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Development of a contextual-based digital book to improve short story writing skills

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ABSTRACT

The current technological development has challenges in seeing the condition of Indonesian language learning in elementary schools, which is still dominated by theoretical approaches. The ability to write is not just composing words, but a reflection of scientific, creative and structured thinking processes that must be honed gradually from an early age. This study aims to develop a context-based digital book using the Project-Based Learning model to enhance elementary school students' short story writing skills. The research employed a Research and Development (RnD) method using the 4-D model consisting of Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate stages. The research subjects were fifth-grade students of SD Swasta Sinar Husni in Medan. Research instruments included a writing skill test and expert validation questionnaires based on writing indicators and media feasibility criteria. Validation results from content, media, and design experts indicated that the developed digital book was highly valid and suitable for use in instructional settings. The effectiveness test revealed significant improvements in students' writing skills, particularly in idea development, logical story structure, and the accurate use of language and punctuation. The implementation also resulted in increased student engagement, learning motivation, and involvement in writing activities based on real-life experiences. These findings suggest that context-based digital books integrated with Project-Based Learning can serve as an effective and practical instructional medium, especially in developing narrative writing skills that are systematic, relevant, and creative for primary school students.

ABSTRAK

Perkembangan teknologi saat ini memiliki tantangan dalam melihat kondisi pembelajaran bahasa Indonesia di sekolah dasar yang masih didominasi pendekatan teoritis. Kemampuan menulis tidak sekadar menyusun kata, tetapi menjadi cerminan proses berpikir ilmiah, kreatif, dan terstruktur yang harus diasah secara bertahap sejak dini. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan buku digital berbasis pendekatan kontekstual dengan menggunakan model Project Based Learning guna meningkatkan keterampilan menulis cerita pendek peserta didik sekolah dasar. Penelitian menggunakan metode Research and Development (RnD) dengan model pengembangan 4-D yang terdiri atas tahap Define, Design, Develop, dan Disseminate. Subjek dalam penelitian ini adalah peserta didik kelas V SD Swasta Sinar Husni Kota Medan. Instrumen penelitian mencakup tes keterampilan menulis dan angket validasi yang disusun berdasarkan indikator menulis serta kelayakan media pembelajaran. Hasil validasi oleh ahli materi, ahli media, dan ahli desain menunjukkan bahwa produk yang dikembangkan berada pada kategori sangat valid dan layak digunakan. Hasil uji keefektifan menunjukkan bahwa terdapat peningkatan signifikan keterampilan menulis peserta didik, khususnya pada aspek pengembangan ide, penggunaan struktur cerita yang logis, serta ketepatan bahasa dan ejaan. Implementasi buku digital ini juga menunjukkan peningkatan partisipasi aktif peserta didik, motivasi belajar, dan keterlibatan dalam kegiatan menulis berbasis pengalaman nyata. Temuan ini merekomendasikan bahwa buku digital berbasis pendekatan kontekstual dapat menjadi alternatif media pembelajaran yang efektif, aplikatif, dan sesuai dengan kebutuhan peserta didik sekolah dasar, khususnya dalam meningkatkan kemampuan menulis naratif secara sistematis dan kreatif.

Kata Kunci: buku digital; keterampilan menulis; pendekatan kontekstual; project based learning

INTRODUCTION

The Fourth Industrial Revolution has brought systemic changes that are driving the education sector to continuously adapt comprehensively. 21st-century competencies, such as creative thinking, understanding of social contexts, and technological skills, are now key requirements that every individual must possess from basic education onward (Setiawan *et al*., 2024). The rapid development in information technology reinforces this urgency, as students live in a digital environment that demands high flexibility and creativity in absorbing and managing information (Kurniati *et al*., 2022). This condition requires learning that is not only oriented towards cognition but also towards contextual skills relevant to the real world.

The challenge becomes increasingly complex when examining the state of Indonesian language learning in elementary schools, which remains dominated by a theoretical approach. The learning process tends to be teacher-centered, does not utilize learning technology, and lacks contextual experiences that involve students' creativity. The learning that takes place tends to focus on passive concept explanations, without providing sufficient space for idea exploration and self-expression. A weak orientation toward practice and active participation in learning further exacerbate the gap between the needs of the times and classroom reality (Khanifah, 2020).

