

Developing a Culture-Based Storybook for English for Young Learners (EYL)

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Abstract. The current research and development was inspired by Ir. Soekarno's childhood which aims to develop a culture-based storybook for English for Young Learners (EYL) in SDN Purwotengah. Adapting the ADDIE model (Branch, 2009), the research went through Analysis, Design, and Development stages. Due to limited time and budget, the research could not proceed to the Implementation and Evaluation stages. During the analysis stage, data on classroom needs and Soekarno's childhood in Mojokerto were collected as the basis for creating the storybook. Upon completion, the storybook "Little Soekarno" was validated by experts to ensure its feasibility and quality. The material expert validation resulted in a perfect score of 100%, while the media expert validation indicated a score of 95.65%. Minor revisions were still necessary in terms of grammar, layout, and typography to improve the quality of the storybook before it could be used as learning media.

Keywords: *local culture-based storybook, English for young learners (EYL)*

1 Introduction

Mojokerto is one of the regions in the eastern part of Java that has exceptional historical and cultural richness. The name 'Mojokerto' originates from the word 'maja' and 'kerta'. The word *maja* means 'bael fruit' which was found around the area, while *karta* or *kerta* means 'country' [1]. Its existence cannot be separated from the Majapahit Empire. Mojokerto, specifically in the village of Trowulan, used to be the heart of the last Hindu-Buddhist kingdom in Indonesia.

Moreover, Mojokerto becomes the silent witness for the life of Indonesian first leader, President Soekarno. The nation hero had spent his childhood in Mojokerto from age 6 to 15 years old. He stayed and attended school in Mojokerto in 1909-1915 [2]. There were two schools where Soekarno had received formal education in Mojokerto. They are the *Eerste Inlandsche School* (EIS) or *Ongko Loro School*, which now is SDN Purwotengah, and *Europesche Legore School* (ELS) which now becomes SMPN 2 Mojokerto [3].

In 2020, the two school buildings were then announced to be local cultural heritages by the Mojokerto City Government [4]. The government has strived to make Soekarno's childhood remain an icon for the youth generation in achieving their dreams. For this reason, it is their

goal to restore the schools where young Soekarno had received his education and embody the historical value in the form of Soekarno Center or Soekarno Gallery [5].

Soekarno Center was then initially established in SDN Purwotengah. The school is located on Taman Siswa Street, Kranggan, Mojokerto City. SDN Purwotengah once also became the host school of the second batch of Kampus Mengajar program conducted in 2021, in which the researcher participated. Formerly known as *Ongko Loro*, the school is notable as a local cultural heritage where people can trace the childhood life of the nation's number one proclinator.

The spirit of the age also resonates in the curriculum used by SDN Purwotengah. According to Endang Pudjiastutik, the principal of SDN Purwotengah, it was their mission to cultivate Soekarno's cultural knowledge to the young generation. To achieve this goal, SDN Purwotengah carries out a program called Geno Center (*Generasi Soekarno Cendekia dan Berkarakter*). Geno Center encourages the students to grow Soekarno's spirit, including nationalism, honesty, literacy, persistence, and willingness to sacrifice for the nation [6].

As a cultural heritage, SDN Purwotengah has attempted to implement its cultural values through a number of programs, starting from creating a healthy habit for students to employing technological-based learning [7]. Moreover, [8] also added that this program aims to establish five pillars of characters within students that are respective to Soekarno himself, namely religiousness, nationalism, independence, mutual assistance (*gotong royong*) as well as integrity.

Cultivating cultural values since young age holds a significant role in education. It is because the development of a child's personality from an early age will shape their character in life [9]. Another previous study [10] also emphasizes that the education children receive at young age will determine their attitudes, values, and behaviour in the future. This is because elementary school students (6-12 years old) are going through the golden age of their childhood. Physical, cognitive, linguistic, motoric, social, emotional, independence and spiritual potential are best developed within children at this stage of development [11].

Moreover, the golden age is also believed to be the best period to learn a new language. Children are better in acquiring foreign language than adults [12]. A study conducted has demonstrated that younger children (under 7 years old) and older children (7-12 years old) are generally better in acquiring language compared to adults (over 12 years old) given both natural and classroom situation [13]. Furthermore, children will also develop their understanding and appreciation of their own language and culture if they begin to learn foreign language early [14].

