



Development Of Level A Leveled Reading Books For Elementary School Students

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ABSTRACT

Reading is a fundamental activity that supports students' cognitive development and language skills. Early exposure to appropriate reading materials is crucial for fostering reading interest and comprehension in elementary school students. This study aimed to develop a Level A leveled picture storybook tailored to the reading abilities of first-grade students at SDN 043 Tarakan. Preliminary observations revealed a lack of leveled reading books suitable for students' early reading stages, which affected their reading motivation and understanding. The development employed the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation), integrating students' characteristics, curriculum objectives, and local mangrove forest context. The storybook was validated by content, language, design, and practitioner experts, and subsequently tested through limited trials with six students and field trials with twenty-six students. Validation results indicated high feasibility: 97% for design, 82% for language, 93% for content, and 92% for practitioner evaluation. Student responses demonstrated strong interest, with 100% attractiveness in the limited trial and 99% in the field trial. Revisions based on expert feedback included adjustments in illustrations, vocabulary, punctuation, and alignment with local context. The findings show that the developed Level A storybook is valid, engaging, and effective in supporting early reading skills. This product provides a structured and visually appealing reading resource that aligns with students' reading development, promotes literacy, and can serve as a teaching aid in early-grade classrooms. The study suggests that integrating local contexts and leveled reading strategies can significantly enhance reading motivation and comprehension, and provides a foundation for developing subsequent levels of leveled reading books.

Keywords: *leveled reading book, early literacy, picture storybook, elementary school, local context*

ABSTRAK

Membaca merupakan aktivitas dasar yang berperan penting dalam perkembangan kognitif dan keterampilan bahasa siswa. Paparan awal terhadap bahan bacaan yang sesuai sangat penting untuk menumbuhkan minat dan pemahaman membaca pada siswa sekolah dasar. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengembangkan buku cerita bergambar berjenjang Level A yang disesuaikan dengan kemampuan

membaca siswa kelas I di SDN 043 Tarakan. Observasi awal menunjukkan minimnya ketersediaan buku cerita berjenjang sesuai tahap membaca awal siswa, sehingga mempengaruhi minat dan pemahaman membaca. Pengembangan menggunakan model ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) dengan mempertimbangkan karakteristik siswa, tujuan kurikulum, dan konteks lokal hutan mangrove. Buku cerita divalidasi oleh ahli isi, bahasa, desain, dan praktisi, kemudian diuji cobakan melalui uji coba terbatas pada enam siswa dan uji coba lapangan pada dua puluh enam siswa. Hasil validasi menunjukkan kelayakan tinggi: 97% untuk desain, 82% untuk bahasa, 93% untuk isi, dan 92% untuk praktisi. Respons siswa menunjukkan kemenarikan yang sangat tinggi, yakni 100% pada uji coba terbatas dan 99% pada uji coba lapangan. Revisi berdasarkan masukan ahli mencakup penyesuaian ilustrasi, diksi, tanda baca, dan kesesuaian konteks lokal. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa buku cerita berjenjang Level A yang dikembangkan layak digunakan, menarik, dan efektif mendukung keterampilan membaca awal. Buku ini menyediakan sumber belajar terstruktur dan menarik secara visual, sesuai dengan perkembangan membaca siswa, serta dapat menjadi media bantu guru dalam pembelajaran literasi. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa integrasi konteks lokal dan strategi buku berjenjang dapat meningkatkan motivasi dan pemahaman membaca, serta menjadi dasar pengembangan buku berjenjang pada level berikutnya.

Kata Kunci: buku cerita berjenjang, literasi awal, buku cerita bergambar, sekolah dasar, konteks lokal

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental activity that plays a crucial role in the development of students' intelligence and thinking abilities. The habit of reading needs to be cultivated consistently, as it greatly contributes to the improvement of language skills. Reading activities are not only related to word recognition and pronunciation but also serve as the main gateway to broader insight and knowledge, enabling individuals to actively participate in lifelong learning (Suhendra et al., 2023). For elementary school students, reading skills have a strategic role in building a strong foundation for language proficiency, fostering reading interest, and understanding that most knowledge is acquired through the reading process. Therefore, reading instruction at the elementary level should be carefully designed to prepare students for higher and more complex stages of learning.

