

Development of Picture Storybooks to Improve Elementary School Students' Reading Literacy

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Article	Abstract
<p>Keywords: Picture storybooks; Reading literacy; Elementary school; Instructional media.</p> <p>Article History Received: Nov 12, 2025 Reviewed: Des 11, 2025 Accepted: Jan 11, 2026 Published: Feb 03, 2026</p>	<p><i>This study aims to examine the development of picture storybooks as instructional media for improving elementary school students' reading literacy. The research employed a literature study (library research) approach by reviewing various scientific journals, books, and relevant academic sources concerning reading literacy, instructional media, and picture storybooks at the elementary school level. Data collection was conducted through documentation of various literature sources, which were then analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach.</i></p> <p><i>The results of the study indicate that the use of picture storybooks can increase reading interest, reading comprehension skills, learning motivation, and language skills among elementary school students. Picture storybooks also help students understand learning materials more concretely through the combination of text and engaging visual illustrations. Furthermore, the development of picture storybooks that are aligned with the characteristics of elementary school students can create a more enjoyable and interactive learning environment. Therefore, the development of picture storybooks is appropriate to be used as one of the instructional media to support the improvement of literacy culture in elementary schools..</i></p>



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INTRODUCTION

Elementary education serves as the primary foundation for developing students' literacy skills. One of the fundamental skills that must be developed from an early age is reading. Reading is not merely an activity of recognizing letters and combining words but is also a process of understanding meaning, acquiring information, and developing students' thinking abilities. Strong reading skills help students understand various subjects and improve academic achievement.

Reading ability is one of the important competencies that must be possessed by elementary school students because it serves as the foundation for the development of learning abilities at subsequent educational levels. Poor reading literacy skills

will have an impact on students' low ability to understand learning materials. Currently, the reading literacy skills of Indonesian students remain a serious concern. Based on the results of the **Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)**, Indonesian students' reading ability is still below the average of many other countries. This condition indicates that the reading culture among students still needs significant improvement. Low reading literacy is influenced by various factors, such as students' lack of interest in reading, the limited availability of engaging learning media, and the use of monotonous teaching methods.

According to Rahim (2018), reading interest is a strong motivation that arises within an individual to engage in reading activities consciously and voluntarily. Students who possess a high interest in reading tend to understand learning materials more easily than students who have a lower interest in reading. Therefore, innovations in learning media are needed to attract students' attention and encourage them to read. One instructional medium that can be used to improve elementary school students' reading literacy is the **picture storybook**. A picture storybook is a medium that combines story texts with illustrations, making it capable of attracting students' attention. The presence of images in storybooks helps students understand the content of stories more easily and concretely. In addition, attractive colors and illustrations can increase students' motivation to learn.

According to Nurgiyantoro (2018), a picture storybook is children's reading material that presents a combination of text and visual illustrations to help children understand the content of a story. This medium is highly suitable for use at the elementary school level because elementary school students generally prefer visual and attractive materials.

The use of picture storybooks in learning offers numerous benefits. In addition to increasing reading interest, this medium can help improve reading comprehension skills, expand vocabulary, stimulate students' imagination, and support children's emotional development. Through illustrations, students can more easily understand the plot of a story as well as the moral messages conveyed in the reading material. Research conducted by **Astuty, Ali, and Ndau (2022)** showed that the use of interactive digital storybook media was able to increase elementary school students' reading interest. The study revealed an increase in students' reading interest from **45% to 90%** after the implementation of digital story media in learning activities. These findings demonstrate that story-based media have a significant influence on the development of students' reading literacy.

Furthermore, research conducted by **Fauziah and Mustadi (2021)** explained that picture story media can help improve elementary school students' reading comprehension skills because students are more interested in reading texts

accompanied by visual illustrations. Attractive images help students understand story content more quickly.

The findings of previous studies indicate that picture storybooks have considerable potential to be developed as learning media that support the improvement of elementary school students' reading literacy. However, the development of picture storybooks must still consider students' characteristics, learning objectives, and curriculum needs to ensure that the media produced can be utilized effectively.

Based on the description above, this study aims to examine the development of picture storybooks as a medium for improving elementary school students' reading literacy through a literature review of various relevant studies. The results of this study are expected to provide insights and references for educators in developing innovative and engaging learning media to foster students' reading literacy culture.

METHOD

This study employed a **library research** method using a qualitative approach. Library research is a research method conducted by collecting and analyzing information from various written sources such as books, scientific journals, articles, research reports, and other relevant documents related to the topic under study.

