

## BILINGUAL STORYBOOKS FOR YOUNG LEARNERS: INSIGHTS FROM ENGLISH TEACHERS

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| ARTICLE INFO                                                                                                                                                             | ABSTRACT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| <p><b>Article History</b><br/>Submission: May 30, 2026<br/>Review: June 13, 2026<br/>Revised: June 18, 2026<br/>Accepted: June 20, 2026<br/>Published: June 24, 2026</p> | <p>This study investigated teachers' perceptions of bilingual storybooks for young learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. The study aims to explore teachers' views regarding the use of bilingual storybooks in supporting English language learning, increasing students' engagement, and promoting local cultural awareness. This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design involving 26 teachers who have knowledge of or experience with teaching English to young learners. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews and analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that teachers generally perceived bilingual storybooks positively as supportive instructional media for young learners. The participants believed that bilingual storybooks helped students understand English vocabulary and expressions more easily through contextualized stories and visual illustrations. In addition, storytelling activities were perceived to increase students' motivation, participation, and classroom engagement. The findings also showed that integrating local cultural elements into bilingual storybooks helped students develop cultural awareness and appreciation of local traditions. However, several teachers identified challenges related to classroom implementation, including students' dependence on first-language translations, differences in language proficiency, and limited classroom time. The study concludes that bilingual storybooks have strong potential to support meaningful and culturally responsive English language learning for young learners when supported by appropriate instructional strategies and classroom activities.</p> <p>Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki persepsi guru terhadap buku cerita dwibahasa untuk pembelajar usia dini dalam konteks English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pandangan guru mengenai penggunaan buku cerita dwibahasa dalam mendukung pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa, serta memperkenalkan budaya lokal kepada pembelajar usia dini. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian deskriptif kualitatif dengan melibatkan 26 guru yang memiliki pengetahuan atau pengalaman dalam mengajar bahasa Inggris kepada anak-anak. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan wawancara semi-terstruktur, kemudian dianalisis</p> |

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|                 | <p>menggunakan teknik analisis data kualitatif yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru secara umum memberikan persepsi positif terhadap buku cerita dwibahasa sebagai media pembelajaran yang mendukung pembelajaran bahasa Inggris bagi anak-anak. Buku cerita dwibahasa dinilai membantu siswa memahami kosakata dan ungkapan bahasa Inggris melalui cerita yang kontekstual dan ilustrasi visual. Selain itu, aktivitas bercerita dinilai mampu meningkatkan motivasi, partisipasi, dan keterlibatan siswa dalam pembelajaran. Temuan penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa integrasi unsur budaya lokal membantu siswa mengembangkan kesadaran budaya dan apresiasi terhadap tradisi lokal. Namun, beberapa guru juga mengidentifikasi tantangan dalam penerapannya, seperti ketergantungan siswa pada bahasa pertama, perbedaan kemampuan bahasa Inggris siswa, dan keterbatasan waktu pembelajaran. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa buku cerita dwibahasa memiliki potensi yang kuat dalam mendukung pembelajaran bahasa Inggris yang bermakna dan responsif terhadap budaya apabila didukung oleh strategi pengajaran yang tepat.</p> |
| <b>Keywords</b> | <p>Bilingual storybooks, teacher perceptions, young learners, English language learning, local culture</p> <p>Buku cerita dwibahasa, persepsi guru, pembelajar usia dini, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, budaya lokal</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

## Introduction

The growing exposure of children to digital media and worldwide popular culture has greatly impacted how young learners view language, literacy, and cultural identity. Although digital platforms offer access to extensive educational resources, they also lead to decreasing interest among children in local cultural traditions and physical literary works (Kucirkova & Flewitt, 2018). In various educational settings, young students often know more about foreign popular culture than their own local traditions. This occurrence worries educators about maintaining cultural identity and fostering significant literacy practices in children.