In supporting reading activities at school, the availability of books throughout the learning process is one of the essential factors that ensures the smooth implementation of reading programs. Providing access to a variety of books, magazines, and other reading materials can enhance students' literacy development. With a wide range of reading options, students are able to explore their personal interests and discover engaging topics, which in turn can increase their motivation to read more frequently (Afrilia & Sulaeman, 2024). Books play a vital role in supporting reading activities in elementary schools. The more diverse the titles and types of books students read, the greater the impact on their vocabulary growth and overall knowledge development (Ekowati et al., 2021).

One type of reading material that can be effectively accessed by students is storybooks. Picture storybooks for elementary school students need to be developed, as many students tend to be more interested in books that contain colorful illustrations. Moreover, students often prefer reading picture storybooks to textbooks because the sentences are easier to understand. Apriliani & Radia, (2020) also explained that storybooks can help increase children's reading interest because the accompanying illustrations successfully capture their attention.

Picture storybooks can easily attract children's attention because of their appealing visual appearance. These books serve both decorative and supportive functions within a story, helping to facilitate students' understanding of the book's content. A picture storybook is a unified narrative that combines text and illustrations. Through picture storybooks, readers are

expected to more easily grasp the information and storyline being conveyed. According to Tarigan (2019), the positive values offered by picture storybooks can be understood and applied in students’ daily lives if they are able to comprehend the content effectively.

Picture storybooks used for students should be adjusted to their reading stages so that they can better understand the story content. This approach can indirectly help students develop reading habits and foster a love for reading (Primasari & Hidayat, 2022). One of the innovations in picture storybook development is the creation of leveled storybooks, which are designed according to students’ reading proficiency levels.

Based on observations conducted at one elementary school in Tarakan City, it was found that there is a lack of children's storybooks that correspond to students’ reading levels. The available books are limited to general children's stories that are not leveled. As a result, students often read books that do not match their reading proficiency, which ultimately affects their reading interest. In fact, students’ reading interest can improve when they are provided with texts that align with their abilities. Moreover, the school has never had leveled storybooks, nor have such books ever been developed previously. Therefore, the researcher was motivated to develop leveled storybooks that align with the needs and reading abilities of first-grade students at an elementary school in Tarakan City. The appropriate level for this context is Level A leveled reading books. For this reason, the researcher selected the research title: “Development of Level A Leveled Reading Books for Elementary School Students.”

METHODS

Type and Design

This development study employed the ADDIE model. The ADDIE model can be applied to develop various types of instructional products, including models, strategies, methods, media, and learning materials (Sugiyono, 2018). This research method produces a specific product and tests its effectiveness. To produce such a product, a needs analysis-based research approach is required, followed by procedures to evaluate the product’s effectiveness. This study developed a Level A leveled storybook for first-grade students at SDN 043 Tarakan. The product development process followed the ADDIE research and development procedure (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) as proposed by Branch (2009).

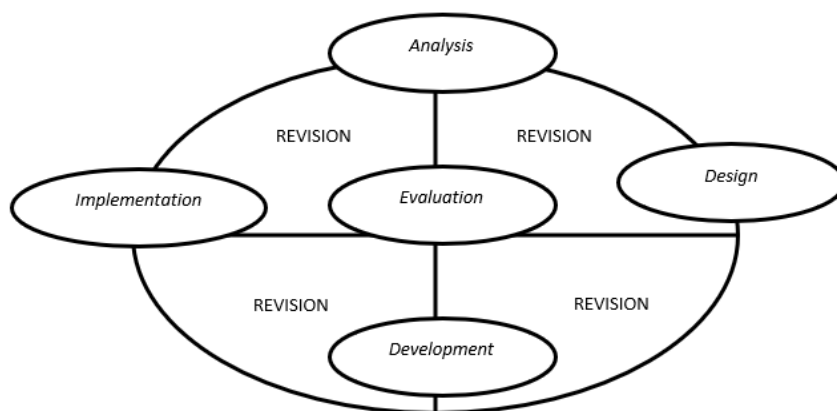


Figure 1. The Development Flow of the ADDIE Model (Branch, 2009).

