Developing Culturally Based Teaching Materials for Explanatory Texts in Senior High School

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop culture-based explanatory text teaching materials to enhance students' understanding of cultural values. Employing the Research and Development (R&D) method with the ADDIE model—Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation—this research focused on creating materials that integrate local cultural elements into language instruction. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, observations, and pretest-posttest assessments. Validation was conducted by material, media, and cultural experts to evaluate the feasibility and quality of the teaching materials. The validation results indicated a high level of feasibility with an average score of 90%, suggesting that the materials met expert standards in terms of content accuracy, cultural relevance, and instructional design. Implementation was carried out with Grade XI students of a senior high school, and the effectiveness of the materials was measured using gain score analysis. The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' understanding of explanatory texts, with a gain score of 0.72, categorized as high. Before the intervention, 40% of students scored below 60, while afterward, only 10% remained below that threshold, and 65% of students achieved scores above 76. Student responses were also highly positive; 85% agreed that the culture-based materials were more engaging, easier to understand, and helped them connect the content with their cultural experiences. These results highlight the effectiveness of integrating local culture into language teaching and suggest that culturally responsive materials can improve both learning outcomes and student motivation. The study concludes that culture-based explanatory text materials are a valuable innovation for enhancing students' comprehension and appreciation of cultural values within the Indonesian language curriculum.
Keywords: Teaching Materials, Explanatory Text, Culture

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian language education plays a crucial role in shaping students' identity, literacy skills, and national character. One of the competencies emphasized in the high school curriculum is writing explanatory texts, which aim to describe how or why a phenomenon occurs using logical and factual information. However, despite its importance, students often face challenges in understanding the structure and language features of explanatory texts. This difficulty is exacerbated when the learning content is not grounded in students' lived experiences. As Prasetyo and Hidayati (2019) have pointed out, contextual relevance in instructional materials significantly enhances comprehension and retention in language learning.

In many cases, students are taught explanatory texts using examples of natural or scientific phenomena that feel abstract and disconnected from their daily lives. While this approach may fulfill curriculum requirements, it often fails to stimulate student interest or deepen cultural awareness. According to Lestari and Suharyono (2020), one of the reasons students underperform in Indonesian language subjects is the lack of cultural context in teaching materials, which makes lessons feel monotonous and irrelevant. This study seeks to address this limitation by incorporating local cultural content into explanatory texts to create a more engaging and meaningful learning experience.

SMA Negeri 1 Sei Kanan, the location of this study, is situated in a culturally rich region, yet many students demonstrate low awareness and appreciation of their own cultural heritage. Observations show that students struggle to identify the structure of explanatory texts, such as general statements, sequences of explanation, and interpretations. They also show limited understanding of local customs, which suggests a missed opportunity in leveraging culture as a teaching resource. This aligns with the findings of Sari et al. (2022), who emphasize that integrating local wisdom into teaching materials can revitalize students' connection with their cultural roots and enhance learning engagement.

The cultural disconnection is further amplified by the influence of globalization and digital media, which expose students to external cultures while diminishing the presence of local values in their daily interactions. Research by Yuliana and Hartono (2021) reveals that students increasingly adopt foreign lifestyles, often at the expense of their own cultural identity. When students are not exposed to their local traditions in educational content, they may not develop a deep appreciation for them. Thus, integrating local cultural phenomena—such as traditional ceremonies, crafts, or folklore—into explanatory texts could serve dual purposes: promoting literacy and preserving heritage.

The current curriculum under the Merdeka Belajar policy promotes differentiated and contextual learning, yet many schools still rely on standardized textbooks that lack regional specificity. Teachers often have limited resources or time to develop supplementary materials tailored to local contexts. As highlighted by Fauziah and

Nugroho (2023), curriculum implementation must be supported by culturally responsive teaching materials to be effective. Without resources that reflect the students' cultural realities, the curriculum's intention remains underrealized.

Existing studies have shown the benefits of using local culture in teaching various types of texts, such as narratives and descriptive texts. For instance, research by Ningsih and Rahayu (2021) demonstrated that incorporating folklore into narrative writing improved students' writing fluency and critical thinking. However, few studies have focused specifically on explanatory texts—a genre that demands both factual explanation and clear structure. This gap in the literature suggests an urgent need to explore the impact of culturally contextual explanatory texts on students' understanding and writing skills.

