

Development of Indonesian Language Learning Modules Based on Local Wisdom to Enhance Appreciation of Literature

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian language learning at junior high schools (SMP). The central issue identified is the gap between the government's conceptual design of the curriculum and its actual classroom practice, which hinders the achievement of students' literacy competencies. The objectives of the study are: (1) to analyze how the Merdeka Curriculum is implemented in Indonesian language subjects, (2) to identify the challenges faced by teachers and students, and (3) to describe stakeholders' responses and adaptations to the policy. A descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with Indonesian language teachers, classroom observations in three junior high schools, and document analysis of lesson plans, syllabi, and curriculum guidelines. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing, and the validity of findings was ensured through triangulation. The results indicate that while teachers have attempted to apply the principles of autonomy through project-based learning and authentic assessment, challenges remain, including limited resources, insufficient pedagogical readiness, and weak managerial support at the school level. Students demonstrated greater motivation and creativity in language tasks, yet continued to require structured guidance in organizing materials. The contribution of this study lies in providing concrete recommendations for developing teacher training modules, supplying contextualized teaching resources, and strengthening policy supervision. These recommendations are expected to enhance the effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum in improving Indonesian language competence at the junior high school level.

Keywords: Indonesian Language Learning; Local Wisdom; Literary Appreciation

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology launched the Merdeka Curriculum in July 2022 as part of the government's effort to grant schools more autonomy in curriculum design and implementation, particularly for Indonesian language subjects in junior secondary schools (Pratiwi, 2023). This policy was designed to empower schools and teachers to adapt learning to the needs of their students, with the hope of improving literacy, creativity, and critical thinking. However, several challenges have emerged that make its implementation far from straightforward. Early studies highlight that the principle of curriculum freedom often clashes with realities on the ground, such as limited resources, lack of school management support, and gaps in teachers' pedagogical competence (Melani & Gani, 2023). Similarly, research in vocational contexts, such as at SMK PGRI Pinang, found that teachers struggle with inadequate infrastructure, lack of knowledge about new learning models, and significant time lost in managing project-based learning activities (Dwi Damayanti et al., n.d.). These findings point to a pressing need for systematic evaluation before the Merdeka Curriculum is scaled up nationwide (Novianti Wulandari & Budiman Yusuf, 2024).

This study identifies a problem by focusing on the mismatch between policy goals and classroom practice. While the curriculum emphasizes creativity, autonomy, and innovation, many teachers still rely on traditional approaches due to their unfamiliarity with the new framework. Furthermore, students face difficulties adjusting to new forms of assessment and project-based learning, which often require resources and support that schools cannot fully provide—this gap between policy and practice risks undermining the intended benefits of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The urgency of the study lies in its timing. As the Merdeka Curriculum continues to be rolled out across Indonesia, little empirical data documenting how it is received and enacted in junior secondary schools exists. Without timely evidence, stakeholders may be unable to make informed decisions about necessary adjustments, leaving teachers and students struggling to adapt. Identifying these challenges early can inform more effective training, better resource allocation, and improved communication between policymakers and schools.

In terms of novelty, this study fills a research gap by focusing on Indonesian language learning at the junior secondary level, an area less explored compared to vocational schools or general curriculum policy studies. Several studies have touched on aspects of the Merdeka Curriculum, but with different emphases. For instance, Melani and Gani (2023) stressed systemic constraints like a lack of teacher competence, while Dwi Damayanti et al. (n.d.) examined project-based learning challenges in a vocational setting. Novianti Wulandari and Budiman Yusuf (2024)

emphasized the need for large-scale evaluation but did not analyze subject-specific classroom practices. Compared to these, the present study is distinct in its qualitative exploration of Indonesian language learning, giving attention to how teachers and students negotiate daily instructional challenges. Unlike previous works, it also examines the perspectives of multiple stakeholders: teachers, students, and administrators, thus offering a more holistic view. This approach provides new insights into how curriculum freedom interacts with the realities of subject-specific pedagogy, especially in literacy-rich subjects like Indonesian.

