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# Enhancing elementary literacy: Developing Canva-based picture storybooks for engaging language learning

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## Abstract

This study developed and evaluated Canva-based picture storybooks as instructional media for second-grade Bahasa Indonesia lessons at SDN 3 Batudaa, Gorontalo. The research aimed to address the limitations of traditional textbooks, which lacked visual appeal and failed to engage students effectively. Utilizing the ADDIE development model, the study identified instructional challenges, designed visually enriched storybooks aligned with the national curriculum, and tested their practicality and effectiveness in classroom settings. The methodology included observations, interviews, and questionnaires to assess initial conditions and validate the developed media. Experts in language, media design, and subject content provided iterative feedback, ensuring the storybooks' quality and relevance. The implementation phase involved small-scale and large-scale trials, with 24 students participating in the latter. The findings demonstrated that the Canva-based storybooks significantly enhanced student engagement, comprehension, and participation, with a high practicality score of 96%. Teachers reported ease of integration and improved classroom dynamics. These results underscore the potential of digital tools like Canva in creating culturally relevant and engaging instructional materials for elementary education. This study highlights a scalable and effective approach to integrating digital media into primary education, with implications for improving literacy and fostering active learning. Future research should explore its application across diverse subjects and educational contexts.

**Keywords:** Interactive Learning Media; Digital Tools in Education; Elementary Literacy Development; Storybooks

## 1. Introduction

The Indonesian language holds a fundamental position in the elementary school curriculum, serving as a vehicle for developing communication skills and critical literacy among students. As a core subject, it enables young learners to enhance their receptive and productive linguistic competencies, which include listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Mastery of these skills not only fosters personal expression but also prepares students for broader academic and professional endeavors. Literacy, as a central focus of Indonesian language education, is instrumental in cultivating critical thinking, creativity, and civic responsibility. This aligns with national educational goals to produce well-rounded individuals equipped for a digitally interconnected world. However, achieving these outcomes necessitates innovative teaching methods and engaging instructional materials that resonate with the dynamic needs of young learners.

Within the classroom, educators play a pivotal role in curating an environment that nurtures active learning. Media for instruction—tools or resources employed to facilitate the teaching-learning process—becomes a critical component in this effort. Research highlights the potential of visual aids and interactive tools in mitigating learner disengagement and enhancing comprehension. According to Wulandari et al. (2023), students are more likely to remain attentive and motivated when exposed to visually enriched learning materials. Similarly, Ngura (2022) emphasizes that elementary learners prefer resources with vibrant imagery, which serve as visual anchors to complement textual information.

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Nevertheless, traditional textbooks, often characterized by lengthy, monotonous textual content with limited visual appeal, dominate Indonesian classrooms. This conventional approach has been linked to student disinterest, reducing their motivation to engage meaningfully with learning content.

Despite these challenges, there is growing recognition of the transformative role of technology in education, particularly in enhancing the delivery of content. Digital tools, such as Canva, have emerged as accessible platforms for designing interactive and visually appealing learning resources. These tools not only simplify the creation process for educators but also align with students' preferences for vibrant, multimedia-based materials. However, while the integration of digital media in teaching has gained momentum globally, its systematic application in Indonesian elementary education, particularly in rural settings, remains underexplored.

The primary research problem addressed in this study revolves around the limitations of existing instructional media in fostering student engagement and comprehension. Current teaching practices predominantly rely on conventional textbooks that fail to captivate learners or accommodate diverse learning styles. These shortcomings are exacerbated by the lack of training and resources available to teachers for developing innovative materials. As a result, students often perceive lessons as tedious, limiting their potential to grasp foundational concepts effectively. Addressing this issue necessitates the development of instructional media that is not only engaging but also tailored to the cognitive and developmental needs of young learners.

A general solution to this problem lies in the utilization of picture storybooks as a medium of instruction. Picture storybooks, combining text and visuals, serve as a dual-channel tool that enhances both engagement and understanding. The integration of images with narratives creates an interactive learning experience, particularly for younger students. Studies by Dessiane & Hardjono (2020) and Ratnasari & Zubaidah (2022) underscore the efficacy of such media in simplifying complex concepts and maintaining students' interest. Moreover, picture storybooks align with the developmental characteristics of elementary learners, offering a bridge between visual stimuli and textual learning.

This study builds upon existing literature by employing Canva, a user-friendly graphic design tool, to create tailored picture storybooks. Canva's versatility in providing templates, fonts, and interactive elements makes it an ideal platform for designing educational materials. Previous research has demonstrated its effectiveness in developing instructional resources across various subjects (Miftahul Jannah et al., 2023). Additionally, platforms like Canva empower teachers to design resources that reflect local contexts and curricula, thereby fostering relevance and cultural resonance. However, the use of Canva in producing picture storybooks specifically designed for the Indonesian language curriculum has not been extensively investigated.

