


## Utilizing the Big Book to Facilitate Indonesian EFL Young Learners' Literacy


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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates how Big Books promote literacy development in young Indonesian EFL learners. It used a qualitative method and descriptive case study research design with twenty fifth-grade kids from a primary school in Semarang, Central Java. Data were gathered through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the teacher and chosen pupils, and an examination of teaching materials and pupils' work. The findings show that Big Book-based training improves student engagement by providing engaging and dynamic learning experiences. Multimodal features, such as expanded texts and visual graphics, improve reading comprehension by allowing for a variety of meaning-making processes. Teacher mediation through dialogic reading and scaffolding has a substantial impact on literacy development. Furthermore, culturally sensitive content boosts learner motivation and contextual knowledge. Based on sociocultural, multimodal, and emergent literacy perspectives, the study emphasizes literacy as a socially mediated activity. It provides both practical and theoretical insights into effective literacy instruction for young learners in EFL settings.

**Keywords:** big books, EFL, Indonesian young learners, literacy

### Introduction

In the Indonesian context, where literacy levels remain a national priority, the development of young learners' literacy has emerged as a major concern in modern education. Literacy encompasses more than just reading and writing; it also entails understanding, critical thinking, and creating meaning across a variety of social contexts. The significance of implementing engaging and developmentally appropriate literacy practices at the early stages of school has been highlighted by educators and scholars more and more in recent years. The use of Big Books, characterized by large fonts, vibrant pictures, and interactive storytelling, is a promising educational tool that captures young students' interest.

It is clear that primary school pupils in Indonesia need to enhance their literacy skills. Research shows that many students still have difficulty with fundamental reading comprehension and

text engagement, especially in the post-pandemic educational environment. Innovative teaching methods that may both increase students' interest in reading and improve their literacy abilities are necessary in this situation. In this sense, Big Books have become a useful teaching tool because they offer a shared reading experience that promotes engagement, communication, and group learning.

Recent research demonstrates how Big Books might help young students improve a variety of literacy-related skills. For example, studies show that Big Books greatly improve vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and students' confidence in learning English. Big Books' integration of text and visuals makes it easier for students to connect words to their meanings, promoting deeper comprehension. Similarly, further research shows that Big Book media can greatly enhance children's reading literacy outcomes, as demonstrated by quantifiable improvements in pre- and post-test scores. These results imply that Big Books offer educational benefits in addition to their interest. The statements are supported by (Harsiwi & Yunarni, 2021; Widiastuti, & Cahyono, 2024; Wiwikananda & Susanti, 2022).

Furthermore, Big Books promote multimodal literacy development, which is critical in the 21st-century educational environment. Big Books cater to varied learning styles by mixing visuals, text, and storytelling, allowing young learners to generate meaning through a variety of representations. Research indicates that Big Books can improve vocabulary acquisition and pique students' interest in learning by offering engaging graphics and contextualized content. Furthermore, the interactive aspect of Big Book reading sessions promotes active engagement, which is essential for early literacy development.

In the Indonesian setting, incorporating local culture with Big Book content enhances its relevance and usefulness. According to a recent study, Big Books that incorporate local wisdom boost literacy skills while also making learning more relevant and culturally responsive. This is consistent with current educational trends, which emphasize context- and culture-grounded learning resources to enhance pupils' identification and involvement. Despite these advantages, the use of Big Books in Indonesian classrooms remains limited and frequently underutilized, particularly in aiding full literacy development. Many teachers continue to use traditional textbooks, which may not completely engage young students or meet their unique requirements. As a result, there is an increasing need to investigate and deploy innovative media, such as Big Books, to improve reading training.

Finally, using Big Books is a potential way to promote literacy among Indonesian young learners. Big Books, which provide interactive, graphically rich, and culturally appropriate learning experiences, can significantly improve students' reading skills, vocabulary, and overall engagement in literacy activities. As a result, incorporating Big Books into early literacy education can help solve literacy issues while also creating a more effective and meaningful learning environment for Indonesia's young learners.

Despite the growing body of research demonstrating the efficacy of Big Books in improving young learners' reading, key gaps persist, particularly in the Indonesian educational system. While prior research has shown that Big Books can improve reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and learner engagement, much of this work focuses on short-term results and constrained instructional settings. As a result, there is still a lack of understanding of how prolonged and regular use of Big Books affects long-term literacy development, particularly higher-order reading skills such as inference, critical thinking, and interpretative ability. The statements are supported by (Hargrave, A. C., & Sénéchal, 2000; Lantolf, J. P., et.al, 2021; Mayer, 2021).

One notable gap is the prevalence of small-scale and quasi-experimental research that typically uses pre-test and post-test designs. Although such studies provide useful insights into immediate learning gains, they often fail to capture the complexities of literacy development as a long-term, socially mediated phenomenon. There is a scarcity of longitudinal studies on how continual exposure to Big Book-based education influences learners' reading trajectories across grade levels. This constraint limits our understanding of whether the reported improvements are sustained and transferable to other literacy contexts beyond the classroom.