Therefore, as an English educator, it is essential to conduct a language learning activity that involve local culture. In line with this, the integration of local culture into English learning will allow learners to experience more relevant English language learning as well as introduce them to indigenous cultures within their own country and worldwide [15]. For that matter, learning media becomes one of the important elements in teaching language that enable cultural knowledge as well.

One of learning media that can support both English learning and cultural knowledge is a storybook. Reading storybooks can be one of the media that supports children's growth. It correlates to the fact that children in golden age engage better in the classroom with three things, which are picture, story, and game [16]. The reason is that storybooks often provide a visual imagination to the readers in form of illustration. Besides, the story in illustrated storybook also contains and teaches the value of life. This will not only attract young learners, but also allow

them to absorb and understand the stories in the book quickly [17]. Hence, it is potential to include local culture-based narrative text with stories in English language teaching materials. By relating local culture with the content in English storybook, students are able to learn English as well as their own culture [18]. It is because the prior knowledge of the topic that they are reading in the storybook can make English learning become more attractive and effective [19].

Many prior studies have explored the use of storybook as learning media for children. [20], [21], [22], and [23] attempted to develop storybooks for young learners using the research and development method. Nonetheless, these studies differ from the present one in terms of content and research participants. Their findings indicated that storybook, whether in digital or printed format, can significantly create an enjoyable learning experience for children and enhance their literacy skills.

In addition, creating storybooks for children that incorporate local culture has gained popularity among education researchers, as evidenced by earlier studies on various culture from different regions in Indonesia. Among these studies were done by [24], [25], [26], and [27] whose researches focus on the culture of Sumatera. Meanwhile, another research [28] created a storybook that draws from the local wisdom of Pematang in Central Java. Similarly, [29] developed a bilingual storybook that attributes the Dayak culture in Central Kalimantan. These former studies have demonstrated that the use of storybooks with local content can provide young learners relevant and meaningful learning experience. The present research stands out from the previous ones in terms of the culture represented in the storybook as content.

The researcher has discovered that there is limited source of literature that discuss the culture of Mojokerto. Although, Mudhafi [4] conducted a study similar to the current one that introduces SDN Purwotengah and Soekarno Center as the place where Soekarno spent his childhood once. His work depicted Soekarno's childhood in Mojokerto in the form of graphic novel mainly for generation Z in order to promote this cultural heritage. The fundamental difference between this previous research and the current one is the goals. The purpose of the current research is to create a storybook that features Soekarno's historical and cultural values at SDN Purwotengah for educational purposes, mainly aiming at young learners. Hence, by virtue of its significance and potential benefits for students, the researcher aims to develop a Mojokerto culture-based storybook as an English leaning media for young learners especially in SDN Purwotengah.

2 Research Method

The research model employed in this research was adapted from the ADDIE model proposed by Branch [30]. ADDIE model initially consists of five stages: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. This research aimed to develop a Mojokerto culture-based English storybook for young learners in SDN Purwotengah. However, this research could not continue to Implementation and Evaluation stage due to the limitation of time and cash. The instruments used in this research were interview guidelines, questionnaire, observation guideline, and documents such as books and lesson plans. In order to give better understanding on the research procedure, this figure below will illustrate the research framework:

