

The development of balanced literacy approach-based reading material for students of elementary school

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Abstract: This study aims to describe the development of teaching materials for reading comprehension of story texts with the perspective of a balanced literacy approach. It focuses more on describing the result of feasibility testing on the developed teaching material. The study's design is Research and Development, introduced by Borg and Gall. This study involved two experts in language learning and 11 elementary school students taken by purposive sampling. The research data was obtained from the results of the validation sheet taken by observing and implementing the teaching material. The data analysis technique used is the Gregory formula. The result of expert validation shows that the reading material is well-developed and categorized as ready to use. On the other hand, the trials on teaching material to the student result excellently, which means accommodating the students' needs. In conclusion, the developed reading material using a perspective of balanced literacy approach is not only feasible but also practical.

Keywords: teaching materials, reading comprehension, balanced literacy approach, story texts, elementary school

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INTRODUCTION

Literacy is one of the essential interpersonal competencies to be taught starting from elementary school. The sooner children master literacy, the better because it makes academic performance better, develops their talents, improves communication skills, quickly understand personal social values, and the ability to work multitasking (Santos, Ramos, Escola, & Reis, 2019). The literacy skills learned since elementary school will be the basis for developing the next higher level of competence and expertise to reach a certain level of proficiency (Brown, 2014). He added that literacy learning in elementary schools should be carried out cross-disciplinary or using everyday topics to be more useful in students' lives (Burke & Welsch, 2018).

One form of literacy learning in elementary schools is reading comprehension. Reading comprehension skills are part of media literacy activities that can improve elementary school students' critical thinking, creativity, and self-awareness (Thanutpitanun, 2022). In addition, reading comprehension activities such as understanding situational pictures are taught to elementary school students as one of the visual literacy skills to strengthen critical thinking skills through seeing, observing, and comparing (Nikleva & Rodríguez-Muñoz, 2022). Finally, early literacy in elementary school children includes three early activities: writing, spelling, and reading comprehension (Bear, 2022). Reading comprehension includes spelling words, finger reading, expressionless reading, aloud reading, repeated reading, and meaning reading.

Data on the initial test of reading comprehension skills for story texts conducted on third-grade elementary school students in Madiun Regency in the post-covid-19 pandemic era showed that the average student score was 62, below the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM) standard of 65. For each aspect of reading skills, the average score of students in finding the main idea is 60, which is still relatively weak. The skill of finding explicit reading information is quite good, with an average of 67. However, the skill of finding implied information is still low, with an average of 63. Next, students' skills in inferring or synthesizing are still low, namely an average of 61. The data also shows that the average of finding messages from reading is also still low, at 60.

The results of observations from learning activities for reading comprehension of story texts done at grade III Elementary School in the Madiun district in the post-covid-19 pandemic also show that students still experience many obstacles in achieving learning goals. Many students still have problems finding reading topics in narration, poetry, or song lyrics. Finding main ideas and detailed information from the thematic readings is also becoming the main obstacle. The result also shows that identifying conclusions and messages from a reading of fiction text is still hard to do. The results of the preliminary study show that the cause of the weakness of these skills is that Indonesian language learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in the last two years is mostly not carried out correctly. The fact shows that most teachers' evaluations, including reading comprehension skills of story texts, were carried out with the help of parents, relatives, and even tutors. The choice aims at getting good grades recorded on the report card. Therefore, most students also find answers to tests on the internet. As a result, the learning goal of reading comprehension of story texts was not achieved.

The interviews with teachers indicate that they have made various efforts to overcome existing reading comprehension problems. First, the teacher sends a link to learning materials from the Youtube channel for students to understand the material independently. The video material is chosen closely to explain the essential competencies to be achieved. Second, the teacher also makes learning video recordings which are then distributed to students. This video is adapted to the learning material the teacher wants to convey in detail. Finally, the teacher sends a voice recording to the What's App group, explaining the learning material. The sound recording was chosen because the file size is not large, and it is easier for students to play it without going to a website or other aliases such as Youtube. However, the interview results also show that the three strategies are

ineffective in overcoming the existing problems. In addition, the three strategies tend to provide a one-way interaction between teachers and students because the teacher gives no feedback. Thus, student activities tend to be unstructured.