Another notable issue is the poor incorporation of theoretical frameworks in previous investigations. Many studies on Big Book use are mostly descriptive or practice-oriented, with little engagement with established theories such as sociocultural theory, multimodal literacy, or emergent literacy frameworks. As a result, more theoretically grounded research is needed to explain how and why Big Books promote literacy development, rather than simply establishing their effectiveness. Such theoretical integration is critical for advancing scholarly discourse and shaping educational design more systematically.

Furthermore, the present research does not adequately investigate the role of teacher pedagogy in moderating the effectiveness of Big Books. Most studies regard Big Books as a stand-alone teaching tool, ignoring the role of instructor practices, including questioning, scaffolding, dialogic reading, and classroom interaction styles. This creates a gap in understanding the interaction between instructional media and teaching practices, a critical factor for optimizing Big Books' pedagogical potential in real-world classrooms. In the Indonesian context, there is also a scarcity of research using culturally responsive, locally contextualized Big Book resources. While a few studies have begun incorporating local wisdom into Big Books, this topic remains underexplored. Given Indonesia's vast cultural diversity, there is a pressing need to explore how culturally embedded Big Books affect not only literacy abilities, but also learners' identity construction, motivation, and engagement. This is consistent with current educational paradigms that emphasize culturally sustainable pedagogy and global English viewpoints. (Hidayatullah, S., 2023; Lantolf, J. P., et al,2021; Dubovi, I., & Lee, V.R., 2022).

In addition, there has been little emphasis on using digital or multimodal Big Books in literacy training. With the growing shift toward digital learning environments, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical to investigate how digital Big Books or interactive storytelling platforms compare with traditional printed Big Books in terms of literacy development. This gap is especially important for meeting the demands of 21st-century learners, who are increasingly exposed to digital media. This study presents several noteworthy new findings that advance both theoretical development and practical innovation in the field of young learners' literacy, particularly in the Indonesian context. While earlier research has shown that Big Books improve fundamental literacy skills, this study goes beyond traditional approaches by introducing a more comprehensive, contextually grounded, and theoretically grounded model of Big Book use. These statements are supported by ( Wilkinson & Silliman, 2000; Harsiwi, N.E & Yunarni, 2021).

First and foremost, this study is unique in combining Big Books with a multimodal literacy approach. Unlike previous research, which focused only on printed Big Books as visual-textual media, this study views Big Books as multimodal literacy tools that include visual, textual, oral, and interactive features. By doing so, the study broadens Big Books' pedagogical function from basic shared reading resources to dynamic meaning-making tools. This method aligns with 21st-century literacy needs, which require learners to perceive and produce meaning across different forms, not just written text.

Second, this study proposes a culturally sensitive Big Book paradigm that combines Indonesian indigenous wisdom, tales, and sociocultural contexts. While previous research has only briefly addressed cultural content, this study integrates local stories, values, and circumstances into the design and implementation of the Big Book. This innovation not only increases learner engagement but also promotes identity construction and culturally relevant learning. In this way, the study bridges the gap between literacy instruction and culturally sustaining pedagogy, a gap that has been underexplored in Indonesian literacy research.

Third, the study offers a new perspective by emphasizing the importance of teacher mediation through dialogic reading and scaffolding. Rather than viewing Big Books as stand-alone instructional material, this study sees teachers as active agents shaping literacy acquisition through directed engagement, questioning strategies, and collaborative meaning-making. This transfers the emphasis from media effectiveness to pedagogical processes, resulting in a more comprehensive knowledge of how literacy develops in classroom settings.

Fourth, this study used a hybrid Big Book strategy, which combines traditional printed Big Books with digital or interactive versions. This hybrid model addresses the increasing digitalization of education by investigating how multimodal and digital affordances can improve young learners' reading experiences. Such integration has been limited in prior studies, particularly in the Indonesian context, making it an important contribution to modern literacy practices. Finally, this study provides a context-specific conceptual framework that connects Big Book use, multimodal literacy practices, teacher mediation, and literacy results for Indonesian young learners. This framework provides a novel perspective for future study and can serve as a reference model for educators and researchers seeking to adopt innovative literacy training in comparable settings.

### *Research Questions*

The complexity of literacy development as a multifaceted process comprising cognitive, social, and affective components is intended to be captured by these research questions. The study intends to contribute to theoretical and practical developments in early literacy education by addressing these interrelated issues and providing a thorough knowledge of how Big Books serve as pedagogical instruments in EFL literacy instruction.

- **RQ1:** How do Big Books support young learners' reading comprehension and meaning-making?
- **RQ2:** How does teacher mediation facilitate literacy improvement during Big Book activities?
- **RQ3:** How do young learners and teachers perceive the use of Big Books in the classroom?