What distinguishes this study from previous work is its focus on explanatory texts that are explicitly based on local cultural phenomena relevant to students in South Labuhanbatu Regency. While previous research has emphasized the benefits of cultural integration in a general sense, this study systematically develops, validates, and tests a set of teaching materials grounded in regional traditions. This novel approach is expected to foster not only language competence but also cultural literacy, which is a critical component of holistic education in the 21st century.

The innovation of this study lies in the development of teaching materials using the ADDIE model, which ensures a structured, research-based development process involving expert validation, student feedback, and iterative refinement. The inclusion of culture-specific content such as the making of songket, traditional communal work practices, and local belief systems distinguishes these materials from conventional texts. According to Sulastri and Hamzah (2020), the use of regionally customized materials has a higher success rate in improving both language skills and cultural empathy among students.

Furthermore, this study addresses the issue of student motivation a recurring challenge in language learning. By presenting explanatory texts that feature familiar contexts and culturally significant topics, the materials are expected to increase student interest and participation. A study by Kartika and Prasetya (2023) supports this idea, indicating that culturally grounded materials significantly enhance students' intrinsic motivation and engagement, particularly in underperforming schools.

The goal of this research is not only to enhance students' ability to write and understand explanatory texts but also to foster a sense of cultural belonging. As Indonesia continues to face rapid modernization, education must play a proactive role in preserving the nation's intangible heritage. By integrating culture-based explanatory texts into classroom learning, teachers can create opportunities for students to reflect on their identity and build pride in their regional traditions.

In conclusion, this study responds to a clear research gap in Indonesian language instruction: the lack of culturally integrated explanatory text materials. It proposes a novel solution through the development and implementation of teaching materials tailored to students' local context, using a systematic and research-based approach. The findings are expected to contribute to more effective, engaging, and culturally responsive language education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Explanatory Texts

Explanatory texts are one of the genres in the Indonesian language curriculum that aim to explain the processes of natural, social, or cultural phenomena logically and systematically. According to Kosasih (2018), an explanatory text functions to describe the causal relationships of an event or phenomenon, generally supported by factual information. The structure of explanatory texts typically includes a general statement, a series of explanations, and a closing or interpretation. This genre helps students develop logical reasoning and factual writing skills.

The Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud, 2017) emphasizes that explanatory texts should not only present information but also train students to analyze causes and consequences. The text structure must encourage scientific thinking, and the linguistic features should include action verbs, technical terms, conjunctions, and time adverbs. This is further supported by Handayani et al. (2020), who state that the ability to write explanatory texts enhances students' critical thinking, especially when they are required to explain phenomena that are relevant to their context.

Recent studies show that explanatory texts are more effectively taught when aligned with local contexts. For instance, Marzulina et al. (2019) argue that culturally contextual texts improve students' comprehension because learners can relate directly to the content. Therefore, integrating local culture into explanatory text instruction not only promotes writing competence but also fosters students' connection with their cultural heritage.

Culture and Cultural Values in Education

Culture, in the educational context, serves not only as a source of identity but also as a vehicle for character development. According to Widodo (2018), culture refers to the complex collection of knowledge, values, traditions, and behavioral patterns passed down through generations. In relation to education, cultural integration in the curriculum promotes relevance and engagement among students, as it connects learning materials with their everyday experiences and community practices.

Cultural values are shared norms and behaviors embedded in the daily lives of a society, functioning as a guide for interaction and moral reasoning. Ningsih and

Sutopo (2021) highlight that education should not be separated from cultural values, especially in multilingual and multicultural countries like Indonesia. These values foster social responsibility and strengthen students' sense of belonging and pride in their cultural identity.

In language education, incorporating culture is crucial in helping students understand not only the structure of a language but also its meaning and social function. Research by Sari and Susanto (2020) indicates that learning materials embedded with cultural narratives improve learners' appreciation for cultural diversity while simultaneously enhancing language skills. Moreover, culture-based texts promote holistic learning, where students can observe, analyze, and reflect on the values conveyed through traditional practices and community stories.