Simultaneously, English has emerged as one of the key languages in worldwide communication, prompting numerous schools and parents to start teaching English from a young age. Early exposure to English is believed to support children's cognitive and linguistic development since young learners have heightened language acquisition skills in their developmental stages (Pinter, 2017). Nevertheless, young learners frequently encounter various obstacles in English learning, especially in situations where children view English as challenging, unfamiliar, or irrelevant to their everyday lives (Shin & Crandall, 2014). As a result, educators must develop stimulating and relevant learning settings that connect language acquisition with the interests and cultural heritage of children.

A noteworthy educational tool that has received recognition for aiding language acquisition in young learners is bilingual storybooks. Bilingual storybooks provide content

in two languages at once, enabling children to enhance their literacy skills while learning vocabulary, sentence structures, and the use of language in context (Naqvi et al., 2012). Besides aiding language development, bilingual storybooks can enhance children's motivation and engagement since stories inherently capture their curiosity and imagination (Bland, 2018). Narrative-driven education offers children the chance to link language acquisition with feelings, experiences, and societal values.

Moreover, bilingual storybooks can act as a valuable tool for incorporating local cultural values into learning the English language. Cultural depiction in children's literature significantly influences the formation of children's identity, moral comprehension, and value of diversity (Nikolajeva, 2014). Incorporating local culture into language learning resources motivates children to not only learn a foreign language but also to take pride in their cultural heritage. This integration holds significant value in Indonesia, a diverse nation with a wealth of local traditions that must be maintained via educational methods.

Previous research has emphasized the advantages of bilingual storybooks in enhancing vocabulary development, reading understanding, and cultural awareness in young students (Ghosn, 2013; Read & Ellis, 2015). Multiple Indonesian research efforts have investigated the creation of bilingual storybooks as teaching tools for children. Nonetheless, the majority of these studies mainly concentrated on product development and classroom application, instead of investigating teachers' views on the use of bilingual storybooks in language learning settings. Teachers significantly impact the effectiveness of learning materials since their perceptions shape classroom practices, the choice of materials, and instructional strategies (Borg, 2015).

In recent years, there has been increasing focus on culturally responsive teaching resources in English language education for young learners. Educational researchers and practitioners are placing greater emphasis on incorporating local cultural elements into language learning materials to provide children with meaningful and contextually relevant educational experiences. An example of these materials is bilingual storybooks, which merge language acquisition with narrative and cultural expression. In the Indonesian EFL environment, bilingual storybooks featuring local cultural aspects can offer children chances to learn English while also fostering an understanding of their cultural identity. Although there is increasing interest in bilingual literacy resources, few studies have explored teachers' views on the educational benefits and classroom usability of bilingual storybooks for young students. This study examines teachers' views on utilizing bilingual storybooks as teaching tools to aid language acquisition and enhance cultural awareness among young students.

Exploring teachers' views is crucial since they are directly engaged in applying learning resources in classroom environments. Their viewpoints can offer valuable insights into the applicability, efficiency, cultural significance, and educational worth of bilingual storybooks. Moreover, grasping teachers' perspectives could enhance the development of culturally relevant teaching resources and facilitate the incorporation of local knowledge into English language instruction.

## Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate teachers' perceptions of bilingual storybooks for young learners. A qualitative approach was considered suitable because the study aimed to explore teachers' perspectives,

experiences, and evaluations regarding the use of bilingual storybooks in English language learning contexts for children.

The participants consisted of 26 teachers who have knowledge of or experience with teaching English to young learners. Their teaching experience ranged from 1 to more than 10 years, allowing the study to capture perspectives from both novice and experienced educators. This diversity of professional backgrounds provided a broader understanding of teachers' perceptions regarding the use of bilingual storybooks in young learner classrooms.

The main focus of this study was teachers' perceptions of bilingual storybooks, particularly regarding their effectiveness in supporting English language learning, improving students' engagement, and introducing local cultural values to young learners. Therefore, the study explored participants' views on the practicality, language appropriateness, cultural relevance, and classroom applicability of bilingual storybooks in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning contexts.

