Development of Indonesian language teaching materials in vocational high schools: integrating digital literacy in news writing

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengembangkan bahan ajar Bahasa Indonesia berbasis penulisan berita untuk kelas XI SMK, pendekatan yang digunakan yaitu deskriptif-kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus yang dilaksanakan di SMK Vancanity Pacet Cianjur dengan integrasi literasi digital, penanaman nilai karakter, dan pendekatan pembelajaran berbasis proyek. Data diperoleh melalui kajian kurikulum, analisis bahan ajar, pelaksanaan uji coba di SMK Vancanity Pacet Cianjur, dan evaluasi berbasis angket dan wawancara. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa pengembangan bahan ajar yang adaptif terhadap Kurikulum Merdeka memperkuat literasi faktual, keterampilan abad 21, dan sikap tanggung jawab sosial siswa. Penekanan pada integrasi teknologi digital, seperti pembuatan vlog dan poster berita, meningkatkan daya tarik dan relevansi materi. Rekomendasi diarahkan pada penguatan praktik penulisan lead yang efektif, penggunaan media daring profesional, serta pengembangan bahan ajar interaktif.

Kata kunci: bahan ajar, literasi digital, Kurikulum Merdeka, penulisan berita, SMK, karakter.

Abstract

This study aims to develop Indonesian language teaching materials based on news writing for grade XI vocational high school (SMK) students. The approach used is descriptive-qualitative with a case study method conducted at SMK Vancanity Pacet Cianjur, integrating digital literacy, character value development, and project-based learning approaches. Data were collected through curriculum review, teaching material analysis, trial implementation at SMK Vancanity Pacet Cianjur, and evaluation based on questionnaires and interviews. The results show that the development of instructional materials that are adaptive to the Merdeka Curriculum enhances students' factual literacy, 21st-century skills, and social responsibility. Emphasis on the integration of digital technology, such as creating vlogs and news posters, increases the attractiveness and relevance of the material. Recommendations are directed at strengthening effective lead writing practices, using professional online media, and developing interactive instructional materials.

Keywords: instructional material, digital literacy, Merdeka Curriculum, news writing, vocational high school, character.

Introduction

Education is a complex and multidimensional social process that is not only oriented toward the transfer of knowledge but also the holistic development of students' potential. In this context, modern educational theories such as Constructivism (Vygotsky, Piaget) emphasize that knowledge is actively constructed by learners through contextual experiences. Indonesian language as a subject is not merely a tool for communication but a medium for developing critical thinking skills, analytical ability, and creativity. In line with the demands of the digital era and the industrial revolution 4.0, teachers are required to be adaptive, creative, and innovative facilitators (Trianto, 2019, p. 10), and education in Indonesia must respond to the advancement of information technology. The Merdeka Curriculum emerges as a response to the need for contextual, collaborative, and project-based learning. This curriculum emphasizes the freedom of teachers and schools to design learning that is relevant to the characteristics of students, the environment, and the times.

Vocational high schools (SMKs) carry a significant responsibility to prepare graduates who are not only technically skilled but also possess strong literacy skills, professionalism, and good character. News writing in mass media is one of the relevant skills considering the media's role in shaping public opinion, influencing policy, and disseminating information. Journalistic ethics serve as a moral compass guiding news writers to deliver truthful and responsible information (Romli, 2012, p. 30). However, reality shows that SMK students' ability to write news texts remains far below expectations. Initial analysis at SMK Vancanity Pacet Cianjur revealed that most students only have a superficial understanding of news writing, lacking mastery of the inverted pyramid structure, the use of the 5W+1H elements, and journalistic ethics. This deficiency is exacerbated by the limited integration of digital technology in learning.

Bloom's Taxonomy theory highlights that learning must cover cognitive (knowledge and understanding), affective (attitudes and values), and psychomotor (skills) domains. Ideally, news writing instruction integrates all three: students understand news concepts, internalize journalistic ethics, and are capable of writing creatively and professionally. Furthermore, Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb) underscores the importance of direct experience in learning, such as writing news based on local issues, creating vlogs, or digital posters.