In this study, the ADDIE model was employed, beginning with the Analysis stage, which involved identifying the need for leveled reading books in the school through library

observations, analyzing the characteristics of first-grade students who are still at the early reading stage, and reviewing the curriculum to ensure that the themes and story content align with the learning outcomes and the local context of the Tarakan mangrove forest. The results of this analysis then informed the Design stage, during which the story structure, plot, vocabulary load, illustration style, and page layout were developed according to Level A book standards. Research instruments such as expert validation sheets and student interest questionnaires were also prepared at this stage.

Next, during the Development stage, the design was transformed into an initial product in the form of a full-color illustrated storybook, which was subsequently validated by content, language, design experts, and practitioners. Revisions were made based on the feedback received, including improvements to diction, punctuation, and illustration adjustments to ensure alignment with mangrove environmental characteristics. The revised product was then tested in the Implementation stage through a small-scale trial involving six students and a field trial with 26 students to assess readability and attractiveness within real learning contexts.

The final stage, Evaluation, was carried out formatively throughout the development process and summatively following implementation. This evaluation assessed the feasibility of the product based on expert validation and student responses, which indicated that the developed book fell into the “highly feasible” and “highly attractive” categories for use in early reading instruction.

Data and Data Sources

The data in this study consist of the assessment results and responses to the Level A leveled storybook developed for first-grade students at SDN 043 Tarakan. These data include validation results from experts—content experts, language experts, design experts, and educational practitioners—who evaluated the feasibility of the developed product based on their respective areas of expertise.

The content expert was selected based on relevant academic qualifications (minimum of a Master’s degree) as well as teaching and research experience in the subject matter being developed. The language expert was chosen due to their linguistic competence, understanding of Indonesian language conventions, and experience in assessing text readability for children. The design expert was selected for their mastery of graphic design and instructional design principles, along with a portfolio of educational media development. The practitioner was chosen because they are an experienced teacher who understands students’ needs in the classroom and can directly assess the product’s feasibility in real instructional settings.

In addition, data were collected from student response questionnaires measuring the attractiveness and comprehensibility of the leveled storybook. The limited trial involved six students from Grade 1A, while the field trial included 26 students from Grade 1C. Other data used in this study included documentation of activities, such as photographs taken during the media trials and while students used the leveled storybook in class.

The data sources in this study included experts or validators who assessed the product’s feasibility aspects, first-grade students at SDN 043 Tarakan who served as direct users of the product and provided responses through questionnaires, and documentation materials that served as supporting evidence for both the research implementation process and the results of product development.

Data collection technique

Data collection in this study utilized several instruments, including validation sheets, student response questionnaires, and documentation. The validation sheet was used to assess the feasibility of the developed product. The product was validated by experts, including content experts, language experts, design experts, and education practitioners.

The content expert's assessment indicated that the reading book aligns with the nonfiction genre and is based on students' daily experiences, making it easy to understand. The use of punctuation is appropriate for beginning readers, and the content includes relevant values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Overall, the reading material was deemed suitable for students' developmental level and reading interests.

The language expert's assessment showed that the sentence structures used in the book are appropriate, consisting of combinations of phonemes, syllables, and words that are easily understood by early readers. The use of words, phrases, clauses, simple sentences, and coordinate compound sentences is proportional. The language is simple and familiar, with diction consisting of common words frequently encountered by students, containing 25–40 vocabulary items suitable for beginning reading levels. The text length is also appropriate, with a maximum of seven words per sentence and five sentences per page, and a total book length of 16–32 pages. Additionally, the use of sans serif font at a minimum size of 20 pt with adequate spacing was considered suitable, and the consistent placement of text on each page was viewed as supportive of reading comfort.

The design expert's assessment showed that the book uses full color with appropriate arrangement and contrast, resulting in an attractive and visually comfortable appearance. The book title accurately reflects the story content, the typography is easy to read, and the text layout does not distract readers. The illustrations were also rated positively, as the images are clear, distinguishable, non-pixelated, consistent in placement, and depict proper proportions and character expressions that match the context. Furthermore, the overall design was deemed appropriate because the layout features more visuals than text, which is characteristic of early reading materials for young learners.

