

Developing a Bilingual Digital Story to Promote Honesty and Environmental Awareness in Natural Tourism Settings

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ABSTRACT

EFL reading motivation among Indonesian junior high school students remains persistently low, compounded by a scarcity of culturally relevant and digitally engaging learning materials. This Design and Development Research (DDR) study aimed to develop and evaluate the feasibility of a bilingual digital illustrated storybook integrating moral values (honesty and environmental awareness) with Malang's local nature tourism contexts as narrative settings. The ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation) guided the development process. Data was collected through teacher interviews, classroom observations, expert validation checklists, and a 9-item Likert-scale student response questionnaire. The product was tested with 42 seventh-grade students at one of Junior High School at Malang, East Java, Indonesia. Expert validation yielded high feasibility scores in both language quality (98/100) and content relevance (95/100). Field testing produced an overall positive student response of 78.8% (mean = 3.94/5), with media accessibility (M = 4.17) and storyline clarity (M = 4.10) rated highest. These findings confirm that locally contextualized bilingual digital storybooks are a feasible and well-received supplementary resource for supporting EFL reading engagement and character education at the junior high school level.

Keywords: Bilingual digital storybook; EFL reading skills; Character education; ADDIE development model; Local nature tourism; Junior High School

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's consistently low PISA reading scores, with the country ranking 72nd out of 79 in the 2022 assessment, signal a persistent, systemic challenge in developing reading literacy at the secondary school level (OECD, 2023). This challenge is particularly acute for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, who must simultaneously navigate a second language and limited access to engaging, contextually relevant learning materials. At the junior high school level, students frequently demonstrate low reading motivation, poor vocabulary retention, and passive engagement with conventional text-based resources (Laura et al., 2023; Satriani, 2018). These difficulties are compounded by instructional approaches that fail to account for the diverse learning needs and cultural backgrounds of Indonesian adolescents, resulting in disengagement from reading as both an academic and recreational activity

Digital media has emerged as a promising vehicle for EFL literacy development, with e-books, interactive applications, and illustrated storybooks demonstrating measurable improvements in reading comprehension and learner motivation (Izzati et al., 2020). Within this landscape, digital storytelling has been applied across a range of literacy outcomes: vocabulary acquisition (Maya et al., 2022), speaking fluency (Hidayat et al., 2024), and narrative comprehension (Febriyanti & Hidayat, 2023). Bilingual formats specifically have been shown to reinforce cross-linguistic scaffolding, support vocabulary transfer between L1

and L2, and strengthen students' cultural identity alongside target language development (Clenton et al., 2025; Zhou, 2024). However, these strands of research have developed largely in isolation: studies on digital storybooks address literacy skills, studies on bilingual materials address language transfer, and studies on character education address moral development, but no study to date has integrated all three dimensions, namely bilingual scaffolding, character education, and local geographic context, within a single DDR-developed product. This tripartite gap is significant: Place-Based Education (PBE) theory argues that learning anchored to geographically and culturally familiar environments enhances intrinsic motivation and deepens knowledge retention (Føns, 2025; Yemini et al., 2025), while sociocultural theory posits that meaningful language acquisition occurs when input is embedded in contexts students recognize as personally and socially relevant (Vygotsky, 1978). The absence of a product that operationalizes both principles simultaneously represents a missed pedagogical opportunity, particularly for Indonesian junior high school students whose local natural environments are rich in ecological and cultural value yet remain largely absent from EFL learning materials.

This study aims to develop a bilingual digital illustrated storybook that integrates moral values (honesty and environmental awareness) with local nature tourism contexts from Malang, East Java, as a supplementary English reading resource for seventh-grade students at the junior high school level. The selection of junior high school as the target level is informed by the critical developmental stage at which reading habits and motivational orientations toward language learning are formed (Richtel, 2025), and by the documented absence of locally-contextualized bilingual EFL materials at this level in the Indonesian curriculum. To guide the development and evaluation process, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the expert-validated feasibility of the developed bilingual digital storybook in terms of language quality and content relevance?
2. What are seventh-grade students' perceptions of the storybook's content, illustrations, and media accessibility?
3. To what extent does the storybook integrate moral values and local nature tourism contexts in a manner perceived as pedagogically engaging by the target learners?