Integration of Culture in Teaching Materials

Teaching materials that integrate local culture have shown significant promise in developing contextual learning experiences. Suryani et al. (2020) found that students are more engaged and perform better when the materials they study reflect their surroundings and lived experiences. This supports the need for teaching explanatory texts not only based on abstract or universal topics but rooted in students' local environment, such as traditional ceremonies, local industries, or folklore.

Such integration aligns with the Merdeka Belajar curriculum policy that encourages the inclusion of local wisdom in education to promote character development and identity reinforcement. According to Astuti et al. (2022), materials developed with local cultural content stimulate higher-order thinking skills by encouraging students to connect what they read and write with their own community experiences.

Furthermore, the development of culturally relevant teaching materials also supports language preservation. In regions where local languages and customs are at risk of being forgotten, instructional content that uses local vocabulary, idioms, and concepts can function as tools for cultural conservation. Putri and Lestari (2021) emphasize that this approach not only supports academic achievement but also serves as a medium for intergenerational knowledge transmission.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employed a research and development (R&D) approach using the ADDIE model, which consists of five stages: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation (Sugiyono, 2021). The purpose of this approach was to create explanatory text teaching materials based on local culture and to evaluate their effectiveness in improving students' understanding of explanatory texts and cultural values. The research subjects were students of class XI at SMA

Negeri 1 Sei Kanan, selected using purposive sampling. The selection was based on the relevance of their curriculum to the study objectives and their exposure to local cultural content.

Instruments and Procedures

The instruments used in this study consisted of tools for needs analysis, product validation, and product testing. The needs analysis instruments included questionnaires for students and teachers to explore the need for culture-based teaching materials, interviews with Indonesian language teachers to assess challenges in learning explanatory texts, and a document review of existing textbooks. Validation instruments involved expert assessment sheets to evaluate the content accuracy (material expert), visual and structural design (media expert), and cultural authenticity (cultural expert) of the developed materials. For product testing, student response questionnaires were used to measure material clarity, attractiveness, and usefulness, along with observation sheets to assess classroom engagement and pretest-posttest tools to measure learning outcomes. The procedure began with analyzing the learning needs of students and identifying gaps in current materials, followed by the design and development of culture-based explanatory text modules. After expert validation and revision, the materials were implemented in a classroom setting. The effectiveness of the materials was then evaluated through a combination of student feedback, observation, and test performance.

Data Analysis

The data analysis techniques included descriptive analysis for needs identification and expert validation results, using a four-point Likert scale (1 = Poor to 4 = Very Good). Validation scores were calculated into percentages and interpreted according to predefined feasibility categories. Student response data were analyzed using percentage formulas to determine levels of satisfaction. Observational data were examined descriptively to understand student involvement, while pretest and posttest scores were analyzed using gain score calculations to evaluate learning improvement. This comprehensive method ensured both the validity of the developed product and its effectiveness in enhancing students' understanding of cultural values through explanatory texts. Product validation analysis is carried out by calculating the validation results from experts using the feasibility percentage technique (Likert scale) and concluding it based on the feasibility category.

Table 2. Likert Scale Validation Answer Criteria

No.	Answer	Score
1	Very good	4
2	Good	3
3	Not good	2
4	Not good	1

(Arikunto, 2022)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Initial product development is carried out to see the quality of the product developed by paying attention to the packaging of materials, packaging of teaching materials and learning evaluation. Packaging of materials, namely packaging materials more systematically. Packaging of teaching materials, namely the technique of packaging learning materials for explanatory texts based on culture is more attractive and in accordance with the level of student development, evaluation functions to help students learn independently. Here are some components in the product in explanatory text materials based on culture.