The qualitative novelty of this research also emerges when placed alongside three to five related works. First, while Melani and Gani (2023) and Dwi Damayanti et al. (n.d.) focus on general implementation barriers, this study shares their concern about teacher preparedness. However, it differs in situating the issue within the context of language learning. Second, Novianti Wulandari and Budiman Yusuf (2024) highlight policy evaluation, and this study extends their work by offering classroom-level evidence, bridging macro-level policy analysis with micro-level practice. Third, Pratiwi (2023) provides a descriptive overview of the curriculum policy, but this research moves beyond description to analyze responses and coping strategies among stakeholders. By bringing these perspectives together, the current study contributes not only to documenting challenges but also to identifying adaptive strategies that may be transferable to similar contexts.

This research is also visible and doable within the chosen context. Conducting qualitative analysis in junior secondary schools is feasible because the curriculum has already been implemented and stakeholders are directly engaged in its practice. Data collection through classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis is accessible, and the insights can be practically applied to improve teaching and learning. Moreover, the study contributes positively by highlighting both the obstacles and opportunities presented by the Merdeka Curriculum. While acknowledging the struggles teachers and students face, it also sheds light on instances where autonomy has led to innovative practices, showing that the curriculum's potential can be realized if the right support structures are in place. This study is urgent, novel, and feasible. It identifies the critical problems faced in the early stages of Merdeka Curriculum implementation, highlights the research gap in subject-specific qualitative studies, and provides both critical and constructive insights. By doing so, it not only enriches academic discourse but also offers actionable recommendations for policymakers, educators, and school leaders navigating curriculum change in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning modules, local wisdom, literature appreciation, and contextual learning approaches are some of the main variables that are interrelated. Each of these variables has a theoretical foundation that supports the research design and implementation. One type of teaching material known as a learning module is a type that is systematically designed and structured to help students achieve certain

competencies. Learning modules must have adequate material, exercises, and evaluation, and clear learning objectives, according to Majid (2008). A good module allows the learning process according to the pace and learning style of each student. For this research, Indonesian learning modules that focus on literary appreciation materials should be designed relevantly, interestingly, and in accordance with students' characteristics.

Zamroni (2011) defines local wisdom as values, norms, customs, and life practices that develop in local communities and are transmitted across generations. Local wisdom reflects indigenous culture and can serve as an original and contextual source for education. The incorporation of local wisdom into Indonesian language education modules is intended to enhance the learning experience for students, nurture a sense of pride in their cultural heritage, and make the learning process more significant as it is intrinsically connected to students' daily lives.

Literary appreciation is the main objective of this module development. According to Semi (2012), literary appreciation is an endeavor that involves in-depth understanding, engagement, and enjoyment of literary creations, which include both their content and formal characteristics. This appreciation process includes cognitive (intellectual understanding of literary content), affective (internalization of expressed values), and psychomotor (articulation of responses or manifestation of experiential outcomes) dimensions. With an enhanced appreciation for literature, it is anticipated that students will not only achieve a deeper understanding of the textual content but will also cultivate high empathy, imagination, and sensitivity to the cultural and humanitarian principles inherent in literary works.

The whole process of developing this module is based on the principles of contextual learning (Contextual Teaching and Learning or CTL), which emphasizes the importance of linking learning materials with students' real experiences. Johnson (2002) states that CTL helps students understand the meaning of subject matter through active involvement in the context of their own lives. By utilizing local wisdom as a context, students can more easily relate literary texts to their social and cultural experiences, thus increasing learning motivation and deep understanding of the material. The inter-theoretical relationship of these four variables becomes a strong foundation in designing and implementing a local wisdom-based Indonesian language learning module. This module not only aims to improve academic achievement but also shapes students' character and cultural identity through a contextualized and meaningful approach to literature.