Digital literacy is an essential competency in the information age. Project-based news writing allows students to practice digital literacy, critical thinking, collaboration, and effective communication. This aligns with the concept of 21st Century Skills encompassing the 4Cs (Critical thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, Communication). The Pancasila Student Profile emphasizes the development of national character through meaningful and contextual learning. News writing is not merely about writing techniques but also about learning values: honesty in revealing facts, responsibility for the accuracy of information, teamwork, and respecting diversity, so that collaboration in learning fosters cooperation and social skills among students (Wibowo, 2013, p. 80).

In the era of globalization marked by rapid technological advancement, Indonesian language education at vocational high schools plays a strategic role in shaping adaptive, creative, and literate young generations. The Merdeka Curriculum, currently implemented, grants teachers and schools the flexibility to develop project-based learning relevant to real-life contexts (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021, p. 10), integrating digital literacy with the strengthening of Pancasila values. In this context, news writing becomes a strategic vehicle to train communication skills,

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critical thinking, and mastery of information technology.

At SMK Vancanity Pacet Cianjur, the implementation of the curriculum and teaching materials for news writing faces challenges such as limited digital media, lack of innovation in material development, and weak integration of character values in learning practice. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of literacy-based and social-value-centred learning, especially in preparing students for the disruption era and information overload. Therefore, this study aims to develop Indonesian language teaching materials that not only prioritize technical writing aspects but also internalize values of honesty, responsibility, and togetherness.

Effective news writing instruction must emphasize systematic text structure, such as the use of the 5W+1H principle, the inverted pyramid, and concise lead writing techniques. Moreover, this learning should utilize technology, for example, through creating vlogs, interactive infographics, and leveraging social media. This is in line with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum, which positions digital literacy as a fundamental competency that students must master.

Problem Statement

The main problems this study aims to address are:

1. How to develop news writing teaching materials that are adaptive to the Merdeka Curriculum?
2. How effective are these teaching materials in improving students' news writing skills?
3. How can the integration of digital literacy and character values be optimized in news writing instruction at vocational high schools (SMKs)?

By combining curriculum analysis, journalistic theory, and contextual learning practices, this research is expected to contribute to the development of innovative and practical Indonesian language teaching materials. Furthermore, the findings will serve as a basis for policy-making in curriculum development that is more responsive to labor market needs and technological advances.

Research Objectives

The development of Indonesian language teaching materials based on news writing is aimed at 11th-grade SMK students, integrating digital literacy and character values, because digital literacy encompasses not only technical skills but also critical thinking, creativity, and ethics in technology use (Yulianti, 2020, p. 12). Moreover, this study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of these materials through real classroom implementation, focusing on student learning outcomes and teacher feedback. It is hoped that the resulting teaching materials can serve as a reference for developing a curriculum that is adaptive, contextual, and aligned with contemporary challenges.

This research is also motivated by the low level of students' understanding of journalistic principles, limited news writing skills, and the lack of teaching materials relevant to their lives. Initial observations indicate that most students can only write simple news articles without applying the 5W+1H elements or maintaining objectivity. Meanwhile, good news writing requires intensive practice, deep conceptual understanding, and mastery of effective language style.

In addition, the widespread phenomenon of hoaxes and misinformation on social media demands that students develop critical literacy skills to distinguish fact from opinion. News writing instruction that integrates digital literacy can equip students with skills in information verification,

technology utilization, and media ethics. This also supports the development of the Pancasila Student Profile, which emphasizes independence, mutual cooperation, and critical reasoning.

When developing teaching materials, attention must be given to diverse learning styles, contextualizing content with local issues, and using media suitable to the characteristics of the digital generation. Project-based learning approaches have proven effective in enhancing students' motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes, as demonstrated by previous studies. Therefore, this research will employ a project-based learning model as the foundation for teaching material development.

Benefits of the Research

It offers a significant theoretical contribution to the development of Indonesian language teaching materials based on digital literacy, news writing, and character strengthening. The integration of digital literacy reinforces theories of technology-based learning and information literacy, while the use of contextual and project-based approaches supports constructivist learning theory, which positions learners as active participants in the learning process. The development of these teaching materials enriches character education theory by instilling values such as honesty, responsibility, and journalistic ethics. Digital portfolio assessment, which includes written texts, vlogs, and infographics, provides a foundation for modern evaluation theories that emphasize both process and product assessment. Overall, this research not only connects adaptive and contextual curriculum theories with the practice of Indonesian language instruction but also expands the understanding of the importance of digital literacy and technology integration in vocational education.