Figure 1. Display of Core Competencies and Basic Competencies
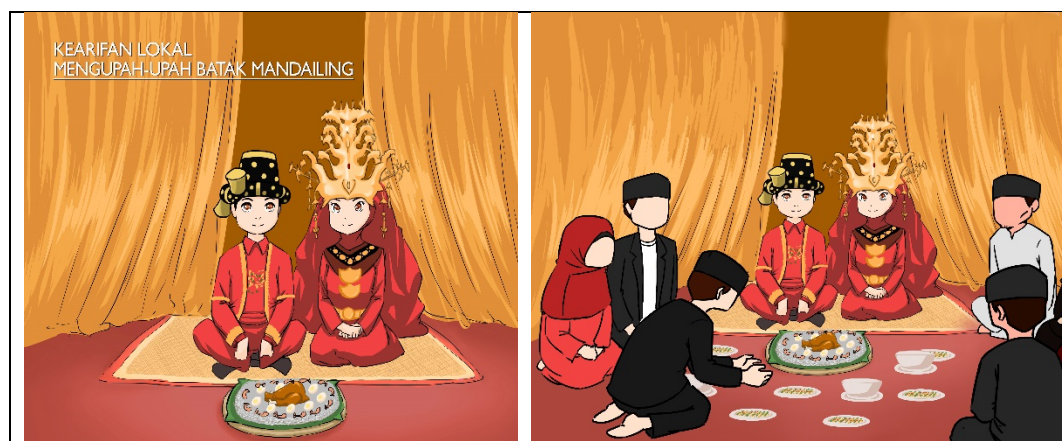
Figure 2. Batak Mandailing Culture Developed in Explanatory Texts

After the development of the material, the material was validated by material, media and culture experts, then viewed from the results of the student needs analysis. The results of the study showed that the development of culture-based explanatory text teaching materials had a positive impact on students' understanding of cultural values. Based on the needs analysis, it was found that students and teachers needed

teaching materials that were more relevant to local culture so that learning was more contextual. The results of validation by experts showed that the teaching materials developed had a high level of feasibility with an average percentage of 90%, which included aspects of content suitability, appearance, and readability.

Table 3. Validation Results

Validation Aspects	Subject Matter Expert	Media Expert	Cultural Expert	Average
Content Conformity	92%	-	-	92%
Appearance	-	88%	-	88%
Legibility	90%	85%	-	87.5%
Cultural Values	-	-	95%	95%
Average	91%	86.5%	95%	**90%**

Based on the product validation results, the teaching materials received an average score of 90% from various aspects assessed. The suitability of the content received the highest score from the material expert with a score of 92%, indicating that the teaching materials were in accordance with the applicable learning standards. The appearance of the material was assessed by the media expert with a score of 88%, indicating that the design and presentation of the material were quite good. Readability received an average score of 87.5%, indicating that the material was quite easy for students to understand. Meanwhile, the cultural value received the highest score of 95%, indicating that the material had accommodated local cultural elements very well. After product validation, a trial was conducted on students to see how students' understanding of cultural values in the explanatory text. The following are the results of the pretest and posttest of grade XI students of SMA Negeri 1 Sei Kanan.
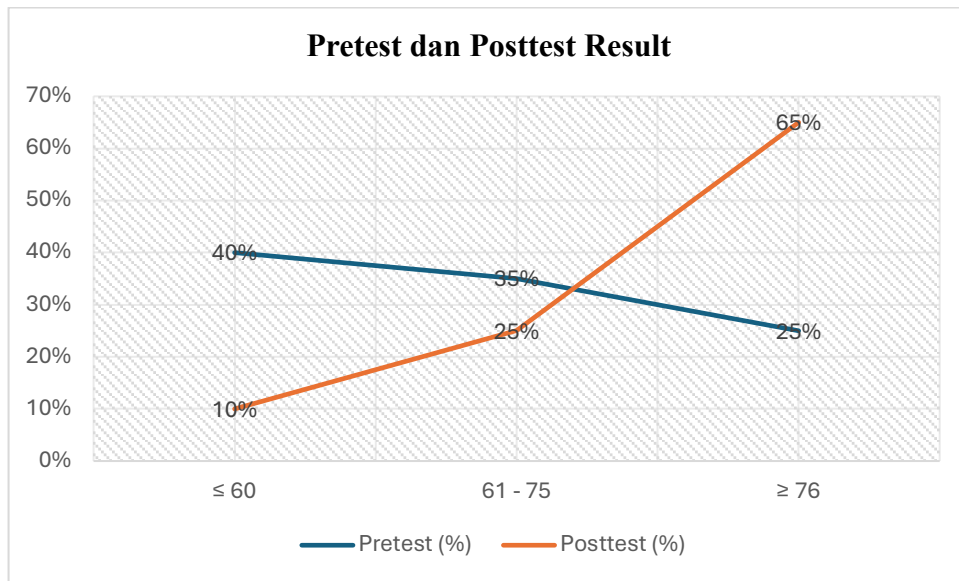
Figure 4. Pretest and Posttest Results