This study makes three distinct contributions to the field of EFL instructional media development. First, it produces the first DDR-ADDIE-developed bilingual digital storybook that simultaneously addresses EFL literacy, character education, and local geographic contextualization for Indonesian junior high school students, an integration that prior studies have addressed only in isolated combinations. Second, it operationalizes Malang's local nature tourism sites as primary narrative settings, grounding language learning in environments that are geographically familiar and culturally meaningful to the target learners, thereby applying Place-Based Education principles within an EFL product development context. Third, it generates empirical feasibility evidence through a two-stage validation process comprising expert assessment across language and content dimensions and structured field testing with 42 seventh-grade students using a standardized 9-item instrument, providing a replicable evidence base for similar localized EFL media development efforts across Indonesia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of this bilingual digital illustrated storybook is grounded in three complementary theoretical frameworks. First, Krashen's Input Hypothesis posits that language acquisition occurs when learners encounter comprehensible input slightly beyond their current proficiency level, referred to as $i+1$ (Luo, 2024). In this study, bilingual scaffolding that presents narratives in both Indonesian and English operationalizes this principle by anchoring unfamiliar English vocabulary and structures to familiar L1 meanings, thereby reducing cognitive load while maintaining productive challenge. Second, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes that learning is most effective when it occurs within meaningful social and cultural contexts that learners recognize as personally relevant (Vygotsky, 1978). The use of Malang's local nature tourism sites as narrative settings directly applies this principle, positioning cultural familiarity as a motivational scaffold for language engagement. Third, Place-Based Education (PBE) theory argues that grounding curriculum content in students' local geographic and ecological environments strengthens intrinsic motivation, deepens knowledge retention, and fosters a sense of environmental stewardship (Yemini et al., 2025). Together, these three frameworks form the theoretical foundation for the tripartite design of this product: bilingual input scaffolding, culturally situated narrative, and locally grounded environmental content.

A substantial body of research confirms the effectiveness of digital storytelling as a medium for EFL skill development. Studies focusing on vocabulary acquisition demonstrate that digital storybook formats consistently improve word recognition, contextual vocabulary use, and reading comprehension among young EFL learners (Hidayat et al., 2024; Maya et al., 2022). Research on speaking skills similarly reports positive outcomes when digital narratives are used as production scaffolds in EFL classrooms (Hidayat et al., 2024). In the domain of reading comprehension specifically, picture storybooks and illustrated digital media have been shown to reduce decoding anxiety and increase text engagement among junior high school students (Febriyanti & Hidayat, 2023).

Parallel lines of research have examined bilingual storybooks and character education materials separately. Bilingual storybook formats have been shown to support cross-linguistic transfer and affirm learners' cultural identities, while engagement with EFL storybooks has been linked to improved reading self-efficacy and proficiency among young learners (Tsang & Yeung, 2024). For early childhood language development, demonstrating that dual-language formats support cross-linguistic transfer and identity affirmation in Indonesian learners. In the domain of character education, interactive e-books and digital learning media have been used to embed moral values within Islamic education and early childhood curricula (Yumna et al., 2024), confirming that narrative-based moral integration is pedagogically effective when the content is developmentally appropriate.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The research employed the Design and Development Research (DDR) method to create digitally illustrated storybooks based on the moral values of local tourism for junior high school students. According to (Govindasamy et al., 2023), The Design and Development Research (DDR) method is defined as “the systematic study of the design, development, and evaluation process to establish an empirical basis for the creation of instructional products and tools and the new or improved models that govern their development”. The researcher used design and development research because this research focused on developing digitally illustrated storybooks based on moral values for junior high school students. The setting of the stories was taken from various natural attractions in Malang. This research aims to address the need for engaging value-oriented learning resources by focusing on both content and digital design to enhance the learning experience.