One alternative solution to overcome these problems is teaching materials. First, the results showed that teaching materials effectively increased students' understanding of the skills learned and scientific concepts (Romadhani & Harahap, 2022; Sari, Arief, Sabandi, & Farida, 2022). Second, teaching materials facilitate learning interaction between teachers and students (Arifuddin, Sutrio, & Taufik, 2022). Third, teaching materials can increase students' understanding of the material (Winarya, Asrofah, & Umay, 2022). Lastly, teaching materials, a collection of written or unwritten materials, can facilitate students' self-regulated learning activities (Afif, 2022).

One of the practical perspectives to improve students' reading comprehension skills and scientific concepts is the balanced-literacy approach (BLA). BLA is proven to improve students' language, literacy, and social skills according to the context of everyday life (Mielonen & Paterson, 2009). BLA improves students' understanding of literacy and communication skills and develops students' cognition (Siaulys, 2013). BLA also improves students' understanding of reading information and makes them successful in the future (Stratton, 2018). In addition, BLA improves students' critical thinking skills and makes it easier to find reading information (Wahyudi, Sukartiningsih, Nanik Setyowati, & Subroto, 2019). Furthermore, the variety of activities in BLA, such as reading aloud, reading together, independent reading, mini-lessons, and guided and independent exercises, makes students more focused on mastering reading skills and makes it easier for teachers to carry out learning (Willson & Falcon, 2018). Finally, the BLA stage makes it easier for teachers to choose readings, give activity orders, give examples of how to find information, and explain the systemic stages for mastering reading skills (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2021).

The results of the analysis on published articles in reputable international journals show that research on reading comprehension is mainly discussed students' reading comprehension levels, evaluation of the balanced literacy approach (BLA), perceptions and difficulties of teachers/instructors in implementing BLA, and media development with a BLA perspective. These details include a case study of the level of reading comprehension of English texts by high school students in Padang, Indonesia, with the perspective of Barrett Taxonomy (Krismadayanti & Zainil, 2022). Similar research was also conducted in Jordan on students with disabilities (Al-Rimawi & Al Masri, 2022). In addition, there is also research on the evaluation of reading comprehension programs with a structured facilitator model in Michigan, United States (Ross, Pinder, & Coles-White, 2015). Furthermore, a similar study was conducted to analyze the difficulties of instructors in applying the balanced-literacy approach model in the reading community of "Taman Baca" in Surabaya, Indonesia (Nuswantara & Rohmah, 2020). Other research is on the application of the balanced-literacy approach by several English teachers in private elementary schools in Bali, Indonesia, and the development of pop-up media based on the balanced-literacy approach to reading comprehension of English texts for first-grade elementary school students in Surabaya, Indonesia (Sayukti, Sundayana, & Gustine, 2019; Wulandari, Hendratno, & Indarti, 2020).

These results indicate that no specific research discusses students' difficulties in mastering reading comprehension skills of story texts. The difficulties discussed are only related to the reading comprehension level of high school students and students with disabilities. Thus, an in-depth investigation of the students' problematic experience when learning reading comprehension skills and the need for strategies, media, or teaching materials is urgent. Other results show that no specific research describes teachers' efforts and strategies to overcome these problems. Finally, no research is related to analyzing the need for teaching materials for reading comprehension of story texts at the elementary school level.

METHODS

Research Design

It is Borg and Gall's research and development consisting of information collecting, planning, developing a preliminary form of product, preliminary field testing, main product revision, main field testing, operational product revision, operational field testing, final product revision, dissemination, and distribution (Borg & Gall, 1983).

