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Picture Book of Surabaya Legend Supports EFL Vocabulary and Cultural Learning

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Abstract

General Background: In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, printed teaching materials that integrate textual and visual information are widely used to support comprehension, motivation, and cultural awareness. **Specific Background:** Picture books that combine narrative text with illustrations provide scaffolding for understanding story progression, vocabulary, and moral values, particularly when adapted from familiar local narratives. **Knowledge Gap:** Despite the recognized potential of visual narrative materials, locally grounded picture books designed specifically for EFL vocabulary learning and cultural connection remain underutilized. **Aims:** This study developed and implemented a simplified English picture book based on the Surabaya legend to support vocabulary acquisition and narrative comprehension. **Results:** The Picture Book – The History of Surabaya integrates sequential illustrations with short sentences, enabling classroom activities such as reading aloud, story sequencing, retelling, vocabulary identification, and group discussion. The combined use of words and images helps learners comprehend narrative structure, expand word meaning, practice narration, and engage with moral messages while connecting local heritage to language learning. **Novelty:** The material embeds local folklore into an English learning resource, linking linguistic development with intercultural awareness and identity formation. **Implications:** The findings suggest that culturally based picture books can serve as practical supplementary materials for EFL classrooms, supporting reading comprehension, vocabulary development, narrative skills, and cultural understanding in an engaging and meaningful way.

Highlights:

- Sequential illustrations facilitate comprehension of story structure and word meaning.

- Classroom practices include oral reading, panel ordering, discussion, and dramatized retelling.

- Local folklore integration connects language study with heritage awareness and moral learning.

Keywords:

Picture Book; EFL Vocabulary Learning; Narrative Text; Cultural Literacy; Visual Learning Media

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Introduction

Narrative text are crucial English learning materials that help develop students' reading comprehension, creativity and cultural literacy. However, students sometimes struggle with story structure, vocabulary and the morals. Studies have indicated that picture-based learning media, such as pictures series and storybooks, can improve students' ability in writing and understanding of a narrative text[1][2] [3]. Furthermore, electronic story books are found to be effective in enhancing reading comprehension and critical thinking[4][5][6]. By turning the Surabaya legend into a picture book this product not only develops linguistic skills but also enriches cultural understanding, supporting the integration of local identity in English learning. In addition, Picture books provide visual scaffolding that makes narrative more accessible for learners of different proficiency levels[7][8]. They also encourage motivation and engagement, creating a more meaningful reading experience in EFL classroom[9].

Additionally, developing picture books based on local culture strengthens the students' sense of identity and belonging while learning English. This approach does not only increase vocabulary mastery but also supports character building through moral values embedded in stories. By learning English through familiar cultural narratives, students are more likely to connect emotionally with the content, thus enhancing their reading interest and long-term retention of new words and concepts.

A. Information on Picture Book – The History of Surabaya

Picture books are effective resources to promote reading comprehension in students, because they integrate text with illustrational means in which meaning is constructed[10]. The images are scaffolding to support students in decoding language, predicting what will happen in the story, and remembering vocabulary[11][12]. Through narrative texts and sequential pictures, students are led to understand orientation, complication, climax, and resolution without depending on text solely.

Specifically, the picture book of Surabaya plays a significant role in English learning since it bridges students' prior knowledge of local folklore with new linguistic input. The combination of familiar characters (sura and Baya) with simplified English sentences allows learners to comprehend vocabulary more concretely. Moreover, it motivates students to practice reading and speaking English in a more interactive way, making the classroom atmosphere engaging and culturally meaningfull.