Based on the picture above, it can be seen that the pretest results, as many as 40% of students scored below 60, which indicates that students' initial understanding of explanatory texts is still low. After being given culture-based teaching materials, the posttest results showed that only 10% of students still scored below 60, while 65% of students managed to achieve scores above 76. This increase indicates the effectiveness of the teaching materials developed in improving students' understanding of explanatory texts. The trial of grade XI students of SMA Negeri 1 Sei Kanan showed an increase in students' understanding of culture-based explanatory texts with a gain score of 0.72 in the high increase category. In addition, the students' response to the developed teaching materials was also very positive, with 85% of students stating that the materials were more interesting and easier to understand compared to previous teaching materials. Thus, the development of these teaching materials is considered effective in improving students' understanding of explanatory texts while instilling local cultural values.

The results of this study strongly indicate that the development of culture-based explanatory text teaching materials significantly improved students' understanding of both the text structure and embedded cultural values. The gain score of 0.72 is categorized as high, demonstrating a notable learning increase following the intervention. Moreover, the percentage of students scoring below 60 dropped dramatically from 40% to 10%, while 65% of students scored above 76 in the posttest. These outcomes suggest that integrating local culture into text materials does not only provide contextually relevant content but also creates a more meaningful learning experience. This finding is consistent with the results of Putri, Nugroho, and Rahayu (2021), who emphasized that contextually developed instructional materials significantly enhance students' comprehension by linking new knowledge to familiar concepts in their environment.

An important contribution of this study lies in the way local culture is not only mentioned but becomes the central theme in explanatory text content. Unlike previous materials that focused on generic or global natural phenomena (like volcanoes or deforestation), the developed texts highlighted real-life cultural processes such as traditional weaving, community rituals, and indigenous beliefs surrounding natural occurrences. This contextualization made the content more engaging and relatable for students, allowing them to visualize and internalize the message more easily. Rahmawati and Suryani (2022) also found that when instructional texts reflect students' daily lives and cultural background, their cognitive engagement and retention are significantly improved. Thus, this research supports the idea that education becomes more effective when grounded in the students' cultural identity.

Furthermore, the success of these teaching materials is attributed to their systematic development using the ADDIE model, which ensured careful planning and iterative validation. The involvement of subject matter experts, instructional designers, and cultural figures in the validation process ensured the content was not only pedagogically sound but also culturally authentic and representative. The overall feasibility rating of 90% from the validation process is evidence that collaboration among multiple stakeholders enhances the relevance, accuracy, and accessibility of teaching materials. This supports the argument by Yulianti and Widodo (2021) that instructional materials need to be validated through a multi-perspective lens to achieve both educational and contextual alignment, especially in culturally diverse regions.

Student responses to the developed materials were overwhelmingly positive. About 85% of the students stated that the new materials were more engaging and easier to understand than the ones previously used. This shows a shift not only in learning performance but also in attitude toward the subject. Students reported greater enthusiasm in reading and writing activities and were able to discuss cultural content with more confidence. This shift in motivation and participation aligns with Lestari et al. (2020), who found that when learning materials are designed to reflect students' local context, there is a notable improvement in both interest and active involvement during class sessions. Students are more likely to take ownership of their learning when they see its relevance to their identity.

In addition to improving learning outcomes and motivation, the materials also helped foster critical thinking. Students were able to identify and explain cause-and-effect relationships in cultural phenomena and articulate how certain traditions emerged and evolved. This ability to analyze cultural processes reflects a deeper level of comprehension, going beyond memorization. According to Sari and Ningsih (2024), students develop stronger critical thinking skills when they engage with content that requires them to compare, interpret, and draw conclusions based on real-world observations. In this case, the explanatory texts served as both linguistic and cognitive tools to help students make sense of the world around them through a cultural lens.