The practitioner's assessment indicated that the illustrations in the reading book are clear and easily recognizable by students, thereby supporting comprehension. The written text is easy to understand and suitable for beginning readers' abilities. The book's design, with engaging illustrations, was also considered effective in fostering students' reading interest. Overall, the practitioner concluded that the use of this reading book can support students in the reading process and enhance literacy learning in the classroom.

Additionally, data collection involved the use of student questionnaires. These questionnaires were employed to determine students' responses regarding the attractiveness of the developed leveled storybook. The questionnaires were administered during both the limited trial and the field trial, and were distributed after students finished reading the Level A leveled storybook. Documentation was also used in this development research, consisting of photographs taken during the media trials, throughout the process of using the leveled storybook, and capturing students' responses using a camera.

Table 1. Expert Feasibility Criteria

Percentage (%)	Category
25% - 43.75%	Very Infeasible
43.76% - 62.5%	Infeasible
62.51% - 81.25%	Feasible
81.26% - 100%	Very Feasible

Source: Aryanto et al., (2023)

To determine the percentage of product feasibility, the following formula was used:

$$NP = \frac{R}{SM} \times 100$$

Where:

NP = Expected percentage value

R = Obtained score

SM = Maximum score

Data analysis

The analysis of the questionnaire sheets was conducted to determine students' responses regarding the attractiveness of the developed leveled storybook. The data obtained from the attractiveness questionnaire were first converted into quantitative form according to the assigned score weights. The formula used is as follows:

$$P = \frac{\sum x}{\sum xi} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P = Percentage

$\sum x$ = Total score obtained

$\sum xi$ = Maximum possible score

Based on the results calculated using the formula above, the obtained percentage values were matched with the criteria presented in the following table.

Table 2. Analysis of the Attractiveness of the Leveled Storybook

Percentage (%)	Criteria
90% - 100%	Very Attractive
80% - 89%	Attractive
65% - 79%	Fairly Attractive
56% - 64%	Less Attractive
0% - 55%	Not Attractive

Source: Dessi (2021)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first stage of developing the Level A leveled storybook began with the analysis phase, in which the researcher conducted preliminary observations during a field study at one of the public elementary schools (SDN) in Tarakan City. The observation was carried out in the school library to examine the availability of storybooks and leveled storybooks. The results showed that although some storybooks were available, their number was still limited. Furthermore, there were no leveled storybooks that matched the reading levels of first-grade students, many of whom were still struggling to read fluently. The available storybooks consisted mainly of text-heavy folktale collections, which were less appealing to first-grade students. Ideally, students at this level should be provided with more engaging, illustrated books that contain short, simple sentences and use appropriate word choices for their reading ability.

In the design phase, the researcher mapped the *Level A Intermediate Readers*, aimed at developing logical thinking skills, general knowledge, and independent learning abilities. The approximate reading equivalence for this level corresponds to children aged 10–11 years. Afterward, the researcher created the outline and structure of the Level A storybook and determined its visual design. The design process utilized two main digital tools: *Sketchbook* for illustration and *Canva Pro* for the overall layout and composition. The use of these applications also represents the researcher's effort to integrate digital literacy in the creation of the Level A storybook, in line with the view of Salsabila & Wachidah, (2024), who emphasized the importance of digital literacy development in response to technological advancement.

The selected theme for the storybook is "Vacation", with the story titled *A Trip to the Mangrove Forest*. The mangrove forest is one of the well-known tourist destinations in Tarakan City. The book consists of 20 pages, with each page containing one to two simple sentences accompanied by attractive illustrations designed to engage early readers.



Figure 2. Cover Page of the Level A Leveled Reading Book

In the development phase, the Level A storybook that had been created underwent validation and revision based on feedback from experts in design, language, content, and educational practice. The validation process aimed to assess the feasibility and appropriateness of the storybook. If the validators provided any suggestions or recommendations for improvement, the researcher reviewed and revised the product accordingly to enhance its quality and suitability for classroom use.