This gap is evident in students' low writing skills, particularly in short stories (Kottacheruvu, 2023; Sarwat *et al*., 2021). The ability to write is not merely about arranging words, but it reflects a process of scientific, creative, and structured thinking that must be gradually cultivated from an early age. This activity requires mastery of developing ideas, constructing narrative structures, and using language appropriately in the appropriate context (Hartini *et al*., 2023). Emphasizing this thinking process shows that learning to write should not focus solely on the final product but also on the process of organizing ideas that shapes the quality of writing.

Efforts to address these issues require a systematic learning approach grounded in students' experiences. One strategy deemed appropriate is the use of the Project-Based Learning (PBL) model, grounded in a contextual approach that places students as the primary actors in the learning process. This model guides students through the stages of determining essential questions, preparing a project plan, scheduling, monitoring progress, evaluating experiences, and conducting a comprehensive assessment of learning outcomes (Tia & Wangid, 2024). The characteristics of this model are well-suited to implementation at the elementary school level, as it provides intensive teacher guidance while fostering students' independence and creativity (Sulistyowati, 2023).

The persistence of obstacles to conventional learning in schools reinforces the relevance of this strategy. Writing instruction is generally delivered in an unengaging manner, with minimal practical activities, and does not provide supporting facilities to optimize students' creative ideas. Students often experience confusion in expressing ideas, organizing narrative structures, and selecting appropriate language because they do not receive adequate guidance. This situation underscores the need for a more innovative and contextually oriented learning approach (Wibowo & Fitriany, 2025).

Digital books have become a promising solution to address these challenges. The use of this medium enables the integration of text, images, audio, and interactive features within a single, flexible, and engaging learning platform (Wibowo & Fitriany, 2025). Research indicates that the use of digital books can enhance students' ability to compose stories more creatively and more structurally, particularly when the content is directly related to students' daily experiences. (Febrianti, 2021). This potential makes digital books an alternative learning medium that is not only technologically adaptive but also transformative for literacy development.

Nevertheless, the combination of the PjBL model and a contextual approach to developing digital books for Indonesian language learning has not yet been widely used as a primary focus in research. Most previous studies have emphasized only one approach or focused on exact sciences subjects. Research specifically examining the effectiveness of combining both approaches in improving the writing skills of elementary school students remains limited and has not provided a comprehensive picture of the potential of their integration (Marcheilla *et al.,* 2025). This condition represents an important gap that requires empirical, systematic studies grounded in students' contextual needs.

Based on the presentation, this study aims to develop a digital book that integrates a contextual approach into the PjBL model to improve elementary school students' short-story writing skills. The learning media being developed are intended to serve as valid, practical, and effective tools that support students' learning in a more meaningful, structured, and adaptive manner to the challenges of 21st-century education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Book

Digital books are technology-based learning media that deliver instructional material in electronic formats accessible via various digital devices, such as computers, tablets, and smartphones. The multimodal presentation supports diverse learning styles, providing students with more opportunities to understand the material through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic channels. Emphasizing flexible access and information delivery makes digital books a medium that suits the characteristics of the digital generation, who are familiar with technology and demand speed, convenience, and active engagement in learning (Azka *et al*., 2024).

The use of digital books in the learning process provides many benefits for students and teachers. Teachers and students use digital books as learning resources, driven by the development of innovative learning media (Arifah *et al*., 2023; Irawan *et al*., 2024). Students gain the freedom to learn flexibly at their own pace and according to their needs. On the other hand, teachers have the flexibility to adjust the materials, add supporting resources, or integrate multimedia links into the teaching content. This capability enables digital books to function not only as sources of information but also as adaptive, responsive learning tools that meet students' needs (Hadiapurwa *et al*., 2021; Pramasdyasari *et al*., 2024).

Limited access to digital devices and internet networks still poses a challenge for some students, especially in environments that do not fully support technology-based learning. Learning through screens also risks reducing concentration if it is not supported by good time management, appropriate content selection, and a conducive learning environment. The risk of distractions from digital devices, such as notifications or other irrelevant applications, poses an additional challenge that must be anticipated in digital media-based learning (Lestari *et al*., 2022).

The development of digital books using a contextual approach has emerged as an innovative strategy for improving learning quality. The content is organized thematically and directly connected to students' experiences, allowing them to build understanding through situations that are familiar and relevant to everyday life. The contextual presentation of the material facilitates deeper learning and actively encourages student involvement in literacy activities.