This research used the ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation) model to develop a digital illustrated storybook (Branch, 2009). The ADDIE model was chosen because one of the systematic approaches commonly used in the development of learning media, which includes the stages of problem and needs analysis, design, product development, product implementation, and evaluation of the results that have been developed. By applying this model, it is expected that the digital storybook products produced can meet the learning needs and be suitable for use by junior high school students.

2.2. Research Procedures

In this research, the researcher followed the five stages of the DDR procedures, which consist of five stages: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. The explanation of the procedure at each stage is as follows:

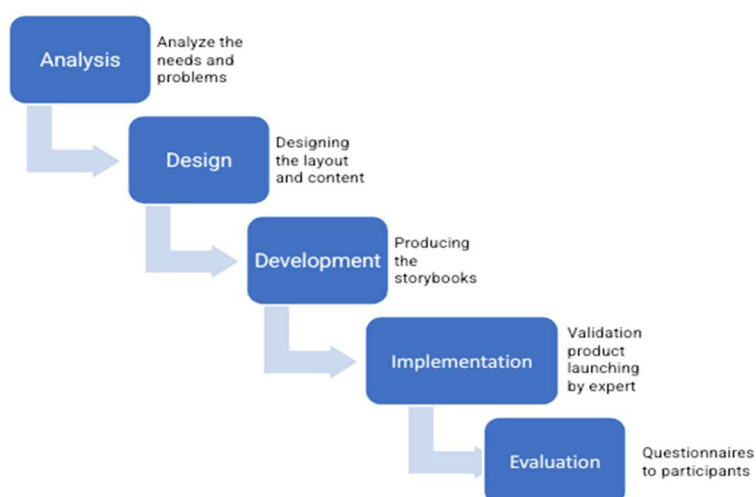


Figure 1. ADDIE Model

2.2.1 Analysis

The analysis was conducted by conducting an interview with a teacher, distributing questionnaires to students and doing observation. The aim of analysis is to find out the problems and needs related to the development of a digital illustrated storybook. In addition, the interview with the teacher was done to collect information about how English was taught in the classroom. In observation, the researcher came to the classroom and saw directly how the classroom atmosphere was during teaching and learning.

2.2.2 Design

In the design stage, the researcher underlined the main activity of designing the stories. Design involved creating storylines, illustrations that align with the identified values, and the layout.

2.2.3 Development

The development stage focused on producing the storybooks, incorporating feedback from teachers and experts. The process began with the creation of an initial draft for the story, which serves as the foundation for the entire project. When the draft was complete, the next step was to convert this written narrative into a digital flipbook format. To facilitate the creation of digital illustrated storybooks, the researcher used applications that can be used to create illustrated storybooks, such as Canva, CapCut, and Heyzine. This approach would not only enhance the storytelling experience but also allow for interactive features that can enrich the reader's engagement with the material. In the development stage, expert validation was conducted to evaluate whether the storybooks were ready for launch, ensuring that they meet educational standards and are appropriate for the target audience.

2.2.4 Implementation

In the implementation stage, the researcher completed the validation assessment before launching the product. The implementation stage involved field testing of introducing the storybooks to a selected group of junior high school students. In this stage, the storybooks were introduced to a sample group of junior high school students at one of Junior High School at Malang through questionnaires, as well as to see the readers' feedback after they read.

2.2.5 Evaluation

In the evaluation stage, the storybooks were given to a sample of junior high school students at one of Junior High School at Malang. The students were given questionnaires to explore their perception of the storybooks. The evaluation phase was conducted so the researchers could get some suggestions to revise the storybooks.