The implementation phase was carried out after the storybook was declared feasible by the validators. At this stage, the Level A storybook was tested on first-grade students at SD Negeri 043 Tarakan. The product trials were conducted in two stages: a limited trial and a field trial. The limited trial involved a small group of six students selected through random sampling, aimed at evaluating the attractiveness and engagement level of the storybook.

The results of the limited trial indicated that the Level A storybook was categorized as very attractive, successfully increasing students' enthusiasm and motivation to read. The field trial was then conducted on a larger scale, involving 26 students in one class session lasting one instructional hour. The field trial proceeded smoothly as expected, and the classroom learning activities were conducted effectively. At the end of the field trial, all students provided their evaluations of the storybook's attractiveness through a response questionnaire, allowing the researcher to determine how engaging the Level A storybook was perceived to be.

The Evaluation stage is carried out after the completion of each implementation phase. At this stage, the assessment of the leveled book is conducted based on its feasibility and attractiveness as a Level A storybook. The feasibility aspect is determined through the feasibility assessment instruments completed by the experts, while the attractiveness aspect is evaluated through students' response questionnaires regarding their interest in the Level A leveled storybook.

Table 3. Results of Design Validation

No.	Observed Aspect	Score	Percentage
1	Book color is full color	5	100%
2	Story title represents the story content	5	100%
3	Font is easy to read	5	100%
4	Text layout does not interfere with images	5	100%
5	Color arrangement in the book	5	100%
6	Color contrast in the full-color book	5	100%
7	Text layout does not interfere with illustrations	5	100%
8	Images are easy to distinguish	5	100%
9	Images are not pixelated	4	80%
10	Image placement is consistent with objects	5	100%
11	Book display is more image-dominant than text	5	100%
12	Character expressions match the situations	5	100%
Total		63	97%

Based on the calculation results, it was found that the validity percentage obtained was 97%. This percentage indicates that the Level A storybook is considered valid and falls into the "highly feasible" category. One suggestion provided by the design expert was to revise the illustrations of plant types so that they correspond to the actual vegetation found in the mangrove forest.

Table 4. Results of Language Validation

No.	Observed Aspect	Score	Percentage
1	The sentence structure appropriately combines phonemes, syllables, and words that are easily understood by students.	4	80%

No.	Observed Aspect	Score	Percentage
2	The sentence structure uses appropriate words, phrases, clauses, simple sentences, and compound sentences.	4	80%
3	The language used is simple and familiar to students.	4	80%
4	The diction (word choice) consists of general or basic words commonly used by students.	4	80%
5	The text contains 25–40 words frequently used by students.	4	80%
6	The text length is limited to a maximum of five sentences per page.	4	80%
7	The text length is limited to a maximum of seven words per sentence.	4	80%
8	The thickness of the reading material ranges from 16–32 pages.	4	80%
9	The typeface used is sans-serif with a minimum size of 20 pt and adequate spacing.	4	80%
10	The placement or position of the text is consistent on each page.	5	100%
Total		41	82%

Based on the calculation results, it was found that the validity percentage obtained was 82%. This percentage indicates that the Level A storybook is considered valid and falls into the “highly feasible” category. The suggestions provided by the language expert included improvements to word usage within the storyline, adjustments to text layout, the use of quotation marks in dialogues, and corrections to the capitalization of initial letters in words.

Table 5. Results of Content Validation

No.	Observed Aspect	Score	Percentage
1	The developed reading book corresponds to the students’ reading ability genre, particularly non-fiction.	5	100%
2	The reading material presented is based on students’ daily life experiences.	4	80%
3	The text is easy for students to understand.	4	80%
4	The punctuation used aligns with the students’ level of knowledge.	5	100%
5	The reading material contains concrete lessons about values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills appropriate to students’ developmental levels.	5	100%

No.	Observed Aspect	Score	Percentage
6	The reading content aligns with students' reading interests and developmental stages.	5	100%
Total		28	93%

Based on the calculation results, it was found that the validity percentage obtained was 93%. This percentage indicates that the Level A storybook is considered valid and falls into the "feasible" category. One suggestion provided by the content expert was to include a glossary of terms.