The data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was distributed to all 26 participants to gather general information regarding their perceptions of bilingual storybooks. The questionnaire included several aspects related to language learning, student motivation, cultural content, and instructional effectiveness. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants to obtain deeper explanations and more detailed insights into their experiences and opinions regarding the use of bilingual storybooks for young learners.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques proposed by Miles et al. (2014), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and categorized the data based on recurring themes and relevant responses related to teachers' perceptions. In the data display stage, the organized data were presented descriptively in the form of narrative explanations and tables to facilitate interpretation. Finally, in the conclusion drawing stage, the researcher interpreted the findings to identify major themes and draw conclusions regarding teachers' perceptions of bilingual storybooks for young learners.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, the researcher applied data triangulation by comparing information obtained from questionnaires and interviews. This process helped strengthen the consistency and trustworthiness of the data analysis. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights into the potential use of bilingual storybooks as meaningful and culturally responsive teaching materials for young learners in EFL classrooms.

## **Results and Discussion**

The findings of this study were obtained from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews involving 26 teachers who have knowledge of or experience with teaching English to young learners. The analysis revealed four major themes related to teachers' perceptions of bilingual storybooks: (1) bilingual storybooks as supportive media for English learning, (2) the influence of bilingual storybooks on students' engagement and motivation, (3) challenges in implementing bilingual storybooks in classrooms, and (4) teachers' suggestions for improving bilingual storybooks for young learners.

### **Results**

#### *Bilingual Storybooks as Supportive Media for English Learning*

Twenty-three participants viewed bilingual storybooks as an effective educational tool for young learners. They reported that using two languages in one text improved comprehension of vocabulary, phrases, and story content while reducing anxiety by allowing students to refer to their native language. Teachers also noted that bilingual storybooks introduced vocabulary in meaningful contexts through stories, illustrations, and character interactions, which supported vocabulary retention and language understanding. Visuals were considered particularly important for helping children understand content and stay engaged.

Despite these benefits, 15 participants expressed concerns that some students relied too heavily on the Indonesian text and paid limited attention to the English version, especially lower-proficiency learners. Consequently, teachers emphasized the need for classroom supervision to encourage engagement with the English text.

Additionally, 18 participants stated that the effectiveness of bilingual storybooks depends on students' English proficiency and teachers' instructional strategies. They recommended integrating bilingual storybooks with interactive activities such as storytelling, guided reading, vocabulary games, and classroom discussions.

#### *The Impact of Bilingual Storybooks on Student Engagement and Motivation*

The positive impact of bilingual storybooks on students' motivation and engagement was another major theme. Most participants reported that children were more interested and actively involved in lessons that included stories and illustrations than in traditional textbook-based activities. Teachers noted that colorful images, familiar cultural elements, and simple storylines encouraged participation, while storytelling activities motivated students to ask questions, share ideas, and engage in discussions. Bilingual storybooks also created a more enjoyable learning environment, helping students visualize events, make predictions, and build confidence in using basic English.

However, participants identified several challenges. Storytelling activities often required more instructional time and sometimes made classroom management difficult due to students' excitement. In addition, 17 participants observed that students lost focus when stories contained too many unfamiliar words or long passages. To maintain engagement and support comprehension, teachers recommended using bilingual storybooks with simple sentences, age-appropriate vocabulary, and attractive illustrations.

#### *Bilingual Storybooks and Local Cultural Awareness*

Teachers generally viewed bilingual storybooks as effective tools for introducing local culture while supporting English learning. Most participants reported that students were more engaged when stories included familiar cultural elements such as traditional clothing, songs, dances, customs, and folktales. Teachers also emphasized the importance of cultural representation, noting that bilingual storybooks can help preserve local identity amid growing exposure to global popular culture.

Additionally, 20 participants stated that bilingual storybooks supported character education by promoting values such as respect, cooperation, tolerance, unity, and appreciation of diversity. However, 17 participants noted that some cultural themes required additional explanation because students lacked sufficient background knowledge. To enhance understanding, teachers recommended complementing storybooks with classroom discussions, cultural projects, and video resources.

### *Teachers' Suggestions for Improving Bilingual Storybooks*

Participants suggested several improvements for bilingual storybooks. The most common recommendation was to use simpler, age-appropriate English vocabulary that matches learners' proficiency levels. Teachers also proposed adding supporting resources such as pronunciation guides, audio recordings, vocabulary lists, comprehension questions, and classroom activities to enhance learning and facilitate instruction. In addition, many participants recommended incorporating cultural content from various Indonesian regions to strengthen cultural representation and help students appreciate Indonesia's diversity while learning English.