### **Literature Review**

Recent years have seen a rise in scholarly interest in the development of literacy instruction for young students, especially in response to concerns about declining reading engagement and proficiency in early education worldwide. The use of Big Books has become a pedagogically effective strategy in this changing environment, particularly for promoting early literacy development through interactive, captivating learning experiences. Early literacy development is most successful when pupils actively participate in meaning-making processes rather than passively absorb information, according to recent studies. By facilitating shared reading activities, in which educators and pupils work together to engage with texts, Big Books promote this paradigm. This is consistent with modern theories of emergent literacy, which see literacy

as a socially constructed process influenced by conversation, interaction, and contextualized learning (Björk, 2025; Neumann, 2020; Wasik, B. A., & Hindman, 2023). In these contexts, Big Books serve as both reading materials and tools for promoting vocabulary acquisition, oral language development, and comprehension.

The incorporation of multimodal literacy into early education is another significant trend in the literature. In addition to written text, scholars contend that young learners understand meaning through a variety of semiotic resources, such as gestures, sounds, and images (Kress, 2005; Serafini, 2022; Tang, M., et al, 2026). This multimodal engagement is naturally supported by Big Books' huge pictures and visually engaging design. According to empirical research done between 2020 and 2025, students who get multimodal Big Book education significantly outperform those who use traditional textbooks in terms of reading comprehension and narrative interpretation (Ferk-Dornstauder, M., n.d.; Mayer, 2021; Nan, J., & Tian, 2025). This suggests that combining textual and visual components improves cognitive processing and promotes deeper learning.

Additionally, recent research has placed a strong emphasis on the function of dialogic reading and instructor scaffolding. Interactive questioning, prompting, and feedback techniques are used in dialogic reading to motivate students to take an active role in the reading process. Research indicates that when dialogic reading strategies are used with Big Books, children demonstrate increased comprehension, improved expressive language, and greater engagement (Hargrave, A. C., & Sénéchal, 2000; Wilhelm, A. M., & McGraw, 2023). This is part of a larger movement to acknowledge the teacher's function as a learning facilitator rather than just a knowledge transmitter.

Recent studies emphasize the significance of culturally appropriate literacy resources in the Indonesian environment. To make learning more relevant and approachable for younger students, academics have begun investigating the incorporation of indigenous stories and local wisdom into Big Books. According to research, culturally embedded Big Books boost pupils' motivation and identity awareness, as well as improving reading outcomes (Hidayatullah, S., 2023; Suryani, A., 2023; Widiastuti, I., & Cahyono, 2024). This is consistent with the tenets of culturally responsive education, which emphasize connecting academic material to pupils' sociocultural backgrounds. Digital Big Books and interactive storytelling platforms have also emerged in response to the post-pandemic educational environment's acceleration of digital and hybrid learning. According to recent research, features like audio narration, animation, and interactive elements might further improve engagement with digital Big Books (Lee, V.R., 2022; Permana, R.S.G, ( Dubovi, I & Lee, V.R., (2022); Permana, R.S.G; et al, 2022; Towson, J., 2025). However, academics also warn that instructor facilitation and pedagogical design have a major role in the efficacy of digital tools.

Despite these developments, the state of the art shows that the majority of research continues to focus on discrete facets of Big Book use, such as vocabulary development or reading comprehension, without fully integrating multimodal, cultural, and pedagogical factors into a cohesive framework. This suggests that the field is continuing to move toward more comprehensive, multidisciplinary approaches to teaching literacy. Big Books are increasingly recognized as effective resources for promoting literacy among young students through dialogic interaction, multimodal engagement, shared reading, and cultural significance. These advancements are part of a larger shift in literacy instruction toward more inclusive, interactive, and culturally grounded methods that meet the requirements of pupils in the twenty-first century.

Figure 1.

## Conceptual Model of Big Book–Mediated Literacy Development

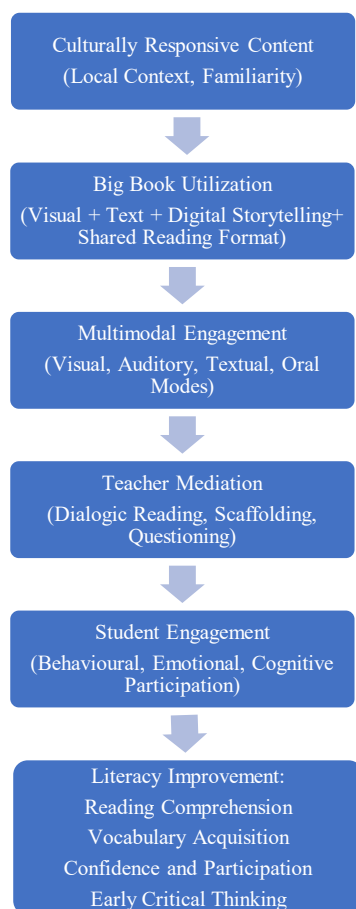


Figure 1. A conceptual model showing how using Big Books promotes the literacy development of Indonesian young learners through teacher-mediated interaction and multimodal engagement, with culturally sensitive content as a moderating element. The model emphasizes the linked, sequential processes that lead to better literacy outcomes.