Table 6. Results of Practitioner Validation

No.	Evaluated Aspect	Score Obtained	Maximum Score
1	The illustrations in the reading book are clear.	5	5
2	The text in the reading book is easy for students to understand.	4	5
3	The reading book is designed with attractive illustrations.	4	5
4	The use of the reading book assists students in the reading process.	5	5
5	The use of the reading book helps teachers in the process of teaching reading to students.	5	5
Total		23	25
Percentage		92%	
Category		Very Feasible	

Based on the results of the practitioner validation, the obtained percentage was 92%, indicating that the *Level A Storybook* is categorized as very feasible for use in classroom learning. This confirms that the book is not only visually appealing and easy to comprehend for students but also serves as an effective supporting medium for teachers in reading instruction.

The limited trial data analysis was conducted with six Grade I-A students, selected through random sampling. The students' responses to the storybook's level of attractiveness during the trial are presented in the following table.

Table 5. Results of Students' Responses in the Limited Trial

No.	Student Initials	Score
1	MR	5
2	NJ	5
3	G	5
4	A	5

No.	Student Initials	Score
5	A	5
6	F	5
Total Score		30
Percentage		100%

Based on the calculation results, the obtained percentage of validity was 100%. This percentage indicates that the *Level A Storybook* is valid and falls into the “very interesting” category.

The field trial was conducted on September 25, 2023, in Grade I-C at SDN 043 Tarakan. The field trial aimed to determine students’ overall responses to the *Level A Storybook* after classroom implementation. The results of the students’ responses during the field trial are presented in the following table.

Table 6. Results of Students’ Responses in the Field Trial

No.	Student Initials	Score
1	M	50
2	EL	50
3	A	50
4	FA	50
5	T	50
6	A	50
7	E	50
8	YT	50
9	S	50
10	N	50
11	D	50
12	NK	50
13	Y	50
14	N	50
15	A	50
16	J	50
17	D	41
18	L	49
19	N	49
20	A	50
21	SP	50
22	L	50
23	TR	49
24	AT	50

No.	Student Initials	Score
25	PY	50
26	M	50
Total Score		1,288
Percentage		99%

Based on the calculation results, the validity percentage of the Level A leveled storybook reached 99%, indicating that the book is highly valid and categorized as very engaging. This finding aligns with Dessi (2021), who states that a product is considered highly engaging if the validation percentage ranges from 90% to 100%.

The design expert's validation results indicated that the Level A storybook was deemed suitable for use with several revisions. The primary suggestion concerned the need to adjust plant illustrations to match the vegetation typical of mangrove forests as a means of strengthening the integration of local cultural context. Such local contextualization is important, as learning media that incorporate local wisdom can serve as a medium for introducing regional potential to students (Septiany et al., 2024). In addition, the design expert emphasized that the book's visual presentation should be made appealing through appropriate typography, color schemes, illustrations, and layout arrangements, as stated by Supit et al. (2021). This aligns with Sanjaya (2012), who argues that effective instructional media must be able to attract students' interest in learning. At this stage, improvements to punctuation were also emphasized because they play a crucial role in helping readers understand the text more easily.

Feedback from the language expert focused on refining diction within the storyline, ensuring correct capitalization, improving dialogue writing, and maintaining consistency in text layout. These revisions were made to ensure that all sentences adhered to the rules of Indonesian orthography, as emphasized by Sirait (2021), and remained accessible to young learners, as noted by Neolaka and Jiwantono (2023). The language validation also stressed that the text must be developmentally appropriate, communicative, and written using simple sentences (Dewiyanti et al., 2019). This is in accordance with the needs of beginning readers, who require short sentence structures and limited vocabulary.

In the content validation, the feasibility percentage reached 93%, placing it in the "highly feasible" category based on the criteria of Ningrum and Widodo (2018). One important revision was the addition of a glossary at the end of the story to help students understand unfamiliar terms. This is consistent with Susanti (in Pratiwi et al., 2022), who states that a glossary functions to facilitate readers' comprehension of specific terminology in a text. With these improvements, the book was declared suitable for use by the content expert.