## **Discussion**

The findings indicate that teachers generally perceive bilingual storybooks as effective tools for supporting young learners' English development. Participants reported that bilingual storybooks help students learn vocabulary, improve comprehension, and reduce anxiety by connecting new language input with their first language. These findings support previous studies highlighting the role of dual-language texts in promoting reading development and language learning.

Teachers also emphasized that storytelling provides meaningful contexts for language learning. Vocabulary was learned more effectively when presented through narratives rather than isolated words, while illustrations supported comprehension and sustained students' attention. In addition, bilingual storybooks increased students' motivation and classroom engagement. Stories, images, and familiar cultural elements encouraged participation, discussion, and confidence in using English, creating more learner-centered classroom interactions.

Despite these benefits, participants identified several challenges. Some students relied heavily on Indonesian translations and paid limited attention to the English text. Storytelling activities also required additional instructional time and careful classroom management, while stories containing unfamiliar vocabulary or lengthy passages sometimes reduced students' focus. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of bilingual storybooks depends not only on the materials themselves but also on appropriate teaching strategies, such as guided reading, storytelling, discussion, and interactive activities.

Another important finding is the contribution of bilingual storybooks to cultural understanding and character education. Teachers reported that integrating local cultural elements, such as traditional clothing, songs, dances, customs, and folktales, increased students' engagement while strengthening their understanding of cultural heritage. Participants also believed that bilingual storybooks promote values such as respect, cooperation, tolerance, and appreciation of diversity. Furthermore, exposure to familiar cultural content may help students develop a stronger sense of cultural identity while learning English.

However, some teachers noted that certain cultural concepts required additional explanation because students lacked sufficient background knowledge. Therefore, bilingual storybooks should be complemented with classroom discussions, project-based learning, and multimedia resources to support deeper cultural understanding.

Teachers also offered recommendations for improving bilingual storybooks. The most common suggestions were using simpler, age-appropriate language and providing supplementary resources such as pronunciation guides, audio recordings, vocabulary lists,

comprehension exercises, and classroom activities. Participants further recommended including cultural content from a wider range of Indonesian regions to enhance cultural representation and appreciation of diversity.

Overall, the findings suggest that bilingual storybooks have strong potential to support English language learning, increase student engagement, and promote cultural awareness among young learners. Their effectiveness, however, depends on accessible language, instructional support, cultural relevance, and effective integration into classroom practice. Therefore, bilingual storybooks should be viewed not only as reading materials but also as culturally responsive learning tools that support both language development and broader educational goals.

## Conclusion

This study explored teachers' perceptions of bilingual storybooks for young learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Based on the findings obtained from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews involving 26 teachers, the study revealed that teachers generally perceived bilingual storybooks as meaningful and supportive instructional media for young learners.

The findings showed that bilingual storybooks help students understand English vocabulary and expressions through contextualized stories, visual illustrations, and the use of two languages. Teachers also perceived that storytelling activities increased students' engagement, motivation, and participation during classroom learning. In addition, the integration of local cultural elements in bilingual storybooks was considered beneficial for promoting cultural awareness, character education, and appreciation of local traditions among young learners.

However, the study also identified several challenges related to the implementation of bilingual storybooks in classroom settings. Some teachers expressed concerns regarding students' dependence on first-language translations, differences in students' English proficiency levels, limited classroom time, and the need for more interactive learning support. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of bilingual storybooks depends not only on the quality of the materials but also on teachers' instructional strategies and classroom management.

To conclude, bilingual storybooks have strong potential to support meaningful, engaging, and culturally responsive English language learning for young learners when designed appropriately and implemented effectively. Future studies are recommended to explore students' perspectives, classroom practices, and the long-term impact of bilingual storybooks on language development and cultural understanding in broader educational contexts.

## Declarations

The authors contributed to the conceptualization of the study, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of the findings, and manuscript writing. This research was funded by Dana PNPB Politeknik Negeri Sriwijaya 2025. The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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