## Method

### *Research Design*

This study employed a qualitative, descriptive case study research design to investigate how Big Book use promotes literacy development among young Indonesian students. Since the study's goal is to comprehend processes, interactions, and experiences rather than to quantify variables, a qualitative approach is chosen. Particularly for younger students, literacy development is a socially created phenomenon that entails contextual learning, meaning-making, and engagement. Consequently, the researcher can capture these complexities in an authentic classroom environment through qualitative inquiry (Creswell, J.W. & Timothy, 2019; Miles, M.B., et al, 2014; Tracy, 2013).

The case study research design is particularly relevant because it focuses on a single classroom where Big Book training is implemented. This methodology allows for a thorough and comprehensive assessment of how instructional media, teacher practices, and student

engagement interact in real-world settings (Lantolf, J. P., et al, 2021; Mol, S. E., & Bus, 2020; Sun, Y., & Yin, 2023). Rather than isolating variables, the study aims to understand how literacy development originates from classroom interactions.

### *Research Setting and Participants*

One English teacher and about 20 pupils, ages 9, participated in the study, which was conducted at an Indonesian primary school. Purposive sampling, which focuses on individuals who can provide rich, pertinent information about the topic under study, is used to select participants. (Braun, V & Clarke, 2021; Creswell, J.W. & Timothy, 2019; Miles, M.B., et al, 2014). The teacher acted as a major informant, offering insights into Big Book implementation, classroom management, and instructional tactics. The main participants whose participation, interaction, and literacy growth are investigated are the students. Because it shows how educational practices are perceived at the learner level, incorporating students' viewpoints is crucial. To offer institutional support and a more comprehensive contextual understanding of literacy practices, school stakeholders, such as a curriculum coordinator, may also be included.

### *Data Collection technique*

This study used a variety of data collection techniques to ensure data triangulation and depth of analysis, thereby representing the complexity of literacy learning. To record teaching and learning activities in real time, classroom observations are carried out. The researcher observes the teacher's use of Big Books, students' reactions, and interactions. This approach is significant because it records real practices instead of self-reported data, offering concrete proof of scaffolding, multimodal interaction, and engagement (Creswell, J.W. & Timothy, 2019; Miles, M.B., et al, 2014; Tracy, 2013).

Participants' viewpoints are investigated using semi-structured interviews. To learn about the pedagogical choices, difficulties, and perceived efficacy of Big Books, the instructor is interviewed. Age-appropriate questions are also used in interviews with chosen students to learn about their motivations, emotions, and educational experiences. This approach maintains focus on research goals while providing freedom to delve further into replies (Creswell, J.W. & Timothy, 2019; Marshall, C., et al, 2021). Examining lesson plans, Big Book resources, and pupils' work are all part of document analysis. This sheds light on how education is planned and how their performance reflects literacy outcomes. By providing context and supporting information, document analysis enhances observations and interviews.

### *Data Analysis*

Thematic analysis is used to analyze data, as outlined by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke V. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021). Because it enables the researcher to methodically find, examine, and explain patterns throughout qualitative data, this approach was selected. The six stages of the analysis are getting acquainted with the data, creating preliminary codes, identifying themes, evaluating themes, defining and labeling themes, and creating the report. Through this method, the researcher can transition from unprocessed data (such as observation notes and interview transcripts) to significant themes like teacher scaffolding, engagement, and multimodal learning. This study is especially well-suited for thematic analysis since it offers flexibility without sacrificing analytical rigor.

## Results

### *Big Books, Reading Comprehension, and Meaning-Making*

Document analysis, pupils' interviews, and classroom observations are used to answer the research question 1. While interviews examine methods like using visuals to understand meaning, observations record how students use textual and visual cues to analyze texts. Analysis of documents (such as worksheets and retelling exercises) provides evidence of comprehension. Both the process (how pupils comprehend) and the outcome (what they comprehend) were analyzed with this triangulated approach. Patterns of inferential reasoning, story comprehension, and vocabulary recognition are the main focus of thematic analysis.

Reading comprehension in the context of EFL learning encompasses more than just decoding written words; it also entails the capacity to use linguistic and contextual resources to interpret, connect, and infer meaning. The main way that Big Books improve reading comprehension is through their multimodal design, which combines rich visual pictures with large, legible text. They can obtain meaning in a variety of ways thanks to these characteristics. For example, learners frequently use images to infer meaning when encountering unfamiliar words, illustrating the role of visual scaffolding in comprehension. Instead of depending only on linguistic understanding, this approach shows how they actively create meaning by combining textual and visual information.

Additionally, Big Books use dialogic and interactive reading techniques to improve understanding. The teacher asks questions, makes predictions, and promotes conversation about the narrative during reading sessions. Higher-order comprehension abilities, such as recognizing major concepts, drawing conclusions, and comprehending cause-and-effect relationships, are supported by these interactions, which help them think beyond literal comprehension. They participate actively in creating meaning through this directed interaction rather than being passive consumers of knowledge.

