Isolec Big Books

by Nine Febrie

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Big Books: Big, Bold, and Beautiful with Impacts

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Abstract

Some Indonesian elementary schools include English as a local content subject. However, one aspect that is often missing in the process of teaching and learning is supporting teaching media. This is often found in schools based in remote areas, including the one at SD Negeri 6 Tambak Ukir, which is included in this study. The teaching and learning at this school is not fully accommodated because of the unavailability of teaching media. The students are not fortunate enough to afford commercial learning media. The problems worsen with the facts that the teachers have never been professionally prepared and trained to teach English. Such problems lead to meaningless learning. Concerning the issues, we developed five big books to be used by English teachers and students of SD Negeri 6 Tambak Ukir with the aim to provide supplementary learning media for the students, particularly in learning English vocabulary. The research adapted the development model proposed by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003). There are four simplified stages in this development process: problem analysis, product development, product trials, and product revisions. In the first stage, the researchers planned to develop 10 books, but because of the COVID-19 pandemic situation, only five books (including a manual user) could be developed. The topic covers numbers, colours, alphabets, animals, and human body. The provision of the books helped the teachers in delivering the topics. The books could also create a new learning experience for the students. Besides, the students also felt that they could get closer to their friends because they could learn together and felt extra motivated. In other words, having been validated and tried out, the books were proven to be valid, effective, and practical. They were valid as they were developed based on strong theories, effective as they can fulfil students' need, and practical as they can facilitate both teachers and students during the teaching and learning process. Briefly, big book can describe itself well. It is big, bold, and beautiful with impacts.

Keywords: big book, English teaching medium, research and development, SD Negeri 6 Tambak Ukir

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1. Introduction

The introduction of English language skills can be done from an early age because children are at their critical age, the most sensitive period for learning languages where the process of learning a language occurs naturally and effortlessly (Hossain, 2015; Hu, 2016). In addition, many parents want to equip their children with English language skills in the hope that English can help make their life easier in the future. These are the reasons why In Indonesia English has been taught at the elementary school level. In elementary school level, English is taught as one of the local content subjects. English is defined as a local content due to the nature of the material, which is only a basic introduction, which emphasizes on vocabulary mastery. However, the school has a policy to develop material according to the conditions of students and their respective environments.

However, the fact is that the process of learning English in children of this age is quite complicated because it requires different treatment compared to learning English in adults (Cameron, 2002). A fun learning process is the main requirement for teaching English to elementary school children. One of the factors that can help make the English learning process fun is the presence of the right teaching media. English teaching media for elementary school children should be designed to help students learn vocabulary both orally and in writing. In this connection, the English teaching media that can be used are media that are able to introduce students to basic vocabulary such as flashcards, storytelling images, animated videos, magazines, comics, scrabble, and posters. Unfortunately, not all elementary school students are lucky to have access to these media. Students who reside and study at schools far from urban areas have difficulties in accessing English learning media. The high cost of media is also an inhibiting factor for the lack of opportunities for students in certain schools to learn English fully.

This problem is also found at SD Negeri 6 Tambak Ukir. The location of the school which is far from the city makes the access to public facilities become limited. The English reading and teaching media available in schools are only textbooks. As a result, the process of teaching and learning English is not optimal. A good teaching and learning process media that can truly provide students with English language skills as well as a pleasant learning experience. Big book is the answer to this problem.

Big book is a teaching medium in the form of a large book containing simple words or sentences and pictures illustrating them. The large letter size aims to make it easier for elementary school students to learn to recognize words/sentences and at the same time

know their meanings. The advantages of the big book are its large size and attractive contents because it is full of colour, and easy to make with a simple process and little cost. Several previous researchers (Honchell & Schulz, 2012; Fahmi, Suhartono, & Arifin, 2015; Mahayanti, 2017; Indrasari, Novita & Megawati, 2018) have discussed the effectiveness of the use of big books in learning English for elementary school children. Big books have been proven effective in helping students develop language skills which include listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills. On the basis of problem identification and the success of several previous studies, the researchers decided to develop some big books as English teaching media for grade 4—grade 6 students of SD Negeri 6 Tambak Ukir.