The purpose of using the library research method in this study was to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the development of picture storybooks as learning media for improving elementary school students' reading literacy. Through this approach, researchers can identify, review, and synthesize findings from previous studies related to picture storybooks and reading literacy.

The data sources used in this study consisted of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included scientific journal articles discussing picture storybooks and reading literacy at the elementary school level. Secondary sources included books, proceedings, theses, dissertations, and other supporting references relevant to the research topic.

Data collection was conducted using documentation techniques. Researchers collected various references related to picture storybooks, reading literacy, and learning media in elementary schools. The collected data were then classified based on themes and research objectives.

The data analysis technique used was **qualitative descriptive analysis**. The analysis process involved several stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by selecting information relevant to the research objectives. Subsequently, the data were organized systematically and interpreted to produce a comprehensive description of the development of picture storybooks as a medium for improving elementary school students' reading literacy.

Through this method, researchers were able to synthesize findings from various studies and formulate conclusions regarding the effectiveness of picture storybooks in supporting the development of students' reading literacy skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Development of Picture Storybooks as Learning Media

Picture storybooks are one of the learning media that combine text and visual illustrations in a single integrated unit. This medium is designed to help students understand story content more easily through the support of attractive images and simple language appropriate to children's developmental stages.

The development of picture storybooks for elementary school students must consider several important aspects, including content suitability, language use, visual appearance, and alignment with students' characteristics. Story content should contain educational values, moral messages, and information relevant to students' daily lives.

The visual aspect is one of the main strengths of picture storybooks. Attractive illustrations can increase students' interest in reading and help them understand story content more concretely. Elementary school students generally tend to be interested in colorful visual materials and images that reflect situations close to their daily experiences. Therefore, the illustrations used in picture storybooks should be designed according to students' developmental characteristics and learning needs. In addition to visual elements, language also plays an important role in the development of picture storybooks. The language used should be simple, communicative, and appropriate to students' level of understanding. Sentences that are too complex can hinder students' comprehension of the reading material. Consequently, story texts should be arranged using language that is easy for elementary school students to understand while still conveying educational messages effectively.

Several studies have demonstrated that picture storybooks can improve students' reading literacy skills. The combination of text and illustrations helps students identify main ideas, understand storylines, and interpret the meaning of the reading material. Furthermore, picture storybooks can encourage students to become more active in reading activities because they provide a more engaging reading experience compared to text-only materials.

According to Mustadi (2020), instructional media that integrate visual elements can increase students' attention and motivation during the learning process. The use of illustrations in picture storybooks helps students build connections between text and visual representations, thereby facilitating the comprehension process.

Research findings by Fauziah and Mustadi (2021) revealed that the use of picture storybooks significantly improved students' reading comprehension skills. Students who learned using picture storybooks showed better reading achievement than students who learned using conventional reading materials. This finding indicates that picture storybooks can function as effective learning media in literacy instruction.

The Role of Picture Storybooks in Improving Reading Literacy

Reading literacy refers to an individual's ability to understand, use, evaluate, and reflect on written texts to achieve specific goals, develop knowledge, and participate actively in society. Reading literacy is one of the fundamental competencies that students must master from an early age.

Picture storybooks contribute significantly to improving reading literacy because they present information through both verbal and visual channels simultaneously. This dual representation enables students to process information more effectively and retain learning content more easily.

Through picture storybooks, students not only learn to read but also learn to understand the meaning of texts, identify messages, analyze story events, and develop critical thinking skills. Storybooks can also foster students' imagination and creativity because they are encouraged to visualize story situations and characters through illustrations.

In literacy learning activities, teachers can utilize picture storybooks in various ways, such as read-aloud sessions, guided reading activities, group discussions, and independent reading assignments. These activities can create a more interactive and enjoyable learning atmosphere for students.

Research conducted by Astuty, Ali, and Ndau (2022) demonstrated that the use of digital storybook media significantly increased elementary school students' reading interest. Students became more enthusiastic about participating in literacy activities because the stories presented were more engaging and interactive. Increased reading interest ultimately contributed to the improvement of students' reading literacy skills.

In addition to improving reading literacy, picture storybooks also support character education. Stories containing positive values can help students understand moral concepts such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, cooperation, and empathy. Through characters and story events, students can learn to apply positive values in their daily lives.

Picture storybooks also provide opportunities for teachers to integrate literacy learning with other subjects. For example, stories related to environmental

conservation can be linked to science learning, while stories about cultural diversity can be connected to social studies learning. This integration helps students understand concepts holistically and contextually.