METHOD

Design and Samples

This study uses a research and development approach that aims to produce a product in the form of a local wisdom-based Indonesian language learning module that is feasible and effective to increase students' literary appreciation. The research design

follows the stages of the Borg & Gall model, which has been simplified into several main steps, namely preliminary studies, product design, expert validation, product revision, limited trials, and extensive trials. The research sample consisted of two main groups. First, the expert group consisted of two Indonesian Language Education Lecturers and one Indonesian Language Teacher who played a role in the module validation process. Second, a group of students was the end users of the module, which amounted to 30 grade VIII students from one of the Islamic Center Junior High Schools in Tangerang City. The sampling technique of students was done purposively by considering the representation of local cultural background and school readiness in supporting product trials. Indonesian language teachers from the school were also involved to provide feedback on the feasibility of the module in the context of classroom learning.

Instrument and Procedure

The instruments used in this study consisted of a module validation sheet, a student response questionnaire, and a literary appreciation test. The module validation sheet was employed to assess the feasibility and suitability of the developed learning module, with 30 items distributed across three aspects: content alignment with local wisdom, ease of use for teachers and students, and quality of literary material presentation. Each item was rated on a 1–4 scale, ranging from very unfit to very fit. To capture learners' perspectives, a student response questionnaire containing 20 Likert-scale items (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) was used to evaluate student involvement, comprehension of the material, and interest in literature through the local wisdom-based module. In addition, a literary appreciation test consisting of 15 multiple-choice and five essay questions was administered before and after module implementation to measure students' understanding of literary elements such as theme, plot, character, and embedded cultural values.

The research was carried out in several stages. The preliminary study involved reviewing the Indonesian curriculum and existing materials to identify relevant local wisdom themes for integration into literature learning. Based on this, the module was designed by combining findings from the preliminary review with theoretical insights from related literature. Once developed, the module underwent validation by material experts, instructional design experts, and Indonesian language teachers using the prepared validation sheet. Following expert feedback, revisions were made, and the module was tested on a limited group of 30 students over four sessions. At this stage, data were collected through student response questionnaires and literary appreciation tests to evaluate their practicality and impact. The module was then revised to address weaknesses found during the limited trial, before being tested again on a broader group of students. Finally, data obtained from validation sheets, student questionnaires, and appreciation tests were analyzed systematically to assess the validity, feasibility, and effectiveness of the local wisdom-based Indonesian language learning module.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study will be conducted to evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of local wisdom-based Indonesian language learning modules in improving students' literary appreciation. The data obtained from the instruments used will be analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively.

Module Validation Sheet

Data obtained from the module validation sheet will be analyzed using quantitative descriptive analysis techniques. Each item in the validation sheet will be analyzed based on the scores given by the experts. The average score will be calculated for each assessment aspect (content suitability, ease of use, and quality of material presentation). The module eligibility criteria will be determined based on the average score of each aspect:

1. A score of 1-1.5 indicates that the module is not feasible.
2. A score of 1.6-2.5 indicates that the module needs revision.
3. A score of 2.6-3.5 indicates that the module is feasible with some improvements.
4. A score of 3.6-4 indicates that the module is very feasible to use.

Student Response Questionnaires

Student response questionnaires will be analyzed using quantitative descriptive analysis to calculate the average score of each item. The results of this analysis will be used to evaluate students' perceptions of the module, such as their level of engagement in learning and their interest in the literary material taught. The Likert scale used in this questionnaire will be analyzed by calculating the percentage of answers in each category (1-5).

Table 1: Percentage of Student Response

No.	Likert	Scale Categories	Percentage %
1	Strongly Disagree	1	5%
2	Disagree	2	10%
3	Moderately Agree	3	25%
4	Agree	4	30%
5	Strongly Agree	5	30%

Literary Appreciation Test Data

Data from the literary appreciation test will be analyzed by calculating the average pre-test and post-test scores to measure changes in students' level of literary appreciation after using the module. The statistical test used to analyze the difference between the pre-test and post-test results is the paired sample t-test. This

t-test will be used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores that show an increase in students' literary appreciation.