B. Preparation of Picture Book
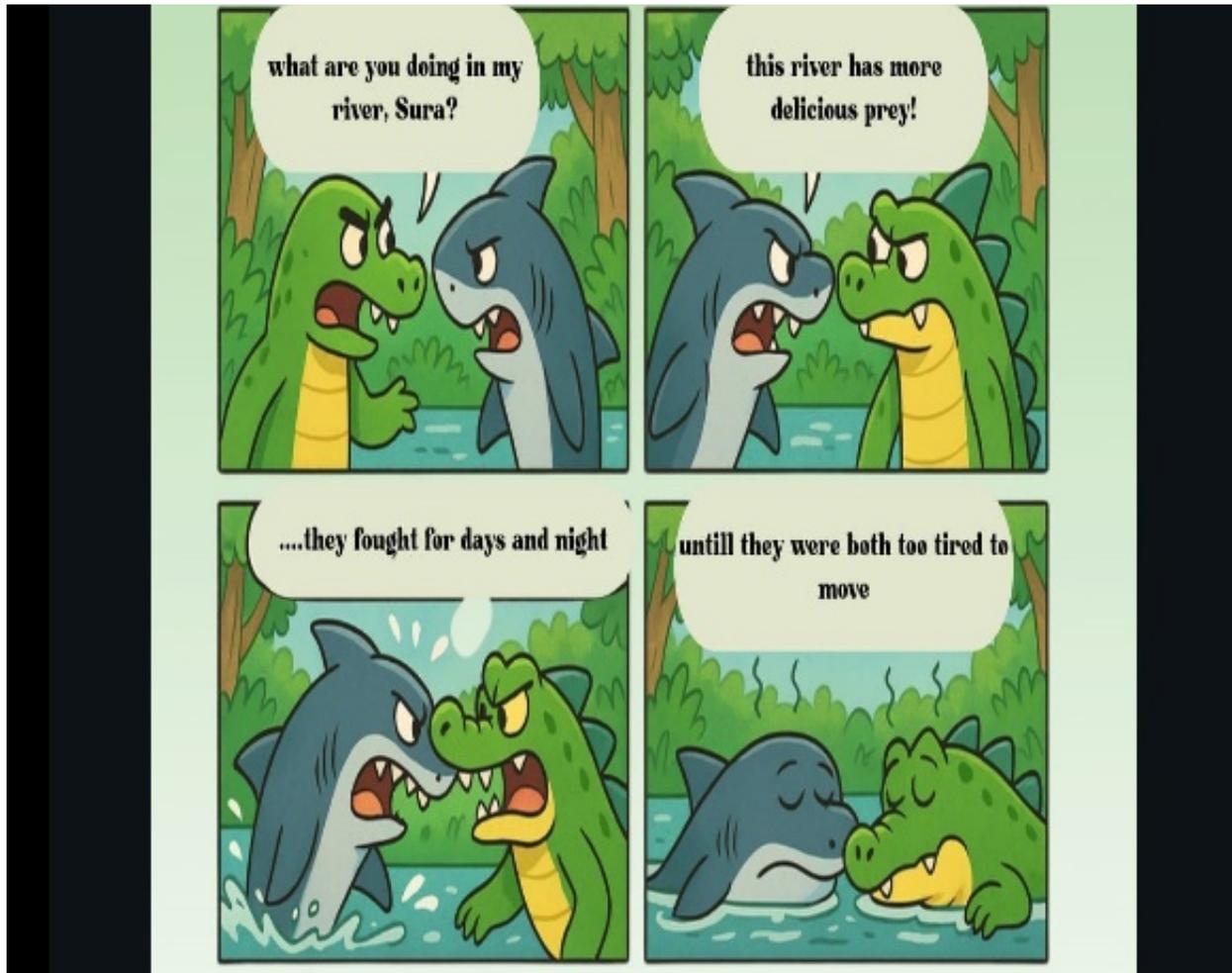
Figure 1. Picture 1

Figure 2. Picture 2

C. Implementation in Learning Activities

1. Students access the flipbook using the link https://heyzine.com/flip-book/a61ec64a4b.html
2. Each page of the picture book presents short English sentences that are directly supported by illustrations.
3. The story is adapted from the Surabaya legend of *Sura* (shark) and *Baya* (crocodile).
4. Vocabulary is simplified to suit learners' levels and accompanied by visual cues.
5. The layout is designed in a sequential panel format to make the storyline easy to follow.
6. Reading Aloud: The teacher or students read the sentences while observing the illustration to build comprehension.
7. Story Sequencing: Students arrange the picture panels in the correct order to understand the flow of the story.
8. Vocabulary Identification: Learners highlight and practice new words supported by the visuals.
9. Discussion: Groups discuss the characters, conflicts, and morals found in the story.
10. Retelling: Students retell the story using their own words or role-play the characters.

Conclusions

The implementation of Picture Book – The History of Surabaya is reliable in explaining English narrative text. Through simple text and illustration, the book makes stories easy to understand and it can be a part of the students' early successes with reading, vocabulary, comprehension and culture[13]. The modular nature of the course enables students to approach the plot structure of the stories step by step, reviewing and building upon their knowledge, and showing clear way to completion of the material. This picture book not only improves reading skill but also connect language learning with local heritage. Therefore, it can serve as a practical meaningful resource for teachers in supporting students' learning of narrative texts in EFL Classrooms.

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