Writing Skills

Writing skills are a productive language ability that reflects logical, systematic, and creative thinking. This activity involves stages of planning, drafting, revising, and refining ideas into a coherent and communicative written form. Writing ability encompasses not only mechanical aspects but also cognitive

capacity, as it involves conveying ideas, feelings, and information while paying attention to proper language structure (Simanungkalit *et al*., 2024).

The factors that influence writing skills are divided into two main categories. Internal factors include interest, motivation, talent, and students' physical condition. External factors include family support, the quality of the learning environment, and the teacher's teaching strategies and media (Budiani *et al.*, 2023). The writing process will develop more optimally when students have a conducive space for expression that is directly related to their real-life experiences.

The primary function of writing skills in education is to serve as a tool for communication, a means of intellectual development, and a vehicle for expressing critical and creative thinking. The writing process also fosters independent learning by encouraging students to engage in reflection, analysis, and the gradual, continuous construction of meaning (Sugerman *et al*., 2022). Effective writing instruction should be process-oriented so that students can gradually develop ideas, rather than just producing a final product.

Writing skills assessment is conducted using multiple indicators that reflect the overall quality of students' content and structure. The alignment between the title and the content demonstrates students' ability to articulate the story's focus and maintain thematic consistency throughout the writing. The correct use of spelling and punctuation is needed to maintain clarity of meaning and smoothness when reading (Susanti, 2023). Accuracy in word choice reflects the breadth of students' vocabulary mastery as well as the relevance of their use of language style in a narrative context. Effective sentence structure demonstrates the ability to think logically and to organize ideas systematically. Cohesion between paragraphs and the coherence of the story's flow reflect the skill of constructing a complete narrative text. The proportional placement of conflict, climax, and story resolution illustrates the students' maturity of thought and mastery of narrative structure.

Short Story

A short story is a form of narrative literary work that presents plot, characters, setting, conflict, and message in a concise space while remaining rich in meaning. Writing short stories emphasizes the sharpness of expression in building imagination, as well as the strength of structure in conveying moral messages or life values implicitly (Ningrum *et al*., 2023). The storytelling elements are presented concisely and effectively, enabling readers to grasp the story's essence in a relatively short time (Sinaga *et al*., 2022).

Writing short stories provides a broad space for students to express their experiences, imagination, and understanding of their social environment. The ability to develop characters, create conflicts, and construct a logical plot is a key skill that requires honing. Story development also requires mastery of linguistic aspects, such as diction, spelling, and effective sentence construction, so that the story can flow and resonate with readers (Waruwu, 2022).

Learning activities that involve writing short stories have great potential to foster students' creative thinking, empathy, and reflective abilities. These skills can be developed more effectively through a contextual approach grounded in students' real-life experiences. Writing stories drawn from everyday life allows students to construct personal meaning and to improve the quality of their writing in both content and structure (Hoerudin, 2024).

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is based on a contextual approach

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The Project-Based Learning (PBL) model is a learning approach that emphasizes students' active involvement in the completion of real, complex projects. The projects designed in this learning approach are intended not only to complete tasks but also to train critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. The learning process proceeds through systematic stages, including determining fundamental questions, project planning, scheduling, monitoring progress, and evaluating outcomes (Mulyaningsih *et al.*, 2021).

The implementation of the PjBL model positions students as active participants in the learning process, with teachers serving as facilitators. Students' independence in seeking information, making decisions, and presenting results is integral to this strategy. When implemented properly, PjBL can enhance learning motivation, active participation, and students' metacognitive abilities (Al Fithri *et al.*, 2025).

A contextual approach can be effectively integrated into PjBL so that learners not only complete projects technically but also understand their relevance to their lives. Learning becomes more meaningful when learners are confronted with situations that resemble real-world contexts. The project's connection to social, cultural, or environmental contexts will encourage learners to build understanding reflectively and authentically (Sabarudin *et al.*, 2023).

The combination of PjBL and a contextual approach has the potential to foster transformative learning by developing cognitive and affective dimensions in a balanced manner. This strategy is highly relevant to teaching Indonesian, particularly for developing writing skills. Students not only learn to express their ideas but also engage in a creative process of composing texts based on observations, experiences, and interpretations of phenomena around them (Azzahra & Butarbutar, 2024).