The practitioner validation, which focused on content, presentation, language, and appearance, showed a feasibility score of 92%, categorized as highly feasible. The practitioner concluded that the book could be used without additional revisions. This assessment corresponds with the criteria of Ningrum and Widodo (2018) and with Sarini and Selamet (2019), who assert that practitioner validation assesses content appropriateness and the practicality of media use in classroom settings. Both aspects received a score of 100%, indicating that the book is easy for teachers to use in instruction. Although the validation

process was completed, several minor refinements were still carried out as recommended by Maria El Puang et al. (2023) before the product was tested in the classroom (Dwi et al., 2020).

In the limited trial involving six first-grade students, the results showed a score of 100%, categorized as highly feasible. Students found the book engaging, easy to understand, and supportive of reading activities. These results align with feasibility criteria described by Dessi (2021). The field trial conducted with 26 students also demonstrated a highly positive response, with a percentage of 99% and categorized as highly attractive. Both in the limited trial and the field trial, students showed strong enthusiasm. This supports the findings of Abdulatif and Muh. Husen Arifin (2023), who argue that storybooks can attract students' attention, especially when they include elements of local wisdom. Deviana (2018) also states that incorporating cultural and environmental elements increases students' reading interest because they feel connected to the story content.

The findings of this study are consistent with several previous studies. Afrilia and Sulaeman (2024) reported that reading materials aligned with students' reading development stages can enhance reading motivation and comfort. This consistency is reflected in the developed Level A book, where the suitability of readability level, sentence length, and vocabulary choices allowed students to read with ease. Ekowati et al. (2021) further emphasized that high-quality picture storybooks can improve comprehension and emotional engagement, as evidenced by students' enthusiastic responses to the colored illustrations and mangrove context in this book. International studies also support this finding. Applegate and Applegate (2020) highlight that leveled texts are an effective early literacy strategy because they maintain alignment between text difficulty and readers' cognitive abilities. Similarly, Duke et al. (2021) and McTigue et al. (2022) emphasize that contextual illustrations and visual literacy components help students understand story content more effectively.

Overall, this study provides evidence that the Level A leveled reading book developed with local context and informative illustrations can effectively support early literacy development. However, this research has several limitations, including the restricted trial sample limited to one school, the absence of direct measurement of reading skill improvement, and the story theme that focuses on only one local context. Additionally, the number of validators did not include early literacy specialists, child psychologists, or professional illustrators.

Future research is recommended to expand the sample size, evaluate the book's effectiveness through experimental designs, develop subsequent reading levels (Levels B, C, and beyond), enrich local thematic variations, and involve a wider range of cross-disciplinary experts so that the resulting products are more comprehensive in terms of content, language, design, and pedagogy.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully developed a Level A leveled reading book intended for first-grade students at SDN 043 Tarakan using the ADDIE development model. The needs analysis revealed that the school did not yet have leveled reading materials appropriate for early readers, indicating the need for reading resources that are more structured, engaging, and

aligned with students' early literacy development. The development process –consisting of the analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation stages–resulted in a picture storybook with a local theme, “*Jalan-jalan ke Hutan Mangrove*” designed with engaging illustrations, controlled sentence length, simple diction, and page layouts suited to the characteristics of beginning readers. Validation results from the design expert, language expert, content expert, and practitioner showed that the developed book fell into the “highly feasible” category, with feasibility percentages of 97% for design, 82% for language, 93% for content, and 92% from the practitioner. Suggestions provided by the experts were incorporated through revisions to illustrations, diction, punctuation, and content alignment with the local mangrove forest context. In addition, both the limited trial and field trial –conducted with six and 26 first-grade students, respectively–showed that the book's attractiveness was rated in the “highly attractive” category, reaching 100% in the limited trial and 99% in the field trial. These results indicate that the developed Level A leveled reading book successfully engages students' interest, is easy to understand, and supports early reading instruction in the classroom. Overall, this study demonstrates that developing leveled reading books based on local context not only improves readability and attractiveness for young learners but also serves as a learning resource that supports foundational literacy development in elementary schools. The storybook can be used as supplementary teaching material for early reading instruction and enriches the availability of reading resources that match students' reading levels. The success of this development effort is expected to serve as a basis for creating leveled books at subsequent levels and to encourage the production of more diverse, contextual, and beginner-friendly reading materials.

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