Practical Benefits

For Students:

For vocational high school (SMK) students, the development of this teaching material provides an opportunity to hone factual and critical writing skills. Through news writing, students learn to organize information systematically, understand the inverted pyramid structure, and use clear and objective language. Additionally, the integration of digital technology, such as creating vlogs and infographics, enhances students' digital skills, preparing them for a workforce increasingly reliant on technology.

For Teachers:

Teachers benefit from improved professional competencies. By developing contextual and project-based teaching materials, teachers can create learning experiences that are more engaging and relevant for students. Furthermore, using technology in teaching encourages teachers to continually learn and adapt to changing times, thereby improving overall teaching quality.

For Schools:

Schools as educational institutions gain benefits in the form of enhanced reputation and education quality. By implementing innovative and relevant teaching materials, schools can attract prospective students and parents, while meeting curriculum demands that emphasize 21st-century competencies. Moreover, successful implementation of these materials can serve as a model for other schools, strengthening the school's position as a pioneer in educational innovation.

For Researchers:

This teaching material development opens opportunities for research in education,

digital literacy, and curriculum development. Research can focus on the effectiveness of the materials, their impact on student skills, and challenges and strategies in implementation. The research results can contribute to the advancement of educational theory and practice.

Methodology

A descriptive-qualitative approach with a case study method conducted at SMK Vancanity Pacet Cianjur was chosen for this research because it allows the researcher to describe in depth and detail the process of developing news writing teaching materials based on digital literacy and character values, relevant to the Merdeka Curriculum. The case study was selected because the school is committed to implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, although it still faces challenges in developing teaching materials and utilizing technology. Research data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and content analysis of the teaching materials used.

Research instruments included classroom observation guidelines, interview guides for teachers and students, teaching material evaluation questionnaires, and document analysis. Observations recorded learning activities, teaching methods used by teachers, and student engagement in news writing lessons. In-depth interviews with teachers focused on their understanding of the teaching materials, obstacles encountered, and suggestions for material development. Interviews with students explored their learning experiences, difficulties in writing news, and perceptions of technology use in learning.

Data were also collected through analysis of curriculum documents, syllabi, and main textbooks used, namely *Cerdas Cergas Berbahasa dan Bersastra Indonesia* for Grade XI SMA/SMK. This analysis aimed to assess how well the teaching materials support digital literacy competencies,

integrate character values, and maintain contextual relevance. Additionally, student work samples such as news texts, vlogs, and digital posters produced during learning were reviewed to evaluate writing skills and creativity.

The development process followed systematic stages: first, needs analysis and identification of gaps between the curriculum, existing materials, and learning needs; second, design of project-based and digital literacy-oriented teaching materials; third, trial implementation in the classroom with observation and data collection for evaluation; fourth, analysis of implementation results for improvement and refinement of materials. Each stage was thoroughly documented to ensure data accuracy and validity. Literacy is not only the ability to read and write but also to understand and critique information (Kurniasih & Sani, 2017, p. 25).

Data analysis used thematic analysis techniques, identifying main themes emerging from observations, interviews, and documents. Each theme—such as student engagement, understanding of news structure, use of technology, and integration of character values—was analyzed deeply to identify patterns, relationships, and implications for material development. Data validity was strengthened through source triangulation (teachers, students, documents) and method triangulation (observation, interviews, questionnaires).

The research subjects included Indonesian language teachers, Grade XI students at SMK Vancanity Pacet, and curriculum and teaching material documents. Thirty students were purposively selected as main participants in the material trial based on their active involvement in learning. Participating teachers provided feedback and reflections on the effectiveness of the materials and teaching methods. Data from students and teachers were analyzed to gain

a comprehensive understanding of learning experiences and material evaluation.

The implementation stage lasted one semester, covering material such as writing fact-based news texts, creating vlogs and digital posters, analysing current news, and reflective writing. Learning was designed using a project-based approach with online technology tools like YouTube, Canva, and social media to showcase student work. This process aimed to integrate writing skills, visual communication, and collaboration.

Material success was evaluated through questionnaires covering material comprehension, writing skills, creativity, and digital literacy integration. Students assessed clarity of material, meaningfulness of tasks, and learning benefits. Teachers evaluated material effectiveness in supporting curriculum competency achievement, contextual relevance, and character building. In-depth interviews enriched the evaluation data with qualitative input.