2. Method

The procedure in this development process is adapted from the R&D stages of Gall et al. (2003). In this study, the ten stages of Gall et al.'s R&D were simplified into four stages: (1) needs analysis, (2) product development, (3) product testing, and (4) product revision.

2.1. Needs analysis

The first stage in this research is needs analysis. This stage aims to obtain clear and comprehensive information about the main problems at hand. The results of the needs analysis form the basis for product development.

2.2. Product development

This stage includes the material mapping process, product development, and expert validation. The theme chosen to be included covers alphabet, animal, colour, number, my body, my family, my school, playground, greeting and parting, and introduction. To validate the products, the four experts were selected; they are one expert in the field of language, one expert in educational technology, one expert in early childhood education (PGSD), and one English teacher.

The data from the validation results are taken using instructional media evaluation guidelines. The factors assessed include the following aspects: general completeness, methodology, suitability with students, physical and additional completeness, additional appropriate additional material, content, vocabulary content, and grammar.

The product evaluated is considered effective and suitable for the students in terms of its general appearance attributes and contents if the final score is above 80. The score is categorized based on some criteria. The process of categorizing the results of product validation is adopted from Akbar (2013:41)

TABLE 1: The categorization of expert validation results (adapted from Akbar, 2013).

No	Final score	Criteria	Description
1	>85.01%	very good	no revision
2	70.01–85%	good	partial revision
3	50.01–70%	fair	major revision
4	≤50%	poor	total revision

2.3. Product trial

Product trial in this study is carried out once in a small-scale context. The trial is carried out after the product has gone through the validation and revision stages. The trial is conducted in three meetings each for grade 4, grade 5, and grade 6. The data got from this stage are taken using questionnaire, observation sheet, and interview guide.

The data obtained from questionnaires are analysed quantitatively using a Likert scale, presented in the form of a percentage and qualitative descriptive. The scale ranges for the questionnaire and observation sheet are 1-4 with information 4 (strongly agree), 3 (agree), 2 (disagree), and 1 (strongly disagree). After that, the results are converted into a percentage using the following formula:

$$\text{Final score} = \frac{\left(\sum \text{total score}\right)}{\left(\sum \text{maximum score}\right)} \times 100$$

Data from the observation sheet are analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The observation sheet variable consists of several criteria that have a range of 1-5 with details as follows: 1 (does not appear in the product), 2 (appears in a small part of the product), 3 (appears in some parts of the product), 4 (appears in most parts of the product), product section), and 5 (appears in most parts of the product). The product does not need to be revised or need a minor revision if the assessment score reaches 80% of the total maximum score.

A product revision will be made based on the categorization of the questionnaire and observation results adapted from Hobri (2010) which can be seen in Table 2.

The data from the interviews are analysed qualitatively. Revisions are made based on additional opinions and suggestions/deeper input about the product. It is expected that the final result of this product are be valid, effective, and practical.

TABLE 2: Categorization of questionnaire results (adapted from Hobri, 2010).

No	Final score	Criteria	Description
1	> 80%	excellent	without revision
2	66–79%	Good	Minor revision
3	56–65%	Fair	Major revision
4	≤56%	Poor	Total revision

2.4. Product revision

Product revision is carried out based on the results of the product trial obtained from questionnaires, observation sheets, and teacher and student interviews. This revision is final, because it has gone through several scientific stages (expert validation and trial stages) so that the results of the revision will be an input for the final improvement of the product before the dissemination stage.

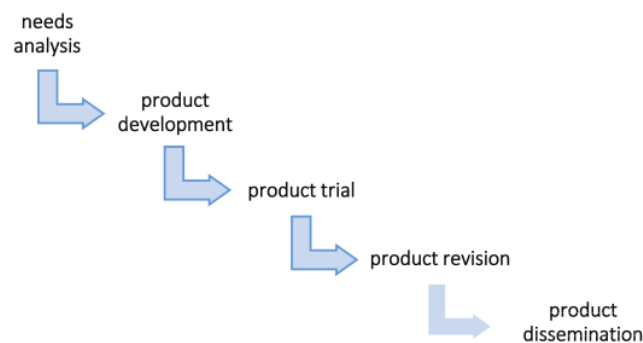In general, this research procedure can be seen in Figure 1.

needs analysis

product development

product trial

product revision

product dissemination

Figure 1: Procedure of development (adapted from Gall *et al.*, 2003).