This research design is a content analysis of the developed teaching materials. This design was chosen because it can produce and validate products in the field of education according to the needs and educational goals required, and the products developed are immediately ready to be applied in schools (Borg & Gall, 1983), as figure 1:

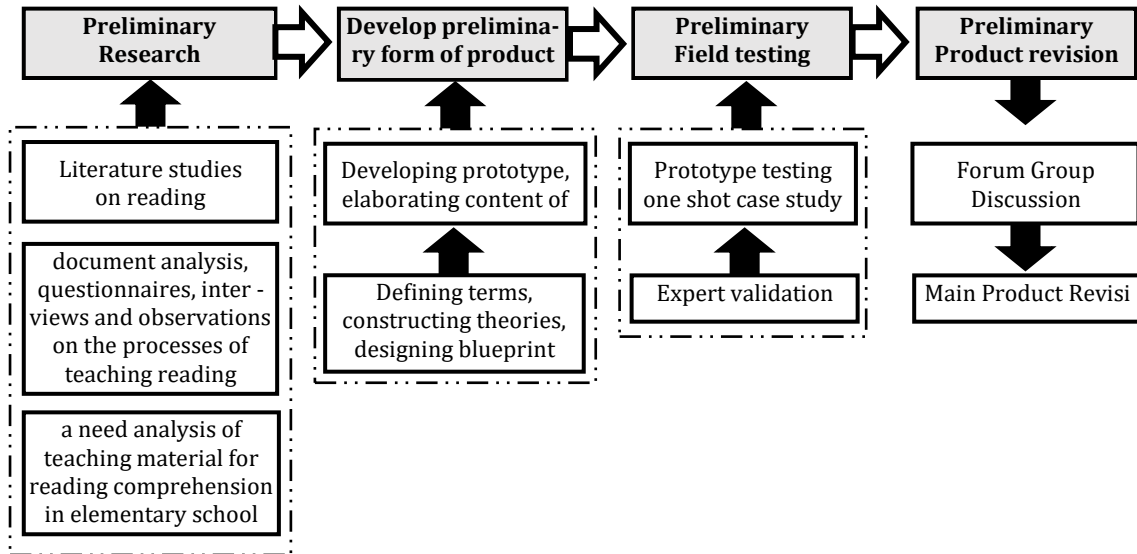


FIGURE 1. *The design of Research and Development by Borg and Gall*

Participant

The sample of this research is eleven students of third-grade elementary school. The researcher used purposive sampling because of the suitability of the students who will use the learning material. The characteristic of the sample is listed in table 1:

TABLE 1. *The characteristic of the research sample*

Variable	Characteristic	Total	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	5	45,5
	female	6	54,5
Age	≤ 8 years old	2	18,2
	> 8 years old	9	81,8
Grade	Second grade	0	0
	Third grade	11	100
	Fourth grade	0	0
Reading Proficiency	Low	3	27,3
	Fair	5	45,4
	Good	3	27,3

TABLE 2. *The items of research indicators*

Aspects	Indicators	Details
content Feasibility	The suitability of the material with standard competence	Material eligibility Material breadth Material Depth
	The accuracy of learning material	Accuracy of concepts and definitions Accuracy of facts and data Accuracy of examples and cases Accuracy of pictures and illustrations term accuracy
	Up-to-date material	Pictures illustrate everyday life Examples of everyday life cases
	Encouraging curiosity	Encouraging curiosity Creating the ability to ask questions
Material Presentation	Presentation techniques	Concept sequence
	Presentation support	Examples of pictures and illustrations Pictures and illustrations on each indicator Introduction Bibliography
	Learning presentation Cohesive and coherence presentation	Student engagement Linkages between main and sub-learning activities Meaning integrity between main and sub-learning activities
Language	Straightforward	Accuracy of sentence structure sentence effectiveness standard sentence information clarity
	Communicative Dialogical and Interactive	Motivating learners
	Conformity to the development of participants' level of education	Conformity with the student's intellectual development Appropriateness with the level of students' emotional development
	Conformity with language rules	Grammatical accuracy Word-spelling accuracy
contextual assessment	Conformity with the nature of contextual assessment	The link between the material being taught and the students' real-world situation The ability to encourage students to make connections between their knowledge and its application in daily lives
	Conformity with the components of contextual assessment	Constructivism Inquiry Questioning Learning Community Modelling Reflection Authentic assessment