The integration of picture storybooks in language instruction has been extensively studied, with a consensus on their role in enhancing literacy skills. For example, studies by Apriatin et al. (2021) and Nuraeni & Kurnia (2024) highlight their contribution to improving reading proficiency and fostering a love for literature among elementary students. Furthermore, research by Yulianin (2022) demonstrates how picture storybooks, when developed systematically using design frameworks like ADDIE, can lead to significant learning gains. Despite these advancements, a notable gap remains in understanding the practical application of these tools in classrooms where resources are limited, such as in rural Indonesian schools.

This study seeks to address this gap by designing and implementing picture storybooks using Canva in a rural elementary school in Gorontalo, Indonesia. The research adopts the ADDIE development model, ensuring a systematic approach to analyzing, designing, developing, implementing, and evaluating the instructional media. By tailoring the content to the specific needs of Grade II students, the study aims to create resources that not only engage learners but also align with the national curriculum.

The novelty of this study lies in its dual focus: leveraging Canva's capabilities to design culturally and contextually relevant picture storybooks and systematically evaluating their effectiveness in improving student engagement and learning outcomes. While prior research has emphasized the theoretical benefits of picture storybooks, this study extends the discourse by providing empirical evidence from a rural Indonesian setting. Moreover, the findings are expected to inform best practices for integrating digital tools into elementary education, offering practical implications for teachers and policymakers.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Research Design

This study adopts a research and development (R&D) approach, which aims to produce and evaluate the effectiveness of a specific product—in this case, picture storybooks designed using Canva as instructional media. The R&D methodology, as outlined by Sugiyono (2018), involves a systematic process to develop, test, and refine educational tools to address specific pedagogical challenges. The development framework employed in this research is the ADDIE model, which consists of five interconnected phases: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation (Endang, 2011). This structured approach ensures that the product is both effective and aligned with educational objectives.

### 2.2. Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at SDN 3 Batudaa, located in Ilohungayo Village, Gorontalo Regency, during the 2024–2025 academic year. This school was selected based on preliminary observations and the identification of challenges in engaging students in Bahasa Indonesia lessons. The participants included 24 second-grade students, comprising 11 males and 13 females. In addition, teachers, language experts, media design specialists, and subject matter experts participated in the validation and evaluation stages of the study.

### 2.3. Data Collection Instruments

Data collection involved various instruments tailored to the specific objectives of the study:

- **Observation:** Observations were conducted to examine classroom practices, teaching methods, and the use of existing instructional media. This provided a baseline understanding of the challenges faced by both teachers and students.
- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with second-grade teachers and selected students. These interviews aimed to gather qualitative insights into the perceived effectiveness of existing media and the specific needs for improvement.
- **Questionnaires:** Structured questionnaires were distributed to validate the designed media. They were administered to experts in media design, language, and subject content to assess the product's validity, practicality, and alignment with educational goals.
- **Validation Instruments:** Validation tools were designed using a Likert scale to evaluate key aspects such as visual design, linguistic accuracy, content relevance, and ease of use. These instruments were used to collect feedback from validators during the development phase.

### 2.4. Development Framework

The ADDIE model provided the conceptual framework for the development and refinement of the picture storybooks. Each phase of the ADDIE model is described below:

- **Analysis Phase:**
  The initial phase involved identifying the specific needs and challenges within the teaching and learning process. Data were gathered through observations, interviews, and a needs analysis questionnaire administered to students and teachers. The findings revealed that conventional textbooks, which lacked engaging visual elements, failed to capture students' interest or support their understanding of Bahasa Indonesia.
- **Design Phase:**
  In this phase, the blueprint for the picture storybooks was created. The design process included determining learning objectives, structuring the content, and conceptualizing the visual and textual components. Canva was selected as the primary tool for creating the materials due to its user-friendly interface and extensive design features (Miftahul Jannah et al., 2023). The content was aligned with the Indonesian national curriculum to ensure relevance and coherence.
- **Development Phase:**
  The storybooks were developed based on the designs created in the previous phase. Canva was used to integrate visuals, narratives, and interactive elements. This phase also included iterative validation by experts in media design, language, and subject content. Feedback from the validation process was used to refine the product, addressing issues such as visual clarity, linguistic appropriateness, and content alignment with learning objectives.