The development of picture storybooks should therefore not only focus on aesthetic aspects but also consider educational content and learning objectives. Storybooks designed according to curriculum demands and students' needs can serve as effective instructional media for improving literacy skills and supporting the overall learning process.

Advantages of Picture Storybooks in Elementary School Learning

Picture storybooks possess several advantages that make them suitable as learning media at the elementary school level. One of the primary advantages is their ability to attract students' attention through colorful illustrations and engaging storylines. These visual elements encourage students to become more interested in reading activities.

Another advantage is that picture storybooks facilitate students' comprehension of reading materials. Illustrations function as visual supports that help students interpret information contained in the text. As a result, students can understand story content more easily and accurately.

Picture storybooks are also capable of increasing students' motivation to learn. Students generally show greater enthusiasm when learning materials are presented in a visually appealing and enjoyable format. This increased motivation positively influences students' participation during classroom learning activities.

Furthermore, picture storybooks contribute to the development of language skills. Through reading activities, students can expand their vocabulary, improve sentence comprehension, and enhance communication skills. Exposure to various story texts also helps students develop writing skills and critical thinking abilities.

Research findings indicate that the use of picture storybooks creates a more enjoyable learning environment. Students feel less pressured during reading activities because learning is presented through stories and illustrations that stimulate curiosity and imagination.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that picture storybooks play a significant role in improving elementary school students' reading literacy. The integration of text and visual illustrations enables students to understand reading materials more effectively and enhances their engagement in literacy activities.

The results support previous studies demonstrating that visual-based learning media are more effective in increasing students' reading interest and comprehension than conventional instructional materials. Picture storybooks provide concrete representations that help students connect abstract concepts with real-life experiences.

The findings also indicate that picture storybooks can increase students' motivation to learn. Attractive illustrations, simple language, and story content that is relevant to students' daily experiences contribute to creating a more enjoyable learning environment. Students become more enthusiastic about participating in learning activities because they perceive reading as an enjoyable and meaningful experience rather than merely an academic obligation.

In addition, picture storybooks support the development of students' language skills. Through regular reading activities, students are exposed to a variety of vocabulary, sentence structures, and language expressions that contribute to the improvement of their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. This finding is consistent with the view that literacy development should be integrated into all learning activities at the elementary school level.

Another important finding is that picture storybooks contribute to character education. Stories containing moral values provide opportunities for students to learn positive behaviors through the experiences of story characters. Values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, discipline, and empathy can be introduced naturally through story narratives. Consequently, picture storybooks not only function as literacy media but also as tools for character development.

The results of this study further indicate that teachers play a crucial role in maximizing the benefits of picture storybooks. Effective utilization of picture storybooks requires teachers to design learning activities that encourage active student participation, such as storytelling sessions, guided reading, discussions, reflection activities, and literacy projects. Through these activities, students can develop deeper comprehension and critical thinking skills.

Although picture storybooks offer numerous advantages, several challenges remain in their development and implementation. One of the primary challenges is the need for storybooks that align with curriculum objectives and students' developmental characteristics. In addition, teachers need sufficient competencies in selecting, developing, and utilizing picture storybooks effectively in classroom learning.

Therefore, collaboration among teachers, schools, parents, and educational stakeholders is necessary to support the development and utilization of high-quality picture storybooks. Such collaboration can contribute to strengthening literacy culture and improving students' reading literacy skills in a sustainable manner.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this literature study, it can be concluded that picture storybooks are effective learning media for improving elementary school students' reading literacy. The integration of text and visual illustrations helps students understand reading materials more easily, increases reading interest, enhances learning motivation, and supports language development.

The development of picture storybooks should consider students' characteristics, curriculum demands, educational values, and learning objectives to ensure optimal effectiveness. In addition, picture storybooks can support character education by introducing positive values through story content.

The findings of this study indicate that the use of picture storybooks can create a more engaging, interactive, and meaningful learning environment. Therefore, picture storybooks are highly recommended as instructional media to support literacy learning and strengthen literacy culture in elementary schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Teachers are encouraged to utilize picture storybooks more extensively as learning media to improve students' reading literacy.
2. Schools should provide support and facilities for the development and use of picture storybooks in learning activities.
3. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct further studies on the development of digital picture storybooks and their impact on students' literacy skills.

Educational stakeholders should support literacy programs that integrate innovative and engaging learning media for elementary school students.

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