METHODS

This study employs a research and development (R&D) approach to develop a digital book grounded in a contextual framework to improve elementary school students' short-story writing skills. The development model used is the 4-D approach, comprising the stages of define, design, develop, and disseminate. These stages are adapted to the context and learning needs of the elementary school level. The effectiveness of the product is measured through a quasi-experimental design using a one-group pretest-posttest model, analyzed with the N-Gain technique to observe the improvement in students' learning outcomes after using the developed product.

The research was conducted at Sinar Husni Private Elementary School during the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year, involving all fifth-grade students as research participants. The sampling technique employed was total sampling because the number of students permitted a comprehensive analysis. The instruments used consisted of two types: a writing skills test and a questionnaire on the feasibility of learning media. The test was prepared as essay questions based on indicators of writing skills, the integration of contextual approaches, and variations in question difficulty. The questionnaire was used to assess the quality of the digital book materials and media with respect to relevance, clarity, and ease of use, using a four-point Likert scale. All instruments were validated by experts and tested for feasibility and reliability before use in data collection.

The define stage begins with identifying the learning needs of fifth-grade students at Sinar Husni Private Elementary School regarding short story writing skills, as well as analyzing problems that arise during the learning process. This information serves as the basis for media development. The design stage involves developing a digital book, including selecting materials, organizing the content structure, and integrating interactive features that align with students' characteristics. The development stage involves conducting product trials with content and media experts to obtain feedback on the product's content and design. Revisions are made based on the validation results obtained. The dissemination stage involves

implementing the product in learning activities and evaluating its effectiveness in improving students' writing skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Definition Stage (Define)

The initial stage of the development process begins with identifying the learning needs of fifth-grade students at Sinar Husni Private Elementary School regarding short-story writing skills. The analysis results indicate that most students struggle to generate ideas, organize the narrative structure systematically, and choose appropriate diction. Based on the initial test results, only a small proportion of students can write high-quality short stories. In contrast, the majority have not met basic criteria such as correct spelling, content coherence, and structural unity. A lack of interest in writing, monotonous teaching methods, and limited variation in learning media exacerbate the low skill level. Unsupportive learning environments and restricted access to reading materials also reinforce these challenges. The absence of innovative digital learning media further impacts students' motivation and engagement during the learning process. This condition aligns with findings that interactive digital media can significantly enhance learning motivation and material absorption (Herniyastuti & Kadir, 2024).

The development of digital books based on a contextual approach is considered a viable solution to address these obstacles. This media is designed to connect short-story writing materials with students' daily experiences, making the learning process more contextual and meaningful. The use of interactive features and multimedia elements, such as text, images, exercises, and automated feedback, in digital books is expected to enhance students' engagement, creativity, and understanding. The flexibility of digital media also allows students to learn independently by adjusting to their own pace and learning style. The presence of this medium not only provides technical writing support but also motivates students to actively participate in an enjoyable learning process that is relevant to their lives.

Further analysis was conducted of the tasks students must master in writing short stories. Writing skills in this context include the ability to formulate story ideas, organize a plot in a structured manner, select appropriate vocabulary, use correct spelling and grammar, and write effective, coherent sentences. Initial observations indicated that most students had difficulty generating ideas, developing a coherent plot, and using appropriate language in their writing. The writing process essentially requires not only the ability to express ideas but also the mastery of technical skills that develop gradually. Therefore, the learning media must be designed to facilitate a writing learning process that is sequential, systematic, and grounded in students' experiences.

The basic concepts students need to understand are also analyzed during the media planning stage. Understanding the meaning of short stories, their intrinsic elements, effective language use, and the development of creative elements such as imagination and personal expression is important for the development of writing skills. A contextual approach places these concepts within students' real experiences, making the learning process more connected to their everyday lives. The concepts analyzed are then implemented as concise, easily accessible digital book materials, accompanied by contextual exercises to reinforce understanding and application in writing practice.

The learning objectives are formulated to guide media development and to specify the expected student outcomes upon use of the digital book. The primary goal is to improve fifth-grade students' short-story writing skills significantly. Specifically, students are expected to develop story ideas relevant to their personal experiences, organize the plot with a logical structure, use correct spelling and grammar, choose varied diction, and write sentences that are effective and communicative. These objectives emphasize not

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only cognitive achievements but also practical writing skills, as evidenced by media interactivity and their relevance to students' daily contexts.