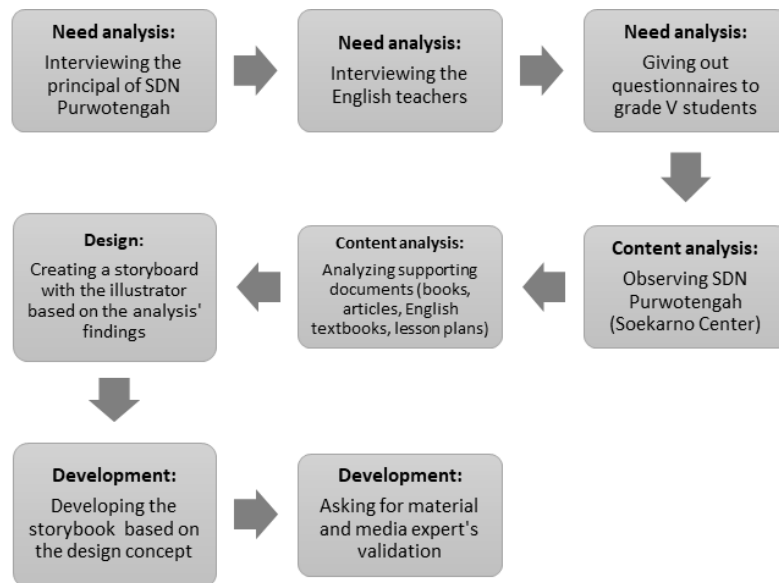


Fig. 1. Research procedure

3 Result And Discussion

2.1 Stage of Analysis

2.1.1 Need Analysis

During need analysis, the researcher gathered information from SDN Purwotengah through interviewing the school principal, interviewing the English teachers, and distributing questionnaire to the fifth grade students in SDN Purwotengah.

The interview with the principal of SDN Purwotengah focused on the school's cultural heritage background, vision, and mission. The interview with the school principal served two purposes: Firstly, it provided information about Soekarno's childhood in Mojokerto, which will contribute to the plot of the storybook. Soekarno's educational journey, moving from *Eerste Inlandsche School* (EIS) to *Europesche Legore School* (ELS), was highlighted. Secondly, the interview emphasized how Soekarno's spirit is integrated into the vision, mission, and goals of SDN Purwotengah as a cultural heritage school. The Geno Center program promotes character development based on Soekarno's values, and the school aims to inspire students to have perseverance and high spirits. The storybook is expected to align with the school's goals, fostering respect for history, national heroes, and foreign cultures, while promoting English proficiency among students.

The researcher conducted interviews with two English teachers from grade 5A and 5B at SDN Purwotengah to understand the students' profile, English skill level, and classroom needs. The interviews were analyzed using Miles & Huberman's data analysis technique, focusing on relevant information based on the interview guidelines. Thematic data analysis was used to explore the data in relation to the investigated themes. The findings revealed that the students

have some language skills, but limited exposure to English lessons hinders their development. To overcome this, the teachers suggested using storybooks as supplementary materials, providing bilingual text, illustrations, and positive moral messages that reflect Soekarno's character values. Introducing new words before reading and incorporating local culture in the storybook were also recommended to enhance its effectiveness and promote language proficiency and cultural awareness among students. The storybook would align with the school's program that aims to promote literacy about Soekarno among students and teachers.

The need analysis questionnaire was distributed to 49 students from both 5A and 5B classes at SDN Purwotengah. The majority of students (95.9%) liked reading illustrated storybooks, and 73.5% showed interest in reading storybooks about local culture. Moreover, 61.2% of students enjoyed learning English through storybooks, but 38.8% expressed disinterest, which could be due to limited exposure to English storybooks. Most students (51%) had experience reading English storybooks, with 55.1% accessing them through the internet. However, 71.4% did not own any English storybooks, indicating a gap in their exposure to physical books. Regarding Mojokerto culture-based stories, 53.1% of students had experience reading them. The majority (81.6%) did not remember the titles, highlighting the need for more promotion of local culture-based stories. Within the third dimension, students showed a strong interest in English storybooks featuring elements of Mojokerto culture (75.5%) and specifically focused on Soekarno's childhood (95.9%). Students' interest in exploring local cultural themes and historical figures reflects their enthusiasm for incorporating local culture-based storybooks in English lessons, which can promote language development, cultural awareness, character building, and a sense of pride among students.

2.1.2 Content Analysis

In the content analysis stage, the researcher did an observation in SDN Purwotengah, specifically the site of Soekarno Center. In addition, supporting documents like books about Soekarno's childhood in Mojokerto and the English textbook as well as lesson plans were analyzed to help determining the elements of the storybook, such as characters, settings, and plot.