Data Collection and Instrument Techniques

The type of test used is a content validity test involving two experts in their field, language learning experts. This content validity test is carried out by asking for expert validation regarding the content of teaching materials and filling out questionnaires. This validation sheet consists of four main aspects: content feasibility, presentation, language, and contextual assessment. There are 16 sub-aspects in this sheet, namely the suitability of the material with standard competence, the accuracy of learning material, up-to-date material, encouraging curiosity, presentation techniques, presentation support, learning

presentation, cohesive and coherence of thinking flow, straightforward, communicative, dialogical and interactive, conformity to the development of participants education, conformity with language rules, contextual nature, contextual components. In addition, researchers also conducted tests to determine the visibility of the developed products in appearance and content by asking students to fill out the teaching material questionnaire sheet. The total number of items in the questionnaire is 38 statements listed in table 2:

Data Analysis

The content validity testing activity is carried out by asking for expert validation regarding the contents of teaching materials by reading teaching materials and filling out questionnaires. In addition, experts are also given the freedom to provide input directly by writing in the developed teaching materials. The validation data was then analyzed using the Gregory formula, as in Table 3.

TABLE 3. *Gregory Content Validation Criteria*

Criteria	Description
0,8 - 1	very high validity
0,6 - 0,79	high validity
0,40 - 0,59	medium validity
0,20 - 0,39	low validity
0,00 - 0,19	very low validity

RESULTS

The results of the experts' content validation

The results of validating the content of teaching materials from experts are divided into two exposures: the main aspects of the composition and sub-indicators of teaching materials. Its constituents' main aspects are the content's appropriateness, presentation of the material, language, and contextual assessment. The details of the four aspects are shown in the following chart:

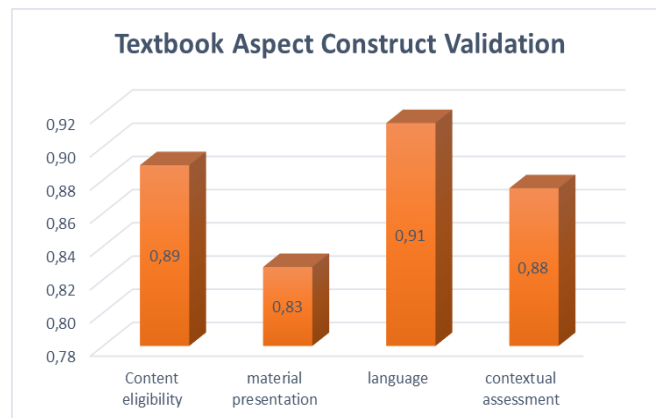


FIGURE 2. *The content validation results from experts*

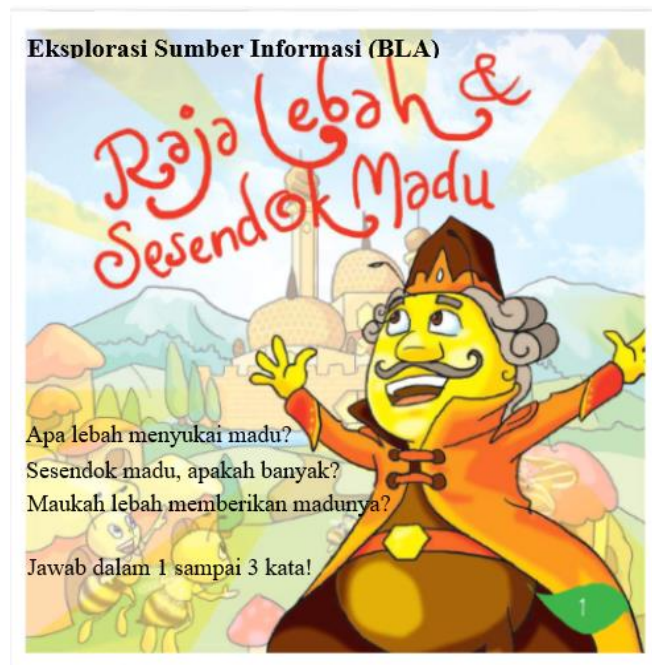
Figure 2 shows that the results of content validation on the four main aspects are at a very high level of validity, above 0.8. The data also shows that the validity ranging from the highest to the lowest score is language (0.91), content feasibility (0.89), contextual assessment (0.88), and material presentation (0.83).