Design Stage (*Design*)

The design stage begins with the preparation of test instruments to objectively and systematically measure students' short-story writing skills. The test is designed based on writing skill indicators, which include the ability to formulate an appropriate title, use correct spelling and punctuation, choose precise diction, arrange the story content coherently, write effective sentences, and present the storyline in an orderly manner. Essay questions are designed to allow students to develop their ideas freely while remaining focused on the assigned theme. This instrument functions as a measurement tool before and after the treatment, in the form of a pretest and posttest, to assess the extent to which context-based digital books can improve students' writing skills. The test preparation aligns with the fifth-grade Indonesian language curriculum and accounts for students' cognitive developmental characteristics (Farahiba, 2022).

The selection of media becomes a crucial aspect in the design stage because it determines the final form of the digital book being developed. The platform used is Canva, an online graphic design tool that supports the creation of visual, engaging, and interactive learning materials. Canva's advantages lie in its ease of use, the completeness of design elements such as illustrations, icons, and educational templates, as well as flexibility in adding multimedia content like images, audio, and interactive links. This platform is well-suited to the needs of elementary school students who require visually appealing, context-rich materials. Learning content created in Canva can be integrated with students' real-life experiences, thereby supporting the implementation of a contextual approach (Rukman & Samsudin, 2022).

The digital book's presentation format is designed not only to be visually appealing but also to enhance accessibility and learning effectiveness. The combination of Canva and HTML5 is chosen to produce a digital book that is responsive, flexible, and easy to use on various devices. Canva is responsible for designing the visual appearance and content structure, while HTML5 serves as the underlying technology for packaging and distributing the product widely. The advantage of HTML5 lies in its ability to integrate interactive elements such as audio, video, navigation buttons, as well as offline access through cache support. This format ensures the functionality of digital books in environments with diverse technological infrastructures.

The integration of Canva and HTML5 enables the development of digital books that are adaptive to the learning needs of elementary school students. The combination of the two not only enhances visual appeal but also increases student engagement through interactive features and contextual material. The choice of media and format is a strategic step in realizing the principles of modern learning that emphasize technology, personalization, and the relevance of material to students' real-life experiences. **Figure 1** depicts the initial design of the digital book prior to expert validation. This display reflects the initial content structure, visual layout, and integration of interactive elements, all designed using a contextual approach and with consideration for the needs of elementary school students.

(i) Sampul depan buku digital

(ii) Halaman prakata buku digital

(iii) Halaman materi buku digital

(iv) Halaman refleksi

Figure 1. Initial view of the digital book
Source: Research 2025

Development Stage (*Develop*)

The development stage aims to produce a final digital book, using a contextual approach, that has undergone validation and revision in response to expert feedback. Assessment is carried out by three validators, including content experts, design experts, and media experts, to ensure the feasibility of the content, visual appearance, and interactive functions of the media. Evaluations by the three experts serve as the basis for revising the product before limited trials are conducted. The success of the media in improving students' writing skills is measured using pre- and posttests, and students' experiences with the digital book are assessed through questionnaires to evaluate practicality and learning engagement.

Content expert validation was conducted by a lecturer in Indonesian language education from the Postgraduate Program at the State University of Medan. The assessment focused on the relevance of the digital book content to the basic competencies, the clarity of learning objectives, and the integration of the material with a contextual approach. The validation score was 42 out of 52 points, corresponding to an eligibility percentage of 80.7%. These results indicate that the digital book is valid and suitable for use in the learning process with minor improvements. The validation results data are presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Subject Matter Expert Assessment Results

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Assessment components	Assessment
Aspect of material suitability	
The material aligns with the learning outcomes and learning objectives (CP/TP)	4
The material supports the development of short story writing skills and provides short story examples suitable for children	4
The material is organized systematically and sequentially	3
The material is appropriate for the developmental level of 5th-grade elementary school students	3
The material contains complete story elements (theme, characters, setting, plot, message)	3
An aspect of the contextual approach	
The material relates learning experiences to students' daily lives	4
The material encourages active student involvement through contextual tasks or activities	3
The material includes examples and illustrations that are contextual and close to the students' environment	3
Aspect of language and readability	
The language used is appropriate for the developmental level of the students	3
The language is effective, communicative, and does not create ambiguity	3
Sentences are easy to understand and not too long	3
Aspect of content feasibility	
The material does not contain elements of SARA (ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group relations), violence, or anything inappropriate according to norms.	3
The material contains positive character values.	3
Total score obtained	**42**
Overall score	**52**