By presenting stories in an organized and captivating manner, Big Books also foster narrative comprehension. They can repeat stories, recognize important events, and comprehend character behaviors thanks to the expanded language and clear event sequencing. This supports the development of both micro-level comprehension (e.g., vocabulary and sentence meaning) and macro-level comprehension (e.g., overall story structure). Additionally, by enabling pupils to connect new material to what they already know and have experienced, the inclusion of culturally familiar content enhances meaning-making. They are better able to understand the narrative and interact with the text more fully when they can identify elements from their own surroundings, such as well-known locations or characters.

The study used information from pupils' interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis to look at this research issue. During reading exercises, observations are made of how pupils engage with the text and make use of visual signals. While document analysis (such as worksheets and retelling exercises) provides proof of learning results, interviews shed light on pupils' understanding processes and perspectives. Patterns of inferential reasoning, narrative comprehension, and word comprehension are identified through thematic analysis. The overall goal of this research topic is to demonstrate how Big Books, when combined with interactive pedagogy, multimodal input, and culturally relevant content in EFL literacy training, serve as useful instruments for promoting reading comprehension and meaning-making.

### *Teacher Mediation in Big Book-Based Literacy Development*

Based on classroom observation data, the teacher actively mediates the learning process through conversation, guidance, and scaffolding during Big Book-based instruction rather than simply presenting the text. Teacher mediation plays a particularly important role in bridging the gap between students' current abilities and the demands of the text in EFL environments, where learners frequently encounter linguistic difficulties. The main way teacher mediation is implemented is through dialogic reading exercises, in which the instructor engages the class in interactive conversations rather than giving one-sided explanations. The instructor encourages pupils to describe pictures and connect them to the text, poses open-ended questions, and makes predictions during Big Book sessions. These techniques encourage active engagement and stimulate pupils' thinking, enabling them to jointly create meaning.

They gain deeper degrees of comprehension, such as inference and interpretation, through this kind of engagement. Scaffolding, which entails offering pupils short-term assistance to complete activities they are still unable to complete on their own, is another crucial component of teacher mediation. Scaffolding is demonstrated in the context of Big Books when the teacher repeats key words, simplifies complex phrases, models pronunciation, or uses visual aids to enhance comprehension. When children have trouble with unfamiliar words, for instance, the teacher might break the word into smaller parts or relate it to a picture. Over time, learners can gain confidence and independence through this gradual support.

Additionally, teacher mediation creates a supportive and low-anxiety learning environment, which is crucial for encouraging participation among young learners. The shared reading format, when combined with guided interaction, reduces pupils' fear of making mistakes and increases their willingness to speak and engage. This emotional support is crucial for literacy development because confidence and motivation influence their ability to participate in learning activities. Big Books allow the teacher to support lower-level pupils through visual elements while simultaneously challenging more advanced learners through textual analysis and higher-order questioning.

The study used teacher interviews and classroom observations to answer this research topic. Observations document the teacher's real-time application of mediation tools, including interaction patterns, scaffolding techniques, and questioning strategies. Interviews with teachers shed light on their teaching goals, decision-making procedures, and perceived difficulties. Important mediation patterns, including dialogic engagement, scaffolding, and adaptive instruction, are found and explained using thematic analysis. Overall, this study emphasizes how the teacher's role as a learning mediator strongly influences literacy development during Big Book activities, rather than just the instructional content. To turn Big Books into useful resources for literacy development in EFL classrooms, teachers must serve as facilitators, guides, and co-constructors of knowledge.

The study used semi-structured interviews with the teacher and pupils to answer this research topic. While teacher interviews focus on teaching methods, perceived advantages, and difficulties, pupil interviews aim to capture their emotions, preferences, and learning experiences in an age-appropriate way. To find recurrent patterns in perceptions, such as involvement, comprehension support, confidence, and practical limits, the data are subjected to thematic analysis. Overall, this study's question shows that pupils' and teachers' opinions on Big Book use are generally favorable and reinforce one another. These results imply that Big Books are a promising strategy for improving literacy instruction in EFL settings, as they are both pedagogically effective and well-received by classroom participants.

The third finding is based on a thematic analysis, namely, teachers' and pupils' voices on the use of the big book. Four main themes emerge from the analysis that explain how the use of Big Books helps Indonesian young learners develop their literacy: (a) increased pupils' engagement; (b) improved reading comprehension through multimodal support; (c) the crucial role of teacher mediation; and (d) the impact of culturally responsive content.

#### *Increased Young Learners' Involvement with Big Book Activities*

The results show that using the Big Book significantly increases pupils' participation in literacy activities. When Big Books were utilized instead of traditional textbooks, pupils were more focused, engaged, and excited, according to observational data. They were drawn in and inspired to participate by the text's huge size and vibrant graphics. Pupils readily offered to read aloud, pointed to pictures, and frequently answered the teacher's questions. This engagement was evident in one observed interaction:

*I am familiar with this tale, Miss! The tiger is furious! (Pupil 1).*

Many students had very positive things to say about Big Book activities. They characterized the educational process as engaging, enjoyable, and distinct from ordinary classes.