3. Result and Discussion

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic situation, this research could not be conducted as it had been planned. At the initial planning, the researchers planned to develop ten big books. However, since it was quite difficult to reach the school and the students, the researchers have only developed five big books (the rest will be developed later, depending on the situation during the pandemic). The topics used are numbers, colours, alphabets, animals, and my body. Besides, the trial of the product which was planned to be held twice was also simplified into once. The brief explanation dealing with the research procedure is explained in the following paragraphs.

After the five big books were developed, they were delivered to the experts to be validated. The assessment results given by the experts showed that the books required some minor revisions. Some suggestions to revise the books came from the early childhood education expert and the schoolteacher. The early childhood education expert suggested that some pictures in the topic of animals were changed into the real pictures of animals instead of the animated ones. In addition to that, she also suggested adding some more information that described the animals, such as what they ate, where we could see them and unique characteristics that differed them from other animals. Some suggestions were also given by the schoolteacher. He recommended adding some animals that were familiar with the students' daily life since most of the students came from farmer families. He also thought that it would be better to develop another big book with the topic of farming in hope that the teaching and would be more meaningful because it is related to the students' social background.

The trials of the product were done three times, with the students of each level (fourth graders, fifth graders, and sixth graders). From the trials, some information was obtained. Based on the results of the questionnaires delivered to the students, it was revealed that the students were happy using the book. They loved the content, the colour, and the pictures contained in the book. They said that the process of learning was fun and the book was really helpful. When asked about the applicability of the book, the schoolteachers said that the book was easy to use and effective in helping them to teach vocabulary to the students. The large size of the book made it easier for the students to learn together. The color and the pictures in the book could attract the students' attention so they could put more focus during the lesson.

The books have some strengths and weaknesses. The first strength is of course the unique features (the large size, the colourful pictures, and interesting-and-daily-life related content). This is in line with what Hashemi and Azizinezhad (2011) about the effectiveness of pictures to grab children's attention. They also mention pictures as a great idea in teaching language to children. Besides, the students can also get closer to their teacher and friends because the book is used together during the shared reading activity. Shared-reading activity is best used with big books because they are sufficiently large and can be seen, shared, and discussed. In addition, the use of big books gives the students a new, different learning model. However, the big books also have some weaknesses. Since big book is rarely available as a teaching medium, its availability is limited, especially if it is developed manually. If it is printed, the cost of the production will be quite pricey. Moreover, since the books were developed based on the needs

analysis, they may not be applicable to students from other schools even though they are on the same grade.

Teaching English, especially to young learners is different from teaching English to adults. Moon (2005) says that children are still developing cognitively, linguistically, physically and emotionally so we need to consider these mental development and their other characteristics. Since children have different characteristics from adults, they also need different treatment in learning. The focus when teaching English to children should be put on how to make them attracted to and enjoy the lesson. It should be noted that children have short attention span. Therefore, the learning activities should be enjoyable and meaningful as well. The use of big books has proven that it has power to create a new learning exposure to the students.

4. Conclusion and Suggestion

Big books have proven that they are effective as supplementary learning media. The use of big books can be an alternative to bring a new learning experience to students through a shared reading activity. Further, it can be concluded that after being validated and tried out, the books are valid, effective, and practical. The books are valid since they were developed based on theories on material development and English teaching for young learners and validated by experts after being assessed. The books are also effective because they can provide what the students need: suitable media for learning, fun activities, and improved skills. Then, the books are practical since they can facilitate the teacher and the students during the teaching and learning process. The books ease the teacher to deliver the topic, and help the students learn easily and meaningfully. In brief, big books are teaching media with these distinct characteristics: big, bold, and beautiful with impacts.

Still, the teachers should not only depend on the teaching guide provided along with the big books developed. They should also try to improve their teaching skills and performance despite the fact that they have never been professionally trained and prepared. The availability of big books as media should be a triggering factor to create varied activities during the lesson.

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