The observation for content analysis was conducted at SDN Purwotengah. The Soekarno Center, a specific building within the school, is a significant cultural heritage site. In front of the building stands a gold statue of Soekarno wearing his school uniform, symbolizing his presence during his golden age. Beside the statue is a small monument called "*tetenger*," highlighting important places from Soekarno's life in Mojokerto. The classroom within the Soekarno Center is preserved in its original state, featuring classic school desks and seats facing a blackboard decorated with Javanese scripts. The side walls of the building are adorned with black and white portraits of Soekarno, including one of him as a child, wearing a traditional Javanese outfit similar to the school uniform currently worn by students at SDN Purwotengah. Additionally, a copy of a letter issued by the *Dutch East Indies* government supports the fact that Soekarno spent his early life in Mojokerto, specifically at *Ongko Loro* school (now SDN Purwotengah). These details are essential for creating an authentic setting and well-defined characters in the storybook.

The document analysis included two types of documents: sources about Soekarno's childhood in Mojokerto and English learning materials for fifth-grade students. Information about

Soekarno's upbringing, challenges, and determination was gathered from books and articles. The English textbook and lesson plans used by teachers at SDN Purwotengah provided insights into the students' language level and learning objectives. These findings were essential in developing a relevant and effective Mojokerto culture-based storybook for English learning.

2.2 Stage of Design

In the design stage, the researcher considered several important elements of the storybook, such as format, plot, characters, setting, moral value, language style, and illustration [31]. The format chosen for the storybook is a square shape with full-color illustrations and a total of 32 pages. The plot revolves around Soekarno's childhood in Mojokerto during the Dutch colonial era, highlighting his determination, passion for reading, and the support of his loving parents. The storybook aims to inspire young learners to embrace Soekarno's character values. The characters are depicted with strong characterization, making them relatable and memorable to the readers [32]. The plot follows a narrative non-fiction style, combining real events and figures to both entertain and inspire the readers [33]. The title of the storybook is "Little Soekarno," encouraging young learners to embody Soekarno's positive qualities. A storyboard and rough illustrations were also created to guide the illustrator in bringing the storybook to life.

The storybook developed in this research is designed to be bilingual, allowing students to compare and connect words, concepts, and structures in different languages, supporting language transfer and promoting cross-cultural understanding [34-35]. It serves as a supplementary material to complement existing learning resources, incorporating relevant vocabularies and language aspects from the English lessons. The storybook aims to enhance young learners' vocabulary and reading comprehension skills, offering mini-games such as matching words with pictures and a maze game for interactive learning.

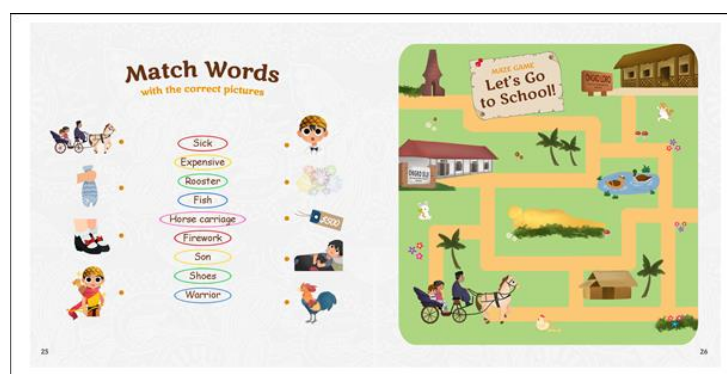


Fig. 2. Vocabulary and reading comprehension activities

The matching words with pictures activity helps students associate words with pictures, fostering vocabulary understanding [36]. The vocabularies in the activity are related to various topics covered in their English lessons. On the other hand, the maze game enhances reading comprehension skills and critical thinking, making connections between the activity and the story [37]. This game aligns with the learning material of giving directions and stimulates logical and concrete thinking through visual elements (see figure 2).