The results of the learning material's content validation from experts in the form of the constituent indicators can be seen in table 4:

TABLE 4. *The results of content validation from experts in the indicators*

Aspects	Indicators	Content Validity	Mean
content feasibility	The suitability of the material with standard competence	1	0,88
	The accuracy of learning material	0,71	
	Up-to-date material	1	
Material Presentation	Encouraging curiosity	1	
	Presentation techniques	1	
	Presentation support	0,62	
	Learning presentation	1	
Language	Cohesive and coherence presentation	1	
	Straightforward	0,73	
	Communicative	1	
	Dialogical	1	
	Interactive	1	
	Conformity to the development of participants' level of education	1	
contextual Assessment	Conformity with language rules	1	
	Conformity with the nature of contextual assessment	1	
	Conformity with the components of contextual assessment	0,83	

Table 4 shows that the average score of expert validation is 0.88, which is very high. The experts' content validation of the teaching materials results in 13 of the 16 indicators being very high, above 0.80. At the same time, the three indicators are at a high level of validity: straightforward language, material content accuracy, and supporting material presentation (0.73, 0.71, and 0.62, respectively).

**FIGURE 3.** *The display of a sample page of revised learning material as expert suggestions*

The Result of Main Product Revision

The expert comments related to the appearance of the developed teaching materials were enlarging image size and reducing the written text as much as possible without distracting the meaning. Therefore, it results in reducing the attractiveness of teaching materials. The researcher then revised the teaching materials and displayed in figure 3.

Figure 3 shows one page as parts of teaching materials consisting of one large picture and several short questions. The display differs from the previous teaching materials, which presented a too-small image of only one-sixth of the page area; the question and pictures were separated and contained much-written text on the page. The results of this revision make the students understand the purpose of one of the stages of the balanced literacy approach easier: the exploration of information sources. In addition, students easily find the meaning because the questions and pictures are integrated.

Test Results of Student's Trial

The developed reading material was implemented for eleven third graders of elementary school. The students vary from those having low, fair, and high reading comprehension skills. Their proficiency separation in reading can be seen in detail in the table of sample characteristics. All samples are taught using the material simultaneously, being observed, and filling out the questionnaire. The result of the trial seen from the aspects composing the learning material is described in Table 5.

TABLE 5. Results of student's trial viewed from aspects composing the reading material

Aspect	F	%	description
Content feasibility	8	72	High
Material presentation	7	63	High
Language	9	81	Very high
Contextual assessment	8	72	High
Average Score	8	72	High

Table 5 shows that eleven students' advanced teaching materials test results are at a high level, above 72% or 0.72. The data also shows that the order scores ranging from the highest to the lowest are material presentation, content feasibility and contextual assessment, and language (63%, 72%, and 81%, respectively). The language element occupies the best aspect of this teaching material, with 81% or very high criteria, while the other three aspects are in the high category.

Meanwhile, the trial result seen from the quality of the developed reading material is presented in Table 6.

TABLE 6. Results of student's trial viewed from the quality of reading material

Data description	The average percentage of students' responses
Very good	18,2 %
Good	81,8 %
Average	0
Deficient	0
Poor	0

Table 6 shows that all students responded that the quality of the balanced literacy approach-based reading material mostly ranges from good to very good. The detail shows that 18,2 % of respondent believes that the reading material is excellently-constructed. Meanwhile, 81,8 % of respondent mention that the material is well-constructed. Last, none of the respondents states low, deficient, or average qualification for the material. The data shows that the developed material does not need any revision and can be used to teach reading comprehension to elementary school students.

DISCUSSION

The test results of the developed teaching materials show that all of its composing aspects are well-categorized. It means that the material presented in the balanced literacy approach-based reading material includes material listed in national standard competence, reflects the description that supports the achievement of basic competence, and orderly starts from the introduction of concepts, definitions, procedures, and output. In line, the texts of teaching materials must be systematically arranged under specific learning competency standards to facilitate implementation, achieve learning objectives, and solve student problems with certain material concepts (Arifuddin et al., 2022; Sari et al., 2022). The developed teaching materials should also contain particular objectives of the curriculum (Afif et al., 2022).

