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Utilization of the Illustrated Storybook Eine Reise in Medan as a German Language Learning Medium: A Preliminary Study of Student Learning Outcomes and Responses

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the use of the illustrated storybook "Eine Reise in Medan" as a German language learning medium based on local culture. The study used a quantitative approach with a one-group pretest-posttest design and involved 17 participants. Data were collected through a pre-test, post-test, and participant response questionnaire. The results showed that the average pre-test score of 97.35 increased to 100.00 in the post-test. The questionnaire results showed an average score of 43.41 out of a maximum score of 49, or 88.59%, indicating a positive response from participants to the book. These findings indicate that "Eine Reise in Medan" has the potential to be a supporting medium for German language learning that integrates language, illustrations, stories, and local culture.

Keywords: illustrated storybook, German language, local culture, learning medium.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a communication tool used by humans to facilitate interaction and communication with one another (Sakdiah & Sihombing, 2023). In learning a foreign language, learners are not only required to master linguistic aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, reading, speaking, etc. Learners also need to understand the cultural context related to the language being studied (Kramsch, 1993). The use of local cultural texts and experiences can make learning

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relevant because they relate to everyday life (Ayuma et al., 2026). Therefore, learning media are needed that not only present linguistic elements but also connect learning to the environment and experiences close to the learner.

In learning German, the use of media that is appropriate to the learner's characteristics is one factor that supports the learning process. German language material presented in the form of long, contextual texts can be challenging for beginning learners, especially in understanding vocabulary and reading content. The use of visual media and stories can be an alternative to make language material easier to understand. Stories provide context for language use, while images can provide visual aids to the meaning of words, situations, characters, and events within the story. Thus, the combination of text and images has the potential to help learners understand German language material in a more engaging way.

Illustrated storybooks are a learning medium containing several collections of images and text (Paramita et al., 2022). The presence of images in a story can provide a visual representation of the information conveyed through the text (Mayer, 2009). Furthermore, the storyline can provide context for vocabulary and sentence usage, allowing learners not only to learn words individually but also to see their use in a given situation. This type of media can also create a more engaging learning experience because learners interact with the language through a story (Bland, 2013).

Beyond linguistic aspects, incorporating local culture into foreign language learning can be a relevant approach. Local culture, close to learners' lives, can be used as a context for delivering language material. Introducing the environment, historical sites, customs, and cultural richness of a region through a foreign language can provide learners with the opportunity to learn the language while also becoming familiar with their own cultural environment. This approach can also make foreign language learning inseparable from the learner's identity and experience (Byram, 1997).

Medan City boasts numerous historical and cultural sites that can be used as learning resources, such as Maimun Palace, Al-Mashun Grand Mosque, Tjong A Fie Mansion, Kesawan Area, Merdeka Square, and many others. These locations provide an opportunity to develop German language teaching materials that utilize the local environment as a learning context. By introducing local places and culture in German, learners can learn simple vocabulary and expressions while also gaining knowledge about their surroundings.

Based on this need, an illustrated book titled "Eine Reise in Medan" was developed. This book chronicles the journey of five friends who visit various locations in Medan. The story is presented in simple German and complemented by pictures depicting characters, places, and activities. Using Medan as the setting is expected to provide a context familiar to learners, making German learning more concrete and meaningful. This book is also expected to serve as an alternative medium that combines German language learning with an introduction to local culture.

The development and use of learning media must be accompanied by a study of user responses and its potential to support the learning process. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine the utility of the illustrated storybook "Eine Reise in Medan" as a local culture-based German language learning medium. This study also examined learner responses after using the book in learning. The results are expected to provide insight into the potential of

illustrated storybooks based on local culture as an alternative medium for German language learning.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive quantitative approach with a one-group pretest-posttest design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). The aim of the study was to determine the use of the illustrated storybook "Eine Reise in Medan" as a local culture-based German language learning medium and to describe changes in learning outcomes and learner responses after using the book. The research design consisted of a pretest before using the media, followed by learning activities using the illustrated storybook, followed by a posttest and a learner response questionnaire. The subjects were students of the German Language Education study program at Medan State University, Class of 2025, studying German Level A2. Subjects were selected using convenience sampling, considering the suitability of the students' German language proficiency level to the material contained in the book "Eine Reise in Medan." A total of 17 students participated in the study.

The medium used in this study was the illustrated storybook "Eine Reise in Medan." This book tells the story of five friends traveling to several locations in Medan. The story is written in German at Level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2020) and is complemented by illustrations related to the characters, places, activities, and events in the story. Some of the places introduced in the book include Maimun Palace, Al-Mashun Grand Mosque, Tjong A Fie House, Kesawan Area, Merdeka Square, and Cemara Asri Temple. The book is designed to integrate German language learning with an introduction to the local culture and environment of Medan.