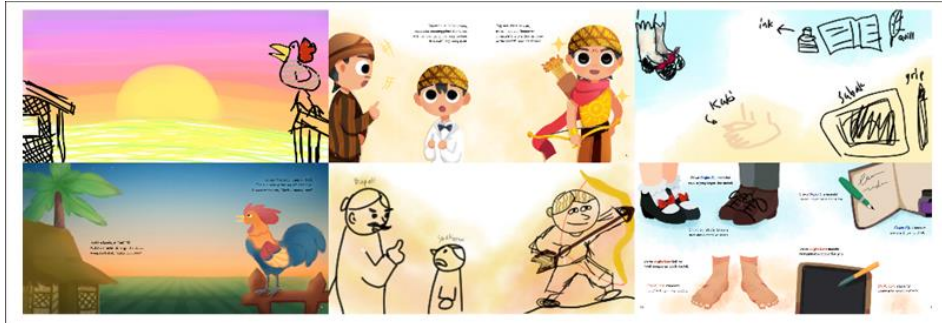


Fig. 3. Storyboard and sketching

To guide the illustration process, the researcher created a storyboard containing the story's script and descriptions for each illustration [32]. The researcher also created sketches so that the illustrator could redraw the scenes based on the researcher's concept, resulting in visually appealing illustrations for the storybook (see fig. 3).

2.3 Stage of Development

During the development stage, the researcher used Photoshop CS4 to edit and layout the illustrations for the storybook. The front and back covers were edited, and the illustrations were adjusted to fit the pages appropriately. The Acme font was used for the cover to add elegance, while Comic Sans font was chosen for the narrative to create a playful and child-friendly vibe. The text size was set to 13 pt. to ensure readability and avoid overcrowding of the pages. Consistent 2 cm margins were applied on all sides for a neat and organized appearance (see fig. 4).

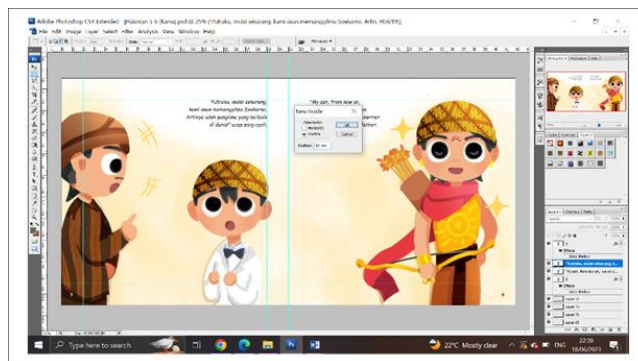


Fig. 4. Setting margins and inputting texts

The narrative was added based on the storyboard script, and page numbers were included for easy navigation. The layout process was carefully executed to achieve balance and harmony between text and illustrations, resulting in an aesthetically pleasing and engaging storybook. The final draft of the storybook was then printed in full color with a soft cover.

2.4 Experts' Validation

For the validation stage, two experts, a material expert, and a media expert were involved. They assessed the printed storybook using a validation rubric provided by the researcher. The average scores from the experts' evaluations were calculated and converted into percentages to determine the storybook's feasibility and quality. The results would indicate whether the storybook met the requirements as a learning media incorporating local culture and suitable for use during English lessons.

The researcher conducted expert validations for the storybook. The material expert suggested improvements in language and visual aspects, such as reviewing grammatical sentences and adjusting text visibility. The media expert recommended refining the layout and typography, ensuring better balance and visibility of bilingual texts.

Despite some weaknesses, both experts praised the storybook's visually appealing illustrations and suitable vocabulary for young learners. The material expert gave a 100% feasibility score, while the media expert's validation achieved 95.65%. The average score of 98.25% indicates an "excellent" category for the storybook as an English learning media for young learners. Improvements are needed before implementing the storybook in the classroom.

4 Conclusions

This research aimed to develop a local culture-based storybook for English for Young Learners (EYL) in SDN Purwotengah, highlighting the cultural and historical values of Mojokerto, Soekarno's childhood home. The ADDIE model was adapted with stages of Analysis, Design, and Development, excluding Implementation and Evaluation due to limitations. Students showed interest in storybooks incorporating Mojokerto culture, but teachers had not utilized them in English classrooms.

The storybook "Little Soekarno" underwent expert validation, receiving a high feasibility score of 98.25% and positive feedback. The storybook's strengths include eye-catching illustrations, simple language, fun activities, and elements of local culture, fostering students' appreciation for their heritage. Improvements in bilingual text layout, grammar, and clear instructions were suggested.

Teachers can use the storybook as a supplementary resource for EYL classrooms, enhancing language skills and cultural understanding. Students can benefit from the storybook's immersive and interactive learning experience. Future researchers are encouraged to explore other cultures and continue to study the storybook's effectiveness through implementation and evaluation stages.

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