Another finding shows that the concepts and definitions presented in the developed teaching material do not have many interpretations and are by the applicable concepts and definitions. Besides, the facts, the data, the examples, the cases, the images, and the illustrations follow reality efficiently to increase students' understanding. Moreover, the technical terms used to follow the prevailing custom. The support from previous research states that suitable teaching materials must contain a series of specific topics that students need to learn and master (Romadhani & Harahap, 2022).

The presentation of the material lies examples of pictures to strengthen students' understanding of the concept. In addition, pictures and illustrations can train the student's ability to understand and apply concepts related to the learning material. The material also contains information on how to use teaching material supplements in the learning process and a list of references to support further reading. Furthermore, the presented descriptions and examples encourage students to practice further, foster creativity and explore the material more. One factor related to developing teaching materials is how the competencies are well-presented to increase students' understanding (Winarya et al., 2022).

The developed teaching material also presents a connection between the material being taught and the real-world situations of students. Therefore, the learning activity encourages students to make connections between their background knowledge and its application in everyday life. The previous research mentions that teaching materials must relate to students' everyday life and the environment (Hernawan, 2015).

The developed teaching materials have also met the principles of relevance, the principle of adequacy, the principle of consistency, and the principle of space (Romadhani & Harahap, 2022). The developed teaching materials have been relevant to the core and essential competencies, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, consistently containing various topics according to the competencies to be achieved by students and allowing students to develop their reasoning. Besides, the presentation of the material is interactive and participatory. The delivery of messages among main learning activities, sub-learning activities, other learning activities, and between paragraphs reflects the coherence and interrelationships of content. Furthermore, the material presented in one learning activity, sub-learning activity, or paragraph reflects the unity of the theme. Moreover, the language used in explaining a concept follows the level of cognitive development of students and the level of student's emotional maturity.

Other finding shows that the teaching materials developed are categorized as very good because they cover all aspects of the Balanced Literacy Approach. The developed teaching materials contain many preceding questions to brainstorm students' previous knowledge of the topic and to fluently drive their understanding of a topic. Teaching materials also connect the initial understanding of the topic, every element of language, and the students' post-reading understanding. The previous research shows that a balanced literacy approach consists of finding meaning and understanding the contents of reading by involving the language and the reader's background knowledge of the text (O'Day, 2009).

Besides, the activities in the developed reading material, which provide students with analyzing the spelling, pronouncing, meaning, and use of keywords or phrases, ease students to predict and comprehend the whole text. A balanced literacy approach combines all aspects of language understanding and phonemes to teach word recognition skills, reading fluency, and reading comprehension (Dorothy, 2006). The teaching material also leads to mastery of phonemes in reading through word recognition activities, word identification, reading fluency, vocabulary mastery, and understanding of the words meaning (Tarat & Sucaromana, 2014).

Last, the developed reading material also presents students with activities to share ideas and understanding. The sharing process occurs in the beginning stages and the running of the reading activities. The activities lead the students to present personal beliefs toward a topic, comment on colleagues' opinions and formulate the best conclusion to the passage. In line, a balanced literacy approach involves pair and group discussion by showing strong evidence from inside and outside the text as the principal of the Balanced Literacy Approach (Mondesir & Griffin, 2020; Nugent et al., 2016).

CONCLUSION

The content analysis results on reading comprehension teaching materials for third-grade elementary school students with a perspective of a balanced literacy approach show that the level of content validity is very high. The validation results from two language learning experts show an average of 0.88, which is very high. Similarly, the results of the trial of teaching materials to 11 students showed the number 0.72, which means high. These results indicate that the developed teaching materials already have good feasibility. Moreover, the reading material is ready to use to improve students' understanding of the story text.

However, the study is still limited to several conditions, such as the limited number of students who participated and the limited area used to do trials. In addition, the study is also limitedly conducted in the sixth stage of Borg and Gall's Research and Development, which is the primary product revision. The research focuses on the feasibility and readiness of the developed balanced literacy approach-based reading material.

The study suggests further research on the effectiveness of advanced reading material in improving the reading comprehension of elementary school students. Furthermore, research to investigate the effectiveness of a balanced literacy approach-based reading material being developed compared to the presented learning material to improve students reading skills can be conducted.

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