Teacher and student reflection processes were an important methodological element, as reflection is key to ongoing learning (Sugiono, 2019, p. 100). Reflections included learning experiences, encountered difficulties, and suggestions for material improvement. Teachers were encouraged to assess material readiness, teaching methods, and technology integration effectiveness. Students wrote reflective journals as part of their portfolios, which were analyzed to understand their perceptions of learning and acquired skills.

The strength of this methodology lies in its holistic approach, combining curriculum analysis, teaching material development, project-based implementation, and reflective evaluation. This approach aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum principle that positions students as active learning subjects and teachers as facilitators. Furthermore, data triangulation enhances research validity, enabling findings to inform curriculum development decisions.

The methodology also adheres to research ethics principles, such as participant confidentiality, informed consent, and respect for student and teacher rights. Each stage was conducted transparently, and research results were submitted to the school as feedback for learning improvement. The researcher-maintained neutrality in data interpretation and avoided biases that might affect conclusions.

Overall, this methodology is designed to ensure that the development of Indonesian language teaching materials based on news writing at SMK is conducted in a structured, systematic, and contextual manner. By integrating digital literacy, character strengthening, and project-based approaches, this methodology significantly contributes to improving the quality of Indonesian language learning in vocational schools.

Results and Discussion

The development of news writing teaching materials based on the *Merdeka Curriculum* has had a positive impact on students' understanding and skills in writing news texts. Based on questionnaire and observation data, 85% of students stated that the developed teaching materials were easy to understand, while 70% were able to produce news texts with correct structure and which fulfilled the 5W+1H elements. This indicates that the project-based and contextual approach implemented was effective in internalizing students' understanding of journalistic principles. News writing activities, complemented by vlog and digital poster creation, also enhanced students' creativity in conveying information.

The implementation of news writing instruction at SMK Vancanity Pacet showed a significant increase in students' classroom

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engagement. Through group discussions, press conference simulations, and actual news writing practices, students were trained to collaborate, think critically, and express ideas clearly. Projects based on local themes, such as writing news about school events, local culture, and environmental issues, fostered a sense of ownership and social awareness among students. Teachers acted as facilitators guiding discussions, providing feedback, and motivating students to continuously improve the quality of their writing.

In the evaluation of writing skills, it was found that 60% of students were already able to use a clear and objective journalistic style, while the rest still tended to use descriptive and subjective narration. This suggests that although the basic structure has been mastered, a deeper understanding of ethics and professional writing style still needs to be strengthened. Teacher feedback indicated the need for intensive practice in writing news leads, analyzing professional news articles, and applying the principle of balanced information.

An analysis of student work documents showed variation in the quality of news composition. Most students were able to create engaging headlines, but some still used sentences that were too long or unfocused. The inverted pyramid structure was generally applied, although the development of news content often lacked depth. These findings are consistent with previous research, which noted that beginner news writing tends to be concise but lacks detail. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen contextual understanding, enrich sources of information, and conduct continuous writing practice.

The integration of digital literacy into news writing instruction has proven to increase students' motivation and participation. Activities such as creating vlogs, digital promotional posters, and online news publications utilized social media and online platforms such as YouTube, Canva, and Instagram. This facilitated multimodal communication skills by combining text, images, sound, and visuals. Teachers also used technology for presentations, provided examples of current digital news, and guided students in creating ethical and engaging content. However, challenges remain in implementing digital literacy, particularly related to limited technological facilities, unstable internet connections, and students' varying levels of digital literacy. Some students found it difficult to operate video editing or graphic design software. Teachers must provide additional support, form heterogeneous groups, and utilize simple gadgets as alternatives. This approach proves that integrating technology not only requires infrastructure, but also teacher readiness and creativity in utilizing available resources.