- **Implementation Phase:**
  The developed picture storybooks were piloted in two stages: a small-scale trial involving eight students and a large-scale trial with the entire class of 24 students. During these trials, teachers utilized the storybooks in Bahasa Indonesia lessons. Data on student engagement, comprehension, and overall learning experience were collected through observations, questionnaires, and teacher feedback.
- **Evaluation Phase:**
  The final phase involved assessing the effectiveness and practicality of the storybooks. Data from the implementation phase were analyzed to determine whether the materials met the intended learning objectives. Additionally, this phase provided insights into potential improvements for future iterations.

## 2.5. Validation and Data Analysis

Expert validation was conducted to ensure the quality and relevance of the instructional media. Validators included experts in design, language, and subject matter, who provided feedback on various dimensions of the product. The data collected from validators and participants were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively:

- **Quantitative Analysis:**
  The data from questionnaires were processed using percentage calculations to determine the validity and practicality of the storybooks. For instance, the level of practicality was categorized based on percentage intervals (Riduwan, 2009). Products scoring above 81% were deemed "Highly Practical."
- **Qualitative Analysis:**
  Observational and interview data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and insights related to the usability and impact of the storybooks. These qualitative findings complemented the quantitative results, providing a comprehensive evaluation of the product.

## 2.6. Criteria for Success

The success of the developed media was assessed based on two primary criteria:

- **Validity**:
  The storybooks were considered valid if they scored at least 81% in expert evaluations across dimensions such as content relevance, visual appeal, and linguistic appropriateness.
- **Practicality**:
  Practicality was measured based on student and teacher feedback during the implementation phase. A minimum score of 81% was required to categorize the product as highly practical.

## 2.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the school administration prior to the commencement of the study. Informed consent was secured from teachers, students, and their guardians. The data collection process adhered to principles of confidentiality and respect for participants' rights.

# 3. Results and Discussion

## 3.1. Overview of Research Findings

The research aimed to develop and implement picture storybooks using Canva as a teaching medium for second-grade Bahasa Indonesia lessons at SDN 3 Batudaa. By employing the ADDIE model, the study systematically analyzed the initial conditions, designed and developed the instructional media, and assessed its implementation. This section presents the findings across the ADDIE phases, followed by a discussion contextualizing these results with existing literature and educational frameworks.

## 3.2. Analysis Phase: Identifying Needs and Challenges

The analysis phase revealed significant gaps in the instructional materials used for Bahasa Indonesia lessons. Observations and interviews indicated that the textbooks provided by the school were predominantly text-heavy and lacked engaging visual elements. Students often found these materials unappealing and challenging to understand, leading to low motivation and reduced participation during lessons. Teachers corroborated these findings, highlighting the absence of visually stimulating resources as a major limitation in maintaining student engagement.

Further, a needs analysis questionnaire completed by students demonstrated a strong preference for visually enriched materials, such as picture storybooks. These findings align with Wulandari et al. (2023), who emphasize that visual aids play a crucial role in fostering student interest and comprehension, particularly in language learning contexts. The analysis underscored the necessity for innovative instructional media that integrates visual and textual components to address these challenges.

### 3.3. Design Phase: Conceptualizing the Picture Storybooks

Based on the insights from the analysis phase, the design phase focused on creating a blueprint for the picture storybooks. The content was structured around the national curriculum for Bahasa Indonesia, ensuring relevance and alignment with learning objectives. Canva was selected as the design tool due to its accessibility and versatility, offering pre-designed templates and customizable features that simplify the creation process (Miftahul Jannah et al., 2023).

The design process emphasized three key components:

- **Visual Appeal:** Bright, colorful illustrations were integrated to capture students' attention and make the learning experience more engaging.
- **Narrative Structure:** Stories were designed to be relatable and contextually relevant, incorporating themes familiar to students.
- **Educational Content:** Each story was aligned with specific learning objectives, incorporating vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension tasks to enhance language skills.

The initial prototypes were reviewed by experts in media design, language, and subject content, who provided feedback on visual clarity, linguistic appropriateness, and thematic coherence. This iterative process ensured that the design met both pedagogical and aesthetic standards.

### 3.4. Development Phase: Producing the Storybooks

The development phase involved translating the design blueprints into tangible instructional media. Canva's features facilitated the integration of illustrations, text, and interactive elements, resulting in a series of picture storybooks tailored to second-grade learners. The books were structured to include:

- A **cover page** with an inviting title and visual cues to the story's theme.
- **Narrative sections** enriched with colorful illustrations and simple, age-appropriate language.
- **Interactive activities**, such as comprehension questions and vocabulary exercises, designed to reinforce learning objectives.

The storybooks underwent validation by a panel of experts, who assessed their quality using a structured questionnaire. Feedback indicated that the media scored highly in terms of practicality and alignment with student needs, achieving a validity score of 96%. Suggestions for minor revisions, such as improving text placement and balancing color contrasts, were incorporated to enhance usability.