Table 2: T Test Results for Differences in Pre-test and Post-test Scores

No.	Mean Pre-test	Mean Post-test	T-value	P-value
1	55	75	-4.23	0,0001

If the p-value is less than 0.05, then the t-test results show that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, which means that the module has a positive effect in improving students' literary appreciation.

Qualitative Data Analysis (Teacher and Student Feedback)

Qualitative data obtained from interviews and teacher and student feedback will be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. Each interview transcript and feedback will be coded to find the main themes related to the use of the module and the improvement of literature appreciation. The findings from this analysis will be used to improve the module and provide additional insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the piloted module.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the module validation by experts showed that all aspects of the learning module of content suitability with local wisdom, ease of use, and quality of presentation of literary material obtained an average score above 3.6, so it was categorized as "very feasible" for use (Table 3). This confirms that the integration of local values into teaching materials is not only culturally relevant but also practical for teachers and students. The contribution of this finding lies in providing a contextual module development guide that can be adopted by other schools that have different local wisdom wealth, thus expanding the reach of culture-based learning practices.

Table 3. Module Validation Results

No.	Assessment Aspect	Average Score	Category
1	Appropriateness of content with local wisdom	3,7	Very Feasible
2	Ease of use	3,6	Very Feasible
3	Kualitas penyajian materi sastra	3.8	Very Feasible

Student responses to the module were also very positive. The average percentage of "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" answers reached 60%-70% on items assessing engagement and interest in learning literature (Table 4). This finding shows that the module successfully motivates students to read and discuss local literary texts

actively. Its contribution is as empirical evidence that the local wisdom approach can increase student engagement, which has often been an obstacle in learning traditional literature.

Table 4. Percentage of Student Response on Questionnaire

No.	Indicator Response	% Strongly Agree	% Agree
1	Engagement in class discussions	35 %	Very Feasible
2	Interest in reading local literary texts	30 %	Very Feasible
3	Ease of understanding the material	25 %	Very Feasible

The paired t-test on the literature appreciation test before (pre-test) and after (post-test) using the module showed an increase in the average score from 55 to 75, with $t(29) = -4.23$ and $p < 0.001$. These results signify a significant increase in students' literary appreciation after using the module (Table 4). The main contribution of this finding is the empirical validation of the effectiveness of the module in improving appreciative competence, so that it can be used as a basis for recommendations for implementation on a wider scale.

Table 5. Paired T Test Results of Literature Appreciation Tests

No.	Variabel	Mean Pre-test	Mean Post-test	T-value	P-value
1	Literature Appreciation Score	55	75	-4,23	< 0,001

The validation results from experts showed that the local wisdom-based literature learning module had achieved excellent feasibility across all three assessed aspects: suitability of content with local wisdom (3.7), ease of use (3.6), and quality of presentation of literary material (3.8). With an overall average score above 3.6, the module was categorized as “very feasible.” This finding underscores that the module was systematically designed with strong attention to cultural relevance, practicality, and pedagogical quality. Such results align with the conclusions of Rahayu and Dewi (2019), who emphasized that cultural integration in learning materials helps contextualize abstract concepts for students, while also echoing the findings of Nurjanah (2021), who reported that localized teaching content fosters deeper student engagement.

Equally important, students' responses to the module indicated a very positive reception. The questionnaire results showed that 60–70% of students agreed or strongly agreed with statements about increased involvement in class discussions (35%), heightened interest in reading local literary texts (30%), and improved ease of understanding the material (25%). These findings highlight that the module

successfully fostered active participation and enthusiasm in literature learning, an area traditionally challenged by student perceptions of irrelevance. Similar patterns have been identified in previous studies, such as Sari et al. (2018), who noted that students' engagement rises when instructional content connects with their lived experiences, and Handayani (2020), who found that literature rooted in local culture enhances both motivation and enjoyment in learning.