The research was conducted in several stages. The first stage involved administering a pretest to students to determine their initial abilities before using the picture book. The test consisted of 20 questions related to vocabulary and simple comprehension in German. The second stage involved implementing the learning process using the book, Eine Reise in Medan. Students read the story, observed the illustrations, and understood the vocabulary and information contained within. The third stage was administering a posttest after students had finished using the book. The posttest was administered to determine changes in learning outcomes following the use of the media. The posttest questions had the same indicators and difficulty level as the pretest, but used a different question format. The fourth stage involved administering a response questionnaire to students. The questionnaire was used to determine students' responses to the use of the book, particularly in terms of interest, use of images, and so on.

The research instruments consisted of a test and a response questionnaire. The test consisted of a pretest and a posttest, each consisting of 20 multiple-choice questions. Each correct answer received a score of 5, while an incorrect answer received a score of 0. Student scores were calculated by multiplying the number of correct answers by 5. The questionnaire consisted of 10 statements using a five-point Likert scale: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = undecided, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree.

The pretest and posttest data were analyzed descriptively by calculating the average score for each test. Improvement in learning outcomes was assessed by comparing the average pretest and posttest scores. These results were then described to determine students' responses to the use of the picture storybook "Eine Reise in Medan." The results of the pretest, posttest, and

questionnaire analysis were then used together to provide an overview of the potential of the picture storybook "Eine Reise in Medan" as a local culture-based German language learning medium.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the pretest and posttest results of 17 students (Table 1), the average pretest score was 97.35, while the average posttest score reached 100.00. The lowest score in the pretest was 95 and the highest score was 100, while in the posttest all participants obtained a score of 100. Thus, there was an average increase in test results of 2.65 points after participants used the picture storybook Eine Reise in Medan. These results indicate that all participants were able to achieve the maximum score in the post-test. However, the relatively small increase needs to be understood considering that the initial abilities of the participants were already at a very high level. This condition causes room for score improvement to be limited. Therefore, the results of this study are more appropriately interpreted as the achievement of high test results after using the media, rather than as a large increase in ability. In addition, the absence of variation in scores on the posttest indicates that all participants answered all questions correctly. These findings indicate that the material provided through the picture storybook Eine Reise in Medan can be well understood by participants in the context of the test used.

Table 1. Student pretest and posttest results

Test	n	Minimum	Maximum	Average
Pretest	17	95	100	97.35
Posttest	17	100	100	100.00

Note. n = number of participants; scores range from 0 to 100. Source: Research data (2026).

Participants' responses to each of the ten questionnaire statements are presented in Tables 2–11, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Table 2. Responses to Statement 1: "I am interested in reading the illustrated storybook Eine Reise in Medan."

Score	Frequency
1	0
2	0
3	0
4	0
5	17

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree; n = 17. Source: Questionnaire data (2026).

Based on Table 2, it can be concluded that all respondents have an interest in the illustrated storybook Eine Reise in Medan.

Table 3. Responses to Statement 2: "The illustrations in the book help me understand the content of the story."

Score	Frequency
1	0
2	0
3	1
4	9
5	7

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree; n = 17. Source: Questionnaire data (2026).

Based on Table 3, it can be concluded that most respondents agree that the illustrations in the book help them understand the content of the story.

Table 4. Responses to Statement 3: "The illustrations help me understand German vocabulary."

Score	Frequency
1	0
2	0
3	0
4	8
5	9

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree; n = 17. Source: Questionnaire data (2026).

Based on Table 4, it can be concluded that all respondents agree that the illustrations in the book help them understand German vocabulary.

Table 5. Responses to Statement 4: "The German vocabulary in the book is easy for me to understand."

Score	Frequency
1	0
2	0
3	2
4	9
5	6

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree; n = 17. Source: Questionnaire data (2026).

Based on Table 5, it can be concluded that most respondents agree that the German vocabulary in this book is easy to understand.

Table 6. Responses to Statement 5: "The German sentences in the book are easy for me to understand."

Score	Frequency
1	0
2	0
3	1
4	10
5	6

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree; n = 17. Source: Questionnaire data (2026).

Based on Table 6, it can be concluded that most respondents agree that the German sentences in this book are easy to understand.

Table 7. Responses to Statement 6: "The story helps me remember German vocabulary."

Score	Frequency
1	0
2	0
3	1
4	9
5	7

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree; n = 17. Source: Questionnaire data (2026).

Based on Table 7, it can be concluded that most respondents agree that stories help remember German vocabulary.