*I like the big book because the pictures are big and colorful. (Pupil 2).*

*It's enjoyable to read together. I'd like to read once again. (Pupil 3).*

These answers show that Big Books foster an engaging classroom where kids are eager to contribute. The materials' aesthetic appeal and interactive features seem to lower anxiety and boost readiness. This implies that Big Books foster a more engaging and dynamic learning environment, which is crucial for younger students. According to interview data, they considered Big Book sessions "fun" and "easy to understand," further supporting their increased enthusiasm for reading activities.

#### *Improved Reading Comprehension through Multimodal Support*

The second major conclusion emphasizes how Big Books use multimodal components to promote reading comprehension. Pupils were better able to comprehend the story because of the combination of text and visual representations, especially when it came to a foreign language. They were able to deduce word meanings from illustrations during observations. For instance, students frequently used visuals to determine the meaning of new words before consulting the teacher. This illustrates how important visual scaffolding is for understanding. In the interview, the teacher also attested to this:

*"They learn more quickly when they see the pictures. They don't always need to be translated. Document analysis of their worksheets revealed that most students correctly answered comprehension questions, particularly those that required identifying primary ideas and sequencing events. This implies that Big Books support both basic comprehension and early interpretive skills."*

The Role of Teacher Mediation in the Development of Literacy. Another important finding is that teacher mediation is essential to maximizing the effectiveness of Big Books. The teacher employed a number of strategies, including scaffolding, repetition, questioning, and prompting, to foster understanding. For instance, she frequently used guiding questions such as these: •

*"What do you anticipate happening next?"*

*"What makes the character depressed?"*

These questions prompted them to think critically and engage more thoroughly with the material. By clarifying challenging terms, demonstrating pronunciation, and promoting peer interaction, the teacher also offered scaffolding. Observation data reveal that pupils' confidence in their responses increased over time, suggesting that teacher support contributed to both confidence and comprehension. This result implies that the usefulness of Big Books depends on how teachers mediate the learning process; they are not enough on their own.

#### *The Impact of Culturally Appropriate Content on Education.*

The results also show that pupils' comprehension and engagement are improved by culturally relevant Big Book content. They found it easier to understand stories with recognizable situations, such as local animals or traditional settings. When the narrative connected to their daily experiences, the pupils' interest increased. For instance, when a story featured a local folktale theme, they were able to connect new information to what they already knew, which improved their comprehension. The teacher observed: "*They participate more and comprehend better when the story is relevant to their lives.*" This research emphasizes the importance of cultural relevance in literacy instruction, as it fosters meaningful learning and increases students' engagement with the text. Overall, the findings show that using Big Books has a good impact on young students' reading development through:

- √ raising participation and engagement,
- √ enhancing understanding by integrating text and images, improving learning via teacher-mediated communication, and
- √ improving comprehension with culturally appropriate material.

These interrelated elements imply that the implementation of instructional materials in engaging and relevant learning contexts is just as important to literacy development as the resources themselves.

#### *Assistance with Comprehension*

Pupils often said that the illustrations made the story easier for them to understand, particularly when they came across new vocabulary. "*I look at the picture if I don't know the word.*" "*I can understand because the picture tells the story.*" This highlights the importance of multimodal input in promoting comprehension by suggesting that learners use visual cues to make meaning. Instead of relying just on teacher explanations, they actively created meaning via interpretation and observation.

#### *Self-assurance in Participation*

Pupils' confidence also rose through Big Book activities. Many pupils said they felt more at ease reading aloud and responding to questions.

*"We read together, so I don't fear speaking."*

*"I see the picture, so I can respond."*

This suggests that the shared reading approach lowers stress and fosters a welcoming atmosphere where students feel comfortable participating. The steady development of confidence is facilitated by the combination of teacher direction and visual support.

#### *Communication and Cooperation*

During Big Book sessions, they emphasized the value of interaction. They took pleasure in answering the teacher's questions and debating the story with their peers.

*"We discuss the narrative together."*

*"My friend clarifies things for me."*

These responses show that learning is a group activity rather than a solitary pursuit. Peer engagement encourages participation and aids in conceptual understanding.

#### *Connection to Personal Experience*

When Big Book stories featured well-known cultural themes, they could relate the content to their personal experiences. This narrative is identical to my village.

*"This animal is familiar to me; I've seen it before." (Pupil 5).*

This demonstrates how culturally relevant content enhances pupils' engagement and comprehension by activating prior knowledge. They are more likely to join when they can identify with the narrative.

#### *Teacher's Voices on Using Big Books*

The teacher's voice offers crucial insights into how Big Books are applied, viewed, and assessed in classroom practice, supplementing students' viewpoints. A number of important themes—including instructional efficacy, pedagogical tactics, pupils' reactions, obstacles, and professional reflection—emerged from semi-structured interviews and thoughtful remarks.