### 3.5. Implementation Phase: Testing the Storybooks in the Classroom

The implementation phase tested the storybooks in two stages: a small-scale trial involving eight students and a large-scale trial with the entire class of 24 students. During these trials, teachers integrated the storybooks into Bahasa Indonesia lessons, using them as the primary instructional material.

### 3.6. Small-Scale Trial

In the initial trial, students were introduced to the storybooks and guided through the activities. Observations indicated a marked increase in engagement and enthusiasm compared to previous lessons using traditional textbooks. Students actively participated in discussions, asked questions about the illustrations, and demonstrated improved comprehension during follow-up activities.

### 3.7. Large-Scale Trial

The large-scale trial replicated the approach used in the small-scale trial but included the entire class. Feedback from teachers and students reinforced the positive outcomes observed in the earlier phase. Students exhibited higher levels of motivation, and their responses to comprehension tasks showed significant improvement.

Questionnaires administered to students during this phase revealed that 96% found the storybooks highly practical and enjoyable. Teachers reported that the storybooks simplified lesson delivery and reduced the need for supplementary explanations, allowing them to focus on fostering interactive learning environments.

### 3.8. Evaluation Phase: Assessing Effectiveness and Practicality

The evaluation phase synthesized data from observations, questionnaires, and expert feedback to determine the effectiveness and practicality of the storybooks. Key findings included:

- **Enhanced Engagement:** Students were more attentive and participated actively during lessons, indicating that the visual and narrative elements successfully captured their interest.
- **Improved Comprehension:** Post-lesson assessments revealed a notable increase in students' ability to recall and apply concepts introduced in the storybooks.
- **Ease of Use:** Teachers highlighted the simplicity of integrating the storybooks into their teaching routines, noting that Canva's design allowed for seamless customization to suit specific lesson needs.

These outcomes align with previous studies (Apriatin et al., 2021; Yulianin, 2022) that emphasize the efficacy of picture storybooks in enhancing student learning outcomes. However, this study extends the discourse by demonstrating the practical application of Canva in producing high-quality instructional media tailored to local contexts.

### 3.9. Discussion: Implications and Contributions

The findings of this study underscore the potential of digital tools like Canva in transforming elementary education. By addressing the limitations of traditional textbooks, the developed storybooks provided a more engaging and effective alternative for teaching Bahasa Indonesia. This aligns with Dessiane & Hardjono's (2020) assertion that integrating visuals and narratives enhances both engagement and comprehension in young learners.

The study also highlights the importance of tailoring instructional media to the developmental needs of students. By incorporating relatable themes and age-appropriate language, the storybooks bridged the gap between abstract concepts and students' everyday experiences. This approach is consistent with constructivist theories, which emphasize the role of context in facilitating meaningful learning.

Furthermore, the research contributes to the growing body of literature on the use of digital tools in education. While previous studies have explored Canva's potential for creating multimedia resources (Miftahul Jannah et al., 2023), this study provides empirical evidence of its application in developing culturally relevant instructional media for rural Indonesian schools. The findings have practical implications for educators and policymakers seeking to integrate technology into resource-limited settings.

### 3.10. Addressing Research Gaps

This study addresses notable gaps in existing research by focusing on the use of Canva to create picture storybooks for Bahasa Indonesia instruction. While earlier studies (Nuraeni & Kurnia, 2024; Yulianin, 2022) have demonstrated the benefits of picture storybooks in improving literacy, they often overlook the role of digital tools in the design process. By bridging this gap, the study provides a framework for leveraging technology to produce high-quality educational resources that are both practical and scalable.

## 4. Conclusion

This study successfully developed and implemented Canva-based picture storybooks as an instructional medium for second-grade Bahasa Indonesia lessons, addressing the limitations of traditional textbooks that lack visual appeal and engagement. By employing the ADDIE model, the study systematically identified challenges, designed visually enriched storybooks, and validated their effectiveness and practicality. The findings revealed that these storybooks significantly enhanced student engagement, comprehension, and participation, with both small-scale and large-scale trials demonstrating their high practicality (96%) and positive reception among students and teachers.

The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by showcasing the potential of Canva as a user-friendly tool for creating culturally and contextually relevant educational resources in resource-limited settings. It extends previous research by providing empirical evidence of the integration of digital tools in elementary education, highlighting their role in fostering interactive and effective learning environments.

The implications of this research are twofold: first, it offers a scalable framework for designing engaging instructional materials; second, it underscores the importance of aligning educational tools with students' developmental and contextual needs. Future research could explore the application of this approach across other subjects, grade levels, and diverse educational contexts to further advance the use of digital tools in enhancing primary education.

## Compliance with ethical standards

*Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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