Table 8. Responses to Statement 7: "This book helped me understand simple German texts."

Score	Frequency
1	0
2	0
3	0
4	10
5	7

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree; n = 17. Source: Questionnaire data (2026).

Based on Table 8, it can be concluded that all respondents agree that this book helps in understanding simple German texts.

Table 9. Responses to Statement 8: "I feel more interested in learning German using this book."

Score	Frequency
1	0

Score	Frequency
2	0
3	0
4	11
5	6

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree; n = 17. Source: Questionnaire data (2026).

Based on Table 9, it can be concluded that all respondents are interested in learning German using this book.

Table 10. Responses to Statement 9: "This book helped me get to know the places and culture of Medan City."

Score	Frequency
1	0
2	0
3	0
4	11
5	6

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree; n = 17. Source: Questionnaire data (2026).

Based on Table 10, it can be concluded that all respondents agree that this book helps in getting to know the places and culture of Medan City.

Table 11. Responses to Statement 10: "I would like to use illustrated storybooks like this again to learn German."

Score	Frequency
1	0
2	0
3	0
4	11
5	6

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree; n = 17. Source: Questionnaire data (2026).

Based on Table 11, it can be concluded that all respondents want to use illustrated storybooks such as Eine Reise in Medan again to learn German.

Table 12. Frequency distribution of total questionnaire scores (n = 17)

Total score	Frequency	Percentage
39 – 41	9	52.94%
42 – 44	2	11.76%
45 – 47	0	0.00%
48 – 50	6	35.29%
Total (n = 17)		100.00%

Note. Total score is the sum of scores on the ten questionnaire statements. Source: Questionnaire data (2026).

Based on the frequency distribution of participant responses shown in Table 12 to the use of the picture storybook "Eine Reise in Medan," it was found that the questionnaire scores of 17 respondents fell within the range of 39–49 out of a maximum score of 49. Nine respondents (52.94%) scored within the range of 39–41, two respondents (11.76%) scored within the range of 42–44, and no respondents (0%) scored within the range of 45–47. Furthermore, six respondents (35.29%) scored within the range of 48–50.

The calculation results showed that the total questionnaire score was 738 with an average of 43.41 out of a maximum score of 49. Thus, the average participant response score reached 88.59% of the maximum score. These findings indicate that participants responded positively to the use of the illustrated storybook "Eine Reise in Medan." The scores obtained show that in general the participants gave a good assessment of the aspects contained in the book, such as interest in the book, use of illustrations, ease of understanding vocabulary and stories, and introduction to the places and culture of Medan City.

Book illustrations

The illustrations in the picture book "Eine Reise in Medan" play a crucial role in supporting the German language learning process. Visual media have a positive impact on learning across various disciplines (Handayani, 2023). The use of illustrations not only serves as a visual element to enhance the book's appearance but also helps learners understand the story's content, vocabulary, and situations presented in German. The presence of images provides visual context to the text, allowing learners to connect German words or sentences with the objects, places, and activities depicted.

In "Eine Reise in Medan," illustrations are used to depict various places and activities featured in the story of the five characters' journeys. For example, illustrations of Maimun Palace, the Grand Mosque, Tjong A Fie House, and other locations help learners identify the objects discussed in the text. Thus, learners not only acquire information through language but also through visuals that support understanding of the story's content.

The role of illustrations is also evident in aiding German vocabulary comprehension. When learners encounter unfamiliar vocabulary, images can provide clues to the word's meaning based on context. This facilitates vocabulary comprehension because learners are not entirely reliant on direct translation. The relationship between text and images allows learners to grasp meaning through the context of the story (Paivio, 1986; Mayer, 2009).

Based on the results of the questionnaire, participants' responses to the use of illustrations in the book tended to be positive. This indicates that the visual elements in the book can support participants' interest and comprehension while using the learning media. Illustrations tailored to the story's content help participants follow the journey and understand information about the places and culture of Medan presented in German. Thus, the illustrations in “Eine Reise in Medan” serve as a support for language comprehension and a bridge between German and the local cultural context. The combination of simple text and illustrations makes the learning material more contextual and provides a learning experience that focuses not only on linguistic aspects but also introduces learners to the culture and environment around them.

Integration of Local Culture in German Language Learning

The integration of local culture into German language learning is one of the main characteristics of the illustrated storybook "Eine Reise in Medan." This book not only presents German language material but also introduces various places, history, and culture found in Medan. Using local culture as a learning context provides learners with the opportunity to learn German through environments and experiences close to their own lives.