Source: Research 2025

Assessments by media experts indicate that the developed digital book meets usability standards, although some components still require improvement. The score achieved was 40 out of 48 points, corresponding to 83.3%. Suggested improvements included the choice of colors in the initial images, which were considered too striking and potentially distracting for students. The colors were then replaced with more neutral options to enhance visual comfort. Validation data from the media experts is presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Media Expert Assessment Results

Assessment indicator components	Assessment items	Assessment	
		Revision	Improvement
Learning	Interactivity	2	4
	Fostering learning motivation	3	4
	Expected function (supporting learning)	4	4
	Ease of understanding	4	4
Media	Efficiency of media usage in terms of time	4	4

Assessment indicator components	Assessment items	Assessment	
		Revision	Improvement
	Program reliability (level of error tolerance)	4	4
	Usability (ease of operation)	3	4
	Compatibility (can run on other devices)	4	3
Design	Digital book display is detailed enough	3	3
	The color composition of the digital book display is attractive	2	4
	Balance (size of digital book display presented)	4	4
	Simplicity (neat, orderly, and not mixed with unnecessary material)	4	4
Total score obtained		40	46
Overall score		48	48

Source: Research 2025

Assessment by design experts focused on visual structure, layout consistency, and ease of navigation in the digital book. The evaluation was conducted to ensure that the product design aligns with the characteristics of elementary school students and supports the principles of effective learning design. The total score obtained from the design experts was 42 out of 52 points, with a feasibility percentage of 80.7%. This assessment indicates that the digital book design falls into the valid category and can be used for learning after minor adjustments. Complete information on the validation results from the design experts is presented in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Design Expert Assessment Results

Assessment Indicator Components	Assessment Items	Assessment
Layout	Consistency in placing elements (title, text, images) on each page	3
	Balanced proportions of design elements between text and images	4
	Placement of elements facilitates navigation and reading	3
Color selection	Harmonious color combinations that are not too striking	4
	Colors support text readability and information delivery	3
Font selection	Font types that are easy to read and appropriate for elementary school students	3
	Consistency in font size usage for the same elements (title, subtitle, content)	3
Suitability of illustrations/images	Illustrations relevant to the short story theme support learning	3
	Image quality is clear, not blurry, and enhances design aesthetics	3
Ease of navigation	Navigation icons and buttons are easy for students to use	4
	Simple and easy-to-understand usage instructions are available	4
Design uniqueness	The digital book design attracts students' attention and motivates them to learn	3
	The design has distinctive features that set it apart from other learning media	3

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Assessment Indicator Components	Assessment Items	Assessment
Total score obtained		42
Overall score		52

Source: Research 2025

All validation results inform the final refinement of the digital book before its implementation in the learning process to assess its effectiveness in improving students' short-story writing skills.

Dissemination Stage (*Disseminate*)

The dissemination stage aims to examine students' broader responses to digital books using a contextual approach through field trials conducted at Sinar Husni Private Elementary School, involving 25 students. This implementation reflects the application of media in a more representative classroom context, following product validation and revision. Evaluation was conducted using observation instruments and questionnaires to assess student engagement, material comprehension, writing motivation, creativity, and the use of digital book features. The observation results showed that students demonstrated enthusiasm and active participation in learning activities using digital media.

Students' responses to the use of digital books are generally very good. In terms of engagement, the majority of students actively answer questions and participate in class discussions. Understanding of the material is demonstrated by students' ability to explain the concept of writing short stories and to provide examples drawn from personal experience. The motivation aspect indicates that students demonstrate strong enthusiasm for completing writing assignments without coercion. Creativity is also evident through the use of varied vocabulary and more original expression of ideas, although some students still need guidance in organizing the story flow systematically. The implementation of a contextual approach is considered successful because all students can relate the story's content to their daily experiences. The use of interactive features in digital books shows promising results, although some students still need guidance to make the most of these features.