2.3 Research Participants

This study involved two categories of participants: expert validators and student field testers. Expert validation was conducted by two specialists selected through purposive sampling based on their academic qualifications and domain expertise. The first validator holds a doctoral degree in English Language Teaching with a minimum of ten years of experience in EFL curriculum and materials development. The second validator holds a doctoral degree in Educational Technology with specialization in instructional media design and digital learning tools. Both validators were affiliated with accredited higher education institutions in East Java, Indonesia, ensuring contextual familiarity with the target educational environment. Field testing involved 42 seventh-grade students (aged 12 to 13 years) at a state junior high school in Malang, East Java, Indonesia, hereafter referred to as School X. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on three criteria: (1) enrollment in the seventh grade during the 2023/2024 academic year, as this cohort represents the primary target level for the developed storybook; (2) access to a personal smartphone or tablet device, given that the digital flipbook format requires a mobile-compatible reading platform; and (3) current enrollment in English language instruction following the Merdeka Curriculum framework, ensuring alignment between the storybook's pedagogical design and the participants' active learning context. Students with documented learning disabilities that would impair reading assessment were excluded from participation.

School X was selected as the research site for four reasons. First, it is a representative urban state junior high school serving a socioeconomically mixed student population, increasing the relevance of findings to the broader urban SMP context in Indonesia. Second, the school possesses adequate digital infrastructure, including stable internet connectivity and a sufficient ratio of personal devices among students, which are prerequisite conditions for the implementation of a digital flipbook product. Third, the English teaching staff at the school had previously expressed interest in piloting locally contextualized EFL supplementary materials, ensuring instructional receptivity and cooperative access during data collection. Fourth, proximity to Malang's nature tourism sites, which serve as the narrative settings of the storybook, was considered contextually advantageous for students' prior familiarity with the locations depicted in the stories. The sample size of 42 students is consistent with the field-testing phase of DDR studies, in which small-to-medium purposive samples are considered appropriate for evaluating product feasibility and learner perception rather than for producing statistically generalizable results (Creswell, W. John & Creswell, 2022). Generalizability across broader populations is acknowledged as a limitation of this study and is identified as a priority for future research.

2.4 Data Analysis

This study employed two parallel analytical approaches corresponding to the qualitative and quantitative data streams collected across the ADDIE development stages.

2.4.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data derived from teacher interviews and classroom observations conducted during the Analysis stage were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-phase procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke, as cited in Ahmed et al (2025): (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of interview transcripts and observation notes; (2) generation of initial codes reflecting recurring patterns in students' reading difficulties and teacher-identified instructional needs; (3) searching for themes by clustering related codes into broader categories; (4) reviewing and refining themes against the full dataset; (5) defining and naming each theme with descriptive labels; and (6) producing a written thematic account that directly informed the design specifications of the storybook. The primary themes extracted from this phase, including low reading motivation, limited vocabulary engagement, and insufficient culturally relevant materials, served as the need-based foundation for product development decisions in the subsequent Design and Development stages.

2.4.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data from two sources were analyzed using descriptive statistics: (1) the expert validation checklists completed by two specialist validators, and (2) the 9-item Likert-scale student response questionnaire administered during field testing (n=42). For expert validation data, scores were aggregated per dimension (language quality and content relevance) and converted to percentages using the following formula:

$$P = (\Sigma X / (N \times S_{max})) \times 100\%$$

Where P is the percentage score, ΣX is the sum of all validator scores for a given dimension, N is the number of assessment items in that dimension, and Smax is the maximum score per item. The resulting percentage was then interpreted against the feasibility criteria presented in Table 1. For student response data, each of the 9 Likert items was scored on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Item-level means and overall means were calculated, and the overall mean was converted to a percentage using:

$$P = (\text{Mean} / 5) \times 100\%$$

The percentage score was interpreted using the same five-category feasibility criteria adapted from (Nirmala & Mujahidawati, 2025), as presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Feasibility Interpretation Criteria

Percentage Score	Category	Decision
81% to 100%	Very Good	Eligible for use without revision
61% to 80%	Good	Eligible for use with minor revision
41% to 60%	Sufficient	Not eligible; major revision required
21% to 40%	Poor	Not eligible; product redesign required
0% to 20%	Very Poor	Not eligible; product discontinued

4. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The findings revealed several key issues in students' reading activities at one of Junior High School at Malang. Interviews with the English teacher indicated that students often struggle with spelling, vocabulary comprehension, and low motivation, compounded by technical issues in digital learning. Questionnaire results confirmed that nearly half of the students rarely read storybooks, and many found difficulties with unfamiliar vocabulary. To address these needs, a bilingual digital illustrated storybook was designed and developed with relatable characters, simple vocabulary, and moral values embedded in stories set in Malang's nature tourism sites. Expert validation showed excellent results in both language (score: 98) and content (score: 95). Field testing with 42 students indicated positive responses, with an overall score of 78.8%, especially highlighting easy accessibility and engaging storyline. These results suggest that bilingual digital illustrated storybooks are perceived positively by students in terms of content accessibility, storyline clarity, and motivational value, supporting their feasibility as a supplementary EFL reading resource.

Table 2 Student Response Questionnaire Results: Field Testing with Seventh-Grade Students at School X (n = 42)

No	Criteria	Score					AVG (Out of 5)
		1	2	3	4	5	
The Content of the Story							
1.	The story you read was interesting.			10 23,8%	20 47,6%	12 28,9%	4.05
2.	The story that has been read uses simple and easy-to-understand language.			8 19%	25 59,5%	9 21,4%	4.02
3.	The plot in the story is simple and easy to understand.			10 23,8%	18 42,9%	14 33,3%	4.10
4.	The moral message conveyed through the story is easy to understand.			16 38,1%	12 28,6%	14 33,3%	3.95

5.	The characters in the stories are interesting and true to real life.	2 4,8%	14 33%	18 42,9%	8 19%	3.76
6.	The stories I read helped me learn more about nature tourism in The Greater Malang area.	3 7,1%	13 31%	16 38,1%	10 23,8%	3.79
Illustration and Media						
7.	Illustrations in stories are interesting and bring stories to life.		15 35,7%	18 42,9%	9 21,4%	3.86
8.	The media used to convey the message is easily accessible.		10 23,8%	15 35,7%	17 40,5%	4.17
9.	The voiceover is clear and understandable.	2 4,8%	17 40,5%	11 26,2%	12 28,6%	3.79
Total						35.49
Final average: total score /total statement = 35.49/9 = 3.94						
Percentage: (3.94 ÷ 5) × 100% = 78,8%						

Notes:**Score Indicator of Score Quality****5 (81%-100%) Very good****4 (61%-80%) Good****3 (41%-60%) Enough****2 (21%-40%) Bad****1 (0%-20%) Very bad****Scale: 1: Strongly Disagree | 2: Disagree | 3: Undecided | 4: Agree | 5:****Strongly Agree****3.2. ANALYSIS**

After completing the implementation phase, the researcher received positive feedback from the students. Based on the field testing results, most students responded positively to both the content and illustrations of the storybooks. This indicated that the bilingual digital illustrated storybooks were engaging, appropriate for their grade level, and aligned with their interests and learning needs. Based on the results of the questionnaire above, it can be concluded that the developed illustrated story media received a "Good" rating from respondents. The average overall score of 3.94 out of 5 or 78.84% indicates that most aspects, including story content, illustrations, language, and delivery media, have been considered good by participants. The highest scores were in the media accessibility aspect (4.17) and storyline (4.10), while the character aspect received a slightly lower score, but remained in the good category.

The development of this digital illustrated storybook offers a pedagogical solution to reading comprehension barriers often rooted in limited vocabulary mastery. A primary scientific finding is that the integration of honesty and environmental awareness, and local natural tourism contexts such as the beaches of Malang, acts as a cognitive bridge. This connection allows students to internalize new vocabulary by anchoring it to familiar geographical environments. Furthermore, the choice of a digital flipbook format aligns with modern accessibility needs; since most students possess smartphones, this medium transforms personal devices into flexible literacy tools. These results corroborate existing literature stating that digital story media significantly improve student motivation and vocabulary acquisition (Laura et al., 2023). However, the novelty of this research lies in its tripartite framework, which consists of the simultaneous integration of bilingual EFL literacy, character education, and locally grounded nature tourism contexts within a single DDR-developed product. While previous studies often focus on general literacy, this product introduces Indonesia's natural wealth as a primary narrative context. In conclusion, this digital storybook successfully synergizes learning motivation, vocabulary enrichment, and character education. By utilizing flipbook technology, the product provides a portable and engaging solution for modern school literacy programs. Beyond its academic impact, the inclusion of Malang's natural destinations ensures that the educational content is both culturally relevant