Another noteworthy aspect is how the culture-based texts encouraged discussions among students and between students and teachers. During classroom implementation, the use of familiar topics sparked curiosity and interaction. Students shared personal experiences, asked questions about lesser-known customs, and even consulted family members for more information. This phenomenon supports Hasibuan et al. (2023), who found that contextual learning promotes social interaction and dialogue in classrooms, which in turn enhances collaborative learning and knowledge construction. These interactions helped students see their own culture as something valuable and worthy of academic exploration, contributing to cultural preservation efforts.

Despite the positive outcomes, this study is not without limitations. First, the research was conducted in a single school with a specific cultural context in Sei Kanan, South Labuhanbatu. Therefore, the results may not be directly applicable to schools in other regions with different cultural dynamics. Future research should consider comparative studies in multiple regions to see how local culture-based explanatory texts perform across various cultural landscapes. This would help determine the universality and scalability of the approach, as suggested by Suhartono and Mahendra (2023) in their recommendation for comparative educational research on localized materials.

Another limitation is the relatively short duration of implementation. The study focused on immediate post-intervention results without assessing long-term retention or whether students could transfer their skills to write or analyze explanatory texts independently. Hartati and Pramana (2022) emphasize that short-term studies may not reveal whether observed gains are sustainable or whether deeper understanding develops over time. Future research should include longitudinal studies that track students' writing and reading abilities across semesters or academic years to measure long-term impacts of culturally integrated instruction.

From a curriculum development perspective, this study reinforces the importance of decentralizing teaching materials to reflect regional and local identities. While national standards are essential, the flexibility to develop and implement localized content is equally crucial for effective pedagogy. These findings support the goals of the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) program initiated by Indonesia's Ministry of Education, which encourages autonomy, creativity, and local relevance in teaching practices. As suggested by Rachmawati and Supriyadi (2023), one-size-fits-all instructional content is insufficient for addressing the diverse needs of Indonesian students.

In sum, the integration of local culture into explanatory text materials not only enhances language comprehension and critical thinking but also strengthens students' cultural identity and pride. The findings of this study provide empirical evidence that culture-based learning is a viable and effective instructional strategy

in Indonesian language education. Teachers, curriculum developers, and educational policymakers are encouraged to consider this approach to foster more inclusive, contextual, and empowering education. Although further research is needed to refine and expand its application, this study makes a valuable contribution to the growing body of knowledge on culturally responsive teaching in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the development of culture-based explanatory text teaching materials is highly effective in enhancing students' comprehension of explanatory texts while simultaneously promoting awareness and appreciation of local cultural values. The teaching materials, developed through the ADDIE model, achieved a very high level of feasibility with an average expert validation score of 90%, indicating their appropriateness and quality for classroom implementation. Furthermore, a significant improvement in student learning outcomes was recorded, with a gain score of 0.72, reflecting a high level of learning enhancement after using the materials. These findings confirm that integrating local cultural content into Indonesian language teaching makes the material more meaningful, engaging, and relevant to students' lived experiences. This not only improves their reading and writing skills but also strengthens their cultural identity. The success of this approach highlights its potential as a practical strategy for contextualizing national curriculum content across diverse cultural regions in Indonesia. From a pedagogical standpoint, these results imply that teachers should be encouraged and supported to develop or adapt teaching materials that reflect the cultural richness of their students' environment. This approach aligns with the principles of the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) curriculum, which advocates for flexible, localized, and student-centered learning. Moreover, curriculum developers and policymakers should consider integrating regional culture more systematically into official textbooks and instructional designs.

Despite its promising results, this study was limited to one school context, and its short-term implementation did not measure long-term retention. Therefore, future research should be conducted with broader and more diverse student populations across regions, and over a longer period, to evaluate the sustainability of learning outcomes. Additionally, further studies could explore the integration of digital media or project-based learning strategies to complement culture-based materials and enhance student engagement. In conclusion, this study offers a valuable contribution to the development of contextual and culturally responsive Indonesian language education. It demonstrates that thoughtfully designed teaching materials can bridge the gap between curricular goals and students' cultural realities, fostering not only academic achievement but also cultural preservation.

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