#### *Perceived Efficiency in Improving Reading*

The teacher consistently emphasized that Big Books are useful resources for promoting early literacy development, especially for enhancing vocabulary and comprehension. *"Big Books help them understand the story faster because they can see the pictures and the words clearly."* She saw that pupils were more adept at understanding concepts without heavily depending on translation, suggesting that Big Books promote more organic language learning. This view is consistent with classroom observations, which showed increased participation and comprehension.

#### *Encouraging Dialogic and Interactive Learning*

The teacher emphasized that, unlike traditional materials, Big Books allow for more involved instruction. *"When I use Big Books, I can ask more questions and students respond more."* The class starts to participate more. All pupils could concentrate on the same subject at once thanks to the text's and the images' large format, which facilitated group reading and debate. The teacher also reported using strategies such as:

- √ posing open-ended queries,
- √ promoting forecasts, and asking pupils to explain pictures. A move toward dialogic and student-centered learning is reflected in these methods.

#### *Assistance with Differentiation and Scaffolding*

The importance of Big Books in scaffolding learning for a range of skill levels is another significant takeaway from the teacher's perspective.

*"While stronger students can read the text, weaker students can still follow by looking at the pictures."* This implies that Big Books offer a variety of entry points, enabling the teacher to support students with varying skill levels on the same task. While expanding questions for more advanced pupils, the teacher explained how to help struggling learners using repetition, modeling, and visual cues.

### *Evidence of Enhanced Student Involvement*

During Big Book sessions, the teacher observed discernible shifts in the children's attitudes and behaviors. They are more enthusiastic. Even quiet pupils want to respond. The teacher claims that Big Books made the classroom more lively and encouraged pupils to interact and share their thoughts. This enhanced participation was especially noticeable throughout the debate and narrative stages.

### *Cultural Relevance's Significance*

Additionally, the teacher stressed the importance of utilizing Big Books' culturally relevant information. *"They comprehend the story better and are more engaged if it is relevant to their lives."* She observed that using local surroundings, including well-known animals or everyday activities, made it easier for pupils to relate to the subject matter. This underscores the importance of contextualizing literacy instruction.

### *Implementation Difficulties*

Despite the advantages, the teacher recognized several difficulties when using Big Books: *"Not all topics have Big Books available, and sometimes preparation takes time."* Among the main obstacles were Limited access to appropriate Big Book resources and the time needed to prepare and adjust. To create culturally appropriate information, creativity is required. She added that using Big Books effectively necessitates being adept at controlling pupils' attention and interaction.

### *Professional Development and Reflection*

The teacher considered how Big Books affected their own instructional methods: *"As a teacher, using Big Books increases my creativity and interactivity."* This shows that by promoting more thoughtful and creative instructional approaches, Big Books not only impact pupils' learning but also aid in teacher growth.

## **Discussion**

This study provides a thorough understanding of how Big Book use promotes literacy development among Indonesian young learners by integrating pupils' and teachers' perspectives with established theoretical frameworks. The findings show that literacy development occurs as a socially mediated, multimodal, and experiential process in which engagement, interaction, and cultural relevance all work together to promote meaningful learning. The convergence of pupils' and teachers' viewpoints reinforces the findings and provides a comprehensive understanding of classroom literacy activities. A key finding of this study is the importance of participation in literacy learning. Children characterized Big Book exercises as "fun" and "interesting," with the teacher noting that "even quiet students want to answer." These opposing viewpoints demonstrate how Big Books foster a highly engaging learning environment that encourages participation. From an emergent literacy standpoint, such enjoyment is critical to early literacy development since pleasant emotional experiences with texts promote motivation and sustained reading engagement (Wilkinson & Silliman, 2000; Hargrave, A. C., & Sénéchal, 2000; Neumann, 2020). The correlation between teacher observation and student perception suggests that involvement is not only observable behaviourally but is also strongly experienced by learners, underscoring its significance as a driver of literacy development.

The findings further emphasize the necessity of multimodal meaning-making for comprehension. Pupils acknowledged using visual cues to understand unfamiliar words, as

evidenced by comments such as *"If I don't know the word, I look at the picture."* Similarly, the teacher stated that children "understand faster because they can see the pictures and the words clearly." These voices collectively demonstrate how Big Books serve as multimodal scaffolds, allowing them to use visual and textual information to generate meaning. This is consistent with multimodal literacy theory, which holds that meaning emerges from the interaction of several semiotic modes (Justice & Ezell, 2020; Mol & Bus, 2020; Zipke, 2021).

Such multimodal support is especially important for improving understanding and lowering cognitive load in the EFL context, where verbal input may be difficult. (Sénéchal & Young, 2021; Sun & Yin, 2023; Suryani, 2023; Tuerah, 2021). The importance of interaction and scaffolding in literacy development is another aspect emphasized in the perspectives of both teachers and pupils. As the teacher explained how to utilize questioning techniques to promote involvement, they reported feeling more confident and "not afraid to speak because we read together." These results are consistent with sociocultural theory's tenets, especially the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory, which holds that learning happens through guided interaction (Dayu, D.P.K & Setyaningsih, 2022; Harsiwi, N.E & Yunarni, 2021; Inderawati, R., et al, , 2022; Rofiah, K., et al, , 2021).