and environmentally conscious, positioning it as an innovative tool for junior high school education in the digital age.

5. LIMITATION

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the sample was drawn from a single school, which constrains the generalizability of the findings to other junior high school contexts across Indonesia, particularly those in rural areas or regions with limited digital infrastructure. Second, the absence of a pre-post reading assessment means that no claims can be made regarding direct improvement in reading comprehension or vocabulary acquisition because of using the storybook; the current evidence is confined to feasibility and learner perception. Third, field testing was conducted within a single session, which may not accurately reflect sustained learner engagement or long-term motivational effects over repeated use. Fourth, no control group was included in the study design, precluding any comparative effectiveness claims between the developed storybook and conventional reading materials currently used in the classroom. Fifth, the expert validation was conducted by two validators, and no inter-rater reliability coefficient was calculated, which limits the precision of the feasibility assessment. These limitations do not diminish the value of the current findings as a feasibility study, but they clearly delineate the boundaries within which the results should be interpreted and identify directions for more rigorous investigation in subsequent research.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research and development that were conducted, it can be concluded that the bilingual digital illustrated storybooks integrating honesty and environmental awareness with a natural tourism setting have been successfully developed and declared suitable for use as a learning medium for junior high school students. The development process of this research followed the Design and Development Research (DDR) model, including analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. Validation by language and media experts confirmed that the storybook met the required standards for content relevance, visual appeal, and language accuracy.

The developed storybook not only offers an engaging reading experience for students but also facilitates contextual English language learning through its bilingual presentation in Indonesian and English. Furthermore, the integration of moral values embedded in the story and the setting featuring Indonesian natural tourist attractions serves as a unique attraction that strengthens character development while introducing students to Indonesia's natural wealth. Limited testing results also indicate that students respond positively to the use of this media, both in terms of content comprehension and their engagement in learning activities.

Thus, it can be concluded that the bilingual digital illustrated storybook developed in this study is an innovative, engaging, and appropriate learning medium for students in English language learning with character education content. This medium can also serve as an alternative solution to enrich teaching materials and support the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes strengthening the Pancasila learner profile and digital literacy. Therefore, the development and utilization of similar media are highly recommended for broader application in the context of language and character education at the junior high school level.

Several directions for future research emerge from the findings and limitations of this study. First, subsequent studies should employ a pre-post quasi-experimental design with a control group to measure the direct impact of the bilingual digital storybook on EFL reading comprehension scores, vocabulary acquisition, and reading motivation, thereby moving beyond feasibility evidence toward effectiveness validation. Second, the development process and product should be replicated across diverse school contexts, including rural and peri-urban schools in other provinces such as East Nusa Tenggara, West Kalimantan, or West Sumatra, to test whether the locally contextualized design framework generalizes to learners with different geographic and cultural backgrounds. Third, future iterations of the product should incorporate professional bilingual narration and interactive comprehension checkpoints, and their contribution to listening comprehension and reading fluency should be evaluated through dedicated instruments. Fourth, researchers may explore the integration of this storybook into a Learning Management System (LMS) environment, enabling longitudinal tracking of student engagement patterns, reading frequency, and time-on-task data across multiple sessions. Fifth, a broader theoretical contribution could be pursued by developing a localized EFL media design framework grounded in the tripartite integration of Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, and Place-Based Education, which could serve as a replicable model for context-sensitive instructional material development across Indonesian secondary education.

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