Assessment of students' ability to receive and respond to feedback shows positive results. Students can revise their writing based on feedback from teachers or peers. The percentage of observation scores across all student aspects ranges from 82% to 93%, with an average score of 86.79, indicating that the digital book successfully enhances participation, understanding, creativity, and the contextual application of material in learning to write short stories. The complete data is presented in **Figure 2**.
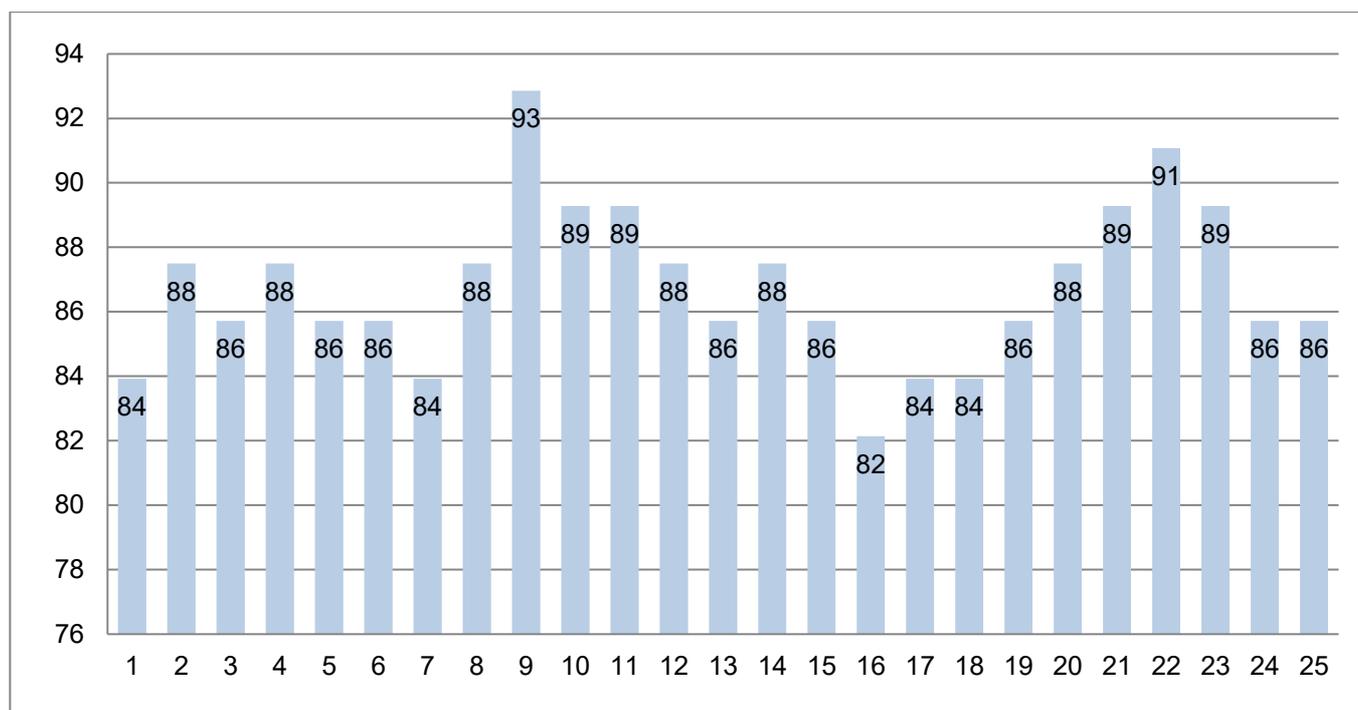
Figure 2. Preliminary evaluation results of digital book usage
Source: Research 2025

Assessment of teachers' media implementation was also conducted to evaluate the suitability of a contextual approach to learning. The planning aspect demonstrates that teachers can prepare relevant learning scenarios and effectively use the features of digital books. Teacher 1 assigned a score of 3, while Teacher 2 assigned a score of 4, with an average of 86.25%, which falls within the good category. In terms of implementation, teachers provide guidance and relate learning content to students' life contexts, although the consistency of this practice remains a concern.

The management of student activities is considered effective, with scores indicating that the teacher successfully maintains classroom dynamics and encourages student involvement in collaborative learning. Learning evaluation is conducted using the features available in the digital book, and the teacher provides appropriate feedback on students' written work. This aspect demonstrates that the media's evaluative function is used optimally to support the improvement of writing skills. The teacher's ability to handle both technical and non-technical challenges is also observed, and both demonstrate a responsive, solution-oriented approach to addressing emerging challenges.