Pupils are given the chance to actively participate in meaning-making when teachers employ dialogic reading strategies, such as posing open-ended questions and encouraging predictions. Peer interaction also contributes to the co-construction of knowledge, as evidenced by pupil remarks such as *"My friend helps me understand."* This illustrates how learning literacy is a collective process influenced by social contact rather than an individual one. The inclusion of voices also emphasizes how crucial participation and self-assurance are as results of encouraging teaching methods. The shared reading environment and the teacher's scaffolding are closely related to students' greater willingness to speak and engage.

Big Books accommodate a range of competency levels, as evidenced by the teacher's remark that weaker pupils can follow along with visual aids while stronger pupils interact with the text. This illustrates the adaptable nature of scaffolding, in which training is tailored to pupils' needs and progressively fosters independence. The reciprocal reinforcement between pupils' responses and the teacher's techniques indicates that confidence is not an innate quality but rather is built through contact and support. Additionally, both teacher and student perspectives emphasize the importance of cultural relevance in improving understanding and engagement. Comments from students like *"This story is like my village"* support the teacher's belief that learning is more relevant in familiar surroundings.

Both sociocultural and emergent literacy views, which emphasize the significance of cultural context and prior knowledge in meaning-making, can be used to interpret this conclusion. Deeper comprehension results from learners' improved ability to interpret and internalize information when they can relate to the material. (Mayer, 2021; Suryani, A., 2023; Widiastuti, I., & Cahyono, 2024). In the Indonesian context, incorporating local knowledge into Big Books promotes a sense of identity and belonging, in addition to literacy development. Simultaneously, the instructor's voice raises significant issues regarding real-world challenges and teacher agency. The teacher draws attention to problems such as scarce resources and limited preparation time, while the students focus mostly on their educational experiences.

This viewpoint emphasizes that the successful adoption of Big Books necessitates not just suitable resources but also teacher proficiency, innovation, and institutional support. From a sociocultural standpoint, the teacher's role as a mediator is shaped by both opportunities and limitations, and teaching practices are shaped by contextual circumstances. By recognizing that effective literacy education depends on the interaction of pedagogy, resources, and context, this

understanding deepens the conversation. When teachers' and pupils' perspectives are combined, it becomes clear that the process of developing literacy through Big Books is dynamic and interrelated. Learning outcomes are shaped by a combination of mutually reinforcing factors, including engagement, multimodal support, interaction, scaffolding, and cultural relevance.

Multimodal characteristics, for example, increase engagement, fostering dialogic interaction and improving comprehension. Similarly, by relating new information to learners' experiences, culturally relevant content improves comprehension and engagement. This interconnection emphasizes the necessity of comprehensive methods for literacy training and validates the conceptual framework presented in this study. Crucially, the findings' trustworthiness is strengthened by the congruence of instructor and student perspectives. Pupils directly demonstrate how these activities are perceived and assimilated, while the teacher offers insights into instructional tactics and classroom dynamics. The confluence of these viewpoints demonstrates that Big Book-based instruction is successful both in theory and in practice because it aligns with learner experiences and pedagogical goals. In summary, this comprehensive debate shows that, when used in an interactive, multimodal, and culturally sensitive context, Big Books are effective instruments for promoting literacy development. The synergy of instructional materials, pedagogical techniques, and learner involvement is what makes this approach successful, as demonstrated by the combined voices of teachers and pupils. These results add to the increasing amount of research supporting learner-centered, theoretically grounded, and contextually grounded approaches to early literacy training, especially in EFL contexts.

## Conclusion

The study found that Big Books increase pupils' engagement, improve reading comprehension through visual-textual integration, and promote active participation through dialogic interaction. This study makes a significant contribution by emphasizing the importance of teacher mediation. The findings suggest that Big Books' performance is mostly driven by how teachers scaffold learning through questioning, prompting, and interactive reading practices, rather than by their visual appeal. This underscores the sociocultural view that literacy development is facilitated by supervised interaction and social involvement. Furthermore, the study shows that multimodal features such as images, text, and oral interaction greatly help meaning-making processes, especially in EFL environments where learners rely on visual cues to improve comprehension. Another noteworthy conclusion is that culturally relevant information improves pupils' motivation and knowledge. Big Books that incorporate familiar cultural contexts help pupils connect prior knowledge to new content, making literacy instruction more meaningful and relevant. This is consistent with current perspectives on culturally sustainable pedagogy and emphasizes the significance of contextualizing teaching materials in a variety of educational settings. Overall, this study shows that Big Book-based training is a comprehensive approach to literacy development that incorporates engagement, interaction, multimodality, and cultural relevance. These aspects work together to provide a supportive learning environment that promotes both foundational and higher-order literacy skills among young learners.

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