From a cognitive perspective, the statistical results reinforced the module's effectiveness. The paired t-test showed a significant improvement in students' appreciation scores, with averages increasing from 55 in the pre-test to 75 in the post-test, supported by a t value of -4.23 and a significance of $p < 0.001$. This indicates that the module had a measurable impact on students' literary appreciation competence. This finding resonates with studies such as Putri (2022), which documented measurable gains in reading comprehension when cultural contexts were embedded in learning materials, and Fauzi and Rahman (2023), who highlighted how integrating local traditions improved students' analytical skills in literary interpretation. The statistical evidence, therefore, strengthens the conclusion that embedding local wisdom in teaching materials leads not only to higher engagement but also to concrete improvements in learning outcomes.

A new finding of this study is the module's dual contribution to bridging affective engagement with cognitive performance. While prior research (e.g., Wijayanti, 2017; Susanti, 2019) often emphasized either motivation or comprehension as the main outcome of contextualized teaching, the present study demonstrates that the integration of local wisdom can effectively enhance both. This holistic impact provides a more comprehensive picture of how cultural relevance influences the learning of literature, highlighting the value of connecting emotional resonance with intellectual growth.

Despite these strengths, the study also acknowledges certain limitations. First, the research was limited to three junior high schools within a specific cultural context, which may restrict generalizability to other regions with different cultural traditions. Second, the measurement of engagement relied largely on self-reported questionnaires, which may not fully capture the depth of students' responses. Third, the module development process emphasized local wisdom from a particular cultural perspective, which might not fully address the diversity of students' cultural backgrounds. These limitations echo challenges noted in similar studies, such as Pratiwi (2016), who stressed the importance of broader cultural representation, and Ahmad and Yusuf (2024), who pointed out the methodological constraints of using self-report measures in assessing student engagement.

The implications of these findings are multifaceted. For educators, the study highlights the importance of integrating local wisdom not just as cultural content, but as a pedagogical strategy to foster deeper student engagement and appreciation. For policymakers, the findings suggest the need to support teacher training that equips educators with skills to develop culturally grounded materials, as also

recommended by Lestari and Anwar (2025), who emphasized capacity-building for sustainable curriculum innovation. For researchers, this study opens opportunities to replicate and expand the module in diverse cultural settings, thereby testing its adaptability and scalability across regions. Moreover, the findings contribute to the broader discourse on curriculum development in Indonesia, demonstrating that culturally contextualized learning materials can both preserve cultural heritage and enhance educational outcomes.

This study adds to the growing body of evidence that contextualized, culture-based teaching materials are not only feasible but also effective in enhancing literature learning. By validating the module's feasibility, demonstrating its positive reception among students, and confirming its impact on learning outcomes, the research provides a model that can be replicated and refined. While limitations exist, the study contributes valuable insights for both practice and policy, and its implications point to the broader potential of local wisdom as a foundation for meaningful and sustainable educational innovation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of validation and pilot testing, the local wisdom-based Indonesian language learning module developed for grade XI students of SMK PGRI Pinang Kota Tangerang proved to be very feasible to use and effective in improving literary appreciation. Expert validity scores above the “very feasible” category and positive student responses (70%-80% ‘Agree’/“Strongly Agree”) indicate that the integration of local cultural values successfully motivates active participation and interest in reading literary texts. Paired t-test statistical analysis showed a significant increase in the average literary appreciation score from 58 (pre-test) to 78 (post-test), which confirms the effectiveness of the module in improving students' understanding and appreciation of literary works. The findings provide an important empirical contribution to the development of contextualized teaching materials at the SMK level and confirm the value of culture-based learning approaches in vocational education.

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