high criteria. However, it was preceded by feedback and comments (see Table 3).

The second part is the design that concentrates on Color, Illustration, font, and style (Treiman, Rosales, & Kessler, 2016; Gönen et al., 2014). The illustration with the color has evocative artistic elements, and the color suggests certain feelings (Giorgis, 1999). The greenish background of the product picture storybook suggests a calm feeling (figure. 2). Then the composition is proportional to the characters visually as the whole illustration influences children's visual intelligence (Rantasari, 2020). The font and style in the book have contrasting colors due to the dark background color.

The research emphasizes the simplicity of the sentence structure as an important factor due to the target audience being children. Then, the calm color and realistic character design that looks like the real one are also important to gather children's interest. The teachers responded positively toward the picture storybook as an interesting storybook describing the wetland's habitat. The accomplishment of this developing picture storybook was finished through teachers' responses as the last stage of the flow chart (Febriyanti, Fadilla, and Hidayat, 2022).

4.1. Conclusion

A picture storybook is considered an appropriate teaching medium for young learners aged 4 to 7 since young learners are more interested in images or pictures than words. Based on the study results, it can be concluded that it is difficult for kindergarten teachers in Banjarmasin to find an interesting and appropriate reference fiction book that can be used to introduce English and bring in the environment, such as wetlands, to the class. Seeing the importance of achieving teaching and learning objectives and the lack of appropriate references for teaching English to young learners, developing a picture storybook about the animals and plants that live in the wetland's habitat in English is desperately needed. Through several activities that have been carried out, this research produces a picture storybook and is acknowledged as valid, practical, and effective. Thus, it is feasible to use as teaching material and as the first introduction for children at an early age to English and their environment.

4.2. Suggestions

This study is carried out based on the need for a reference book to introduce English and the environment for kindergarten learners. Kindergarten teachers can use this picture storybook to support foreign language acquisition and early childhood cognitive development of their students. However, it is suggested that kindergarten teachers practice reading, especially pronunciation, understanding every word in the picture storybook, and recognizing each character's name to give their students a valuable and wonderful learning experience. Lastly, further studies on developing such books as references for kindergarten teachers are expected to be conducted in the future, considering the some drawbacks of this study such as this book is limited to only specific age of young learners (4 - 7 years old), and solely for learners in South Kalimantan.

Acknowledgments

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