The average assessment percentage from teacher 1 was 85%, and from teacher 2, 87.5%, indicating that the implementation of the digital book was effective and aligned with the principles of a contextual approach. These results reinforce the conclusion that the developed media is not only theoretically feasible but also successfully implemented practically in teaching short story writing at the elementary school level.

Discussion

The improvement in short-story writing skills achieved through the implementation of a digital book using a contextual approach demonstrates that this medium can address the challenges of teaching Indonesian in elementary schools. These findings indicate that student engagement in learning increases, particularly in developing story ideas, organizing a logical plot structure, and choosing appropriate diction. The learning process, which integrates everyday life contexts with lesson materials, encourages students to be more expressive in conveying their ideas in writing. This research aligns with studies confirming that the use of

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context-based media can simultaneously enhance student engagement in learning (Setyowati *et al*., 2023). The visual and interactive support provided by digital books also enables students to understand writing concepts more concretely and practically.

The PjBL model used in material development significantly improves students' writing skills. This model provides an active learning experience through exploratory stages, ranging from determining fundamental questions and project planning to implementation and evaluation of the final results. This process trains students to think logically and systematically and to take responsibility for their own work. This finding is supported by prior research indicating that project-based learning is effective in fostering students' independence and creative thinking skills (Mulyaningsih *et al*., 2021). Learning to write in project-based form also provides students with a broad space for expression and for exploring ideas from their surroundings, which strongly supports a contextual approach (Sinaga *et al*., 2022).

Strengthening the contextual aspects not only makes the material easier to understand but also increases the relevance of the learning content to students' lived experiences. Social, cultural, and local environmental contexts serve as authentic sources of ideas for students writing short stories. Previous research indicates that the ability to relate learning content to personal experiences is an important indicator of context-based learning and can encourage the development of more meaningful literacy (Ningrum *et al*., 2023). This relevance enhances students' comprehension of the material and stimulates creativity in translating ideas into communicative writing (Waruwu, 2022).

The use of educational technology through digital book platforms has proven to expand opportunities for flexible and enjoyable learning. Attractive visual design, interactive features, and easy-to-use navigation make the learning process engaging rather than monotonous. Concept visualization and multimedia-based exercises also support writing skills by enhancing visual memory and understanding of narrative structure (Akras & Pujiastuti, 2025). These findings are consistent with studies emphasizing that digitally designed pedagogical media can significantly improve student participation and the effectiveness of literacy learning (Susanti, 2023). Interactive elements, such as practice questions, automated feedback, and supporting illustrations, also enrich the learning experience and foster students' intrinsic motivation.

The accessibility of digital books across various devices provides high flexibility for students to learn at any time and from any location. This convenience is particularly important in modern learning, especially when facing infrastructure constraints such as limited reading spaces or short study hours (Resti *et al*., 2024). The use of responsive technology enables the learning process to be unconstrained by space and time and supports the development of adaptive, independent learning. Other studies show that the use of flexible digital media can bridge access gaps and support the achievement of equal learning outcomes across students' socioeconomic backgrounds (Fortinasari *et al*., 2022). These advantages make digital books among the most relevant and effective learning media in contemporary elementary education.

The effectiveness of implementing this strategy indicates that developing media grounded in a contextual approach and the PjBL model not only enhances learners' cognitive abilities but also shapes sustainable social and affective skills. Participatory, reflective, and product-oriented learning makes learners active subjects in the knowledge construction process. The implications of these findings suggest that innovation in the development of learning media must integrate technology, context, and pedagogical strategies to meet the demands of 21st-century competencies holistically.

CONCLUSION

The development of digital books using a contextual approach through the Project-Based Learning (PBL) model is effective in improving elementary school students' short-story writing skills. The development process, which involves needs analysis, material design, expert validation, and field testing, demonstrates

that this medium is highly valid and effective. Digital books not only facilitate students' understanding of story structure and content but also encourage them to think creatively, organize ideas systematically, and write with proper language. Integrating everyday life contexts into the learning materials makes the learning process more meaningful and relevant, while its interactive features enhance students' motivation and active participation. The implications of this research indicate that innovations in learning media that combine a contextual approach with project-based learning should be continuously developed and widely implemented. Therefore, teachers are advised to use similar digital books in Indonesian language learning activities, particularly to develop writing skills, thereby creating a learning process that is not only cognitively effective but also fosters creativity, independence, and reflectiveness in students.

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