The book showcases local culture through the travel stories of five characters who visit several locations in Medan, such as Maimun Palace, Al-Mashun Grand Mosque, Tjong A Fie House, Kesawan, Merdeka Square, and Cemara Asri Temple. Each location is presented through simple German text complemented by illustrations. In this way, learners not only learn German vocabulary and sentences but also gain insight into the history and cultural diversity of Medan.

The use of local cultural context also helps create connections between the learning material and learners' existing knowledge. The places featured in the book represent more familiar environments for learners, allowing for a more contextual understanding of the German language information. For example, when learners read descriptions of the Maimun Palace or the Tjong A Fie House in German, they can connect this information to their knowledge of the places discussed. This can help them understand the vocabulary and content more easily.

In addition to introducing the culture of Medan, this book also demonstrates that foreign language learning can be carried out by highlighting the culture of one's own environment. Learners act not only as German learners but also as individuals who know and understand their local culture. Thus, German is used as a means to convey and introduce local culture to readers (Byram, 1997).

Based on the results of using the book and learner responses, the integration of local culture provides a supportive context for German language learning. The presentation of Medan's places and culture through German text makes the learning material more contextual and closer to the learner's experience. Therefore, “Eine Reise in Medan” demonstrates that local culture can be integrated into German language learning as a context for introducing vocabulary, practicing reading comprehension, and enhancing learners' knowledge of the surrounding culture and environment.

Storybooks as Contextual Learning Media

Contextual learning is learning that links the material taught to real-world situations and encourages learners to relate it to applications in their lives (Johnson, 2002; Muhartini et al., 2023). The illustrated storybook "Eine Reise in Medan" can be used as a contextual learning medium in German language learning because the material presented is linked to situations, places, and cultures close to the learners' lives. In this book, German is not presented as a stand-alone material, but is used to recount travel experiences and introduce various places in Medan.

The presentation of the material in story form places German vocabulary and sentences in a more meaningful context. Learners can discover the use of vocabulary through the journeys undertaken by the characters in the story. For example, vocabulary related to places, travel, activities, food, and culture is used appropriately in the situations in the story. This way, learners can understand language usage in context, rather than simply memorizing vocabulary in isolation (Nation, 2013).

Furthermore, the use of illustrations reinforces the contextual nature of the book. Images depicting places and activities in the story provide visual information that can help learners understand the German text. Learners can connect the information contained in the text with the images they see, making the process of understanding the material more concrete. The combination of text, stories, and illustrations also makes the material easier to follow compared to presentations that focus solely on text. The local context used in "Eine Reise in Medan" also provides learners with the opportunity to learn German in a familiar environment. Places such as the Maimun Palace, Al-Mashun Grand Mosque, Tjong A Fie House, Kesawan, and Merdeka Square are part of the learning context.

Based on the research results, the use of the picture storybook "Eine Reise in Medan" demonstrated a positive response from participants. Of the 17 respondents, the total questionnaire score ranged from 39 to 49, with an average of 43.41 out of a maximum score of 49. This average equates to 88.59% of the maximum score. These results indicate that participants generally responded favorably to the use of books as a learning medium. This supports the use of picture storybooks as a medium that can provide more contextual German language learning through a combination of stories, illustrations, and local culture.
Thus, Eine Reise in Medan serves not only as a medium for delivering German language materials but also as a means of connecting language learning with the learner's environment and experiences. The use of local context through travel stories makes learning more relevant, concrete, and meaningful for learners.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a study on the use of the illustrated storybook "Eine Reise in Medan" as a German language learning medium based on local culture, it can be concluded that this book has potential as a supporting medium for German language learning. The book presents German through the travelogue of five characters visiting various locations in Medan, combining simple text, illustrations, and information about local culture and the environment.

Pre-test and post-test results for 17 participants showed that the average score increased from 97.35 in the pre-test to 100.00 in the post-test, representing an increase of 2.65 points. The pre-test scores were in the 95–100 range, while all participants scored 100 in the post-test. These results indicate that participants were able to achieve very high test scores after using the book. However, because the participants' initial abilities were already high and the study did not use a control group, these results cannot be used to conclude that this improvement was entirely due to the use of the book.

The questionnaire results showed that respondents' total scores ranged from 39 to 49, with a total score of 738 and an average of 43.41 out of a maximum score of 49. This average is equivalent to 88.59% of the maximum score. These results indicate that participants responded positively to the use of the picture storybook "Eine Reise in Medan." These responses related to the use of illustrations, story presentation, ease of understanding vocabulary and content, and introduction to the places and culture of Medan.

Overall, "Eine Reise in Medan" can be an alternative German language learning medium that integrates aspects of language, illustration, story, and local culture. This medium provides a context close to the participants' environment, so that German learning focuses not only on language mastery but also provides opportunities for participants to learn and understand local culture through the language they are learning.

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