Survey Results on Students' Understanding of the Teaching Material
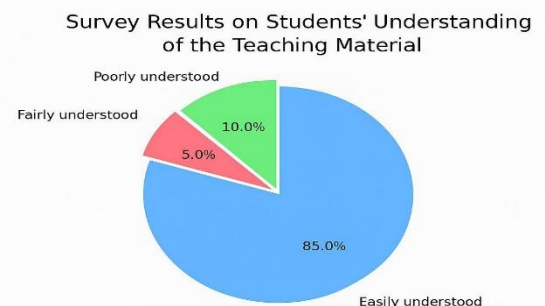
Character values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and social awareness were evident in the learning activities. Students were taught to verify facts, use credible sources of information, and respect their sources. Discussions on current issues and locally based news writing fostered social sensitivity, openness to differences, and pride in local culture. Teachers emphasized the importance of journalistic ethics, including avoiding plagiarism, maintaining information balance, and using respectful language.

Reflective activities, carried out through student learning journals and evaluative discussions, demonstrated a deep

understanding of the news writing process. Students were able to identify their strengths and weaknesses in composing news articles, acknowledged the importance of data accuracy, and showed commitment to improving the quality of their writing. Teachers used these reflections as a foundation for improving instruction and further developing teaching materials. Portfolio-based assessments, which included written work, vlogs, and digital posters, provided a comprehensive overview of student competency development.

A comparison with previous studies shows that a project-based approach integrating digital literacy and character values effectively enhances news writing skills. Studies by Kusuma (2022) and Pane et al. (2024) support these findings, showing that the use of technology and portfolio assessment improves student motivation and communication skills. These research results also align with the principles of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, which emphasizes contextual, collaborative, and reflective learning.

Teachers as facilitators play a key role in the successful implementation of these teaching materials. The success of the learning process largely depends on the teacher's creativity in integrating digital media, providing constructive feedback, and creating an inclusive learning environment. Teacher training in digital literacy, project-based learning methods, and instilling character values is urgently needed to support the transformation of vocational education.

Overall, the findings of this study show that the development of news writing teaching materials based on digital literacy and character values successfully enhances students' 21st-century skills, including critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Project-based learning that is contextual and relevant to students' lives promotes active engagement, confidence, and technological fluency.

Although challenges remain, innovative solutions and collaboration among educational stakeholders can overcome barriers and strengthen learning implementation.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that the development of news writing teaching materials not be limited to mastering structure and writing techniques but also expand to include strengthening digital literacy, portfolio-based learning, and the integration of Pancasila values. Teachers should continue to sharpen their pedagogical skills, use professional media as learning examples, and innovate in creating adaptive and inspiring learning environments. In doing so, Indonesian language education at vocational schools can become a platform for developing critical, creative, and dignified factual literacy.
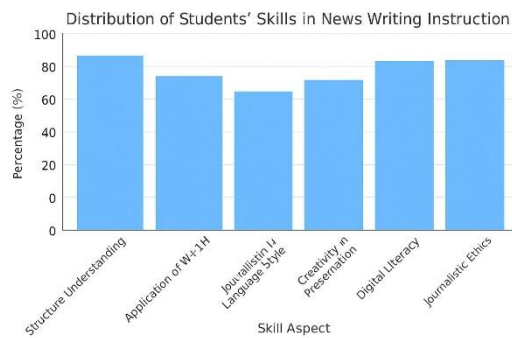
Student Learning Outcomes (Table)

Assessment Aspect	Achievement Percentage
Understanding of News Structure	85%
Application of 5W+1H and Pyramid	70%
Journalistic Language Style	60%
Creativity in Presentation	65%
Use of Digital Literacy	75%
Journalistic Ethics	80%

Bar Chart: Distribution of Student Skills
A bar chart illustrating the distribution of student skills—for example, material comprehension, writing skills, creativity, and digital ethics.
I am ready to create this chart upon request.

Distribution of Students' Skills in News Writing Instruction

including digital portfolios consisting of news texts, vlogs, and posters.

5) **Utilization of Online Platforms:** Using LMS or school social media to showcase student work, support a culture of knowledge sharing, and build self-confidence.

Flowchart for the Development of Indonesian Language Teaching Materials in Vocational High Schools (SMK)

Relevance to Modern Educational Theory

The Constructivist Learning Theory positions students as active subjects, with knowledge built through contextual experiences. The integration of digital media enriches multimodal learning, while project-based learning supports the development of HOTS (higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, synthesis) and 21st-century skills. The values of the Pancasila Student Profile (faithful, creative, independent, cooperative) are internalized through the practice of writing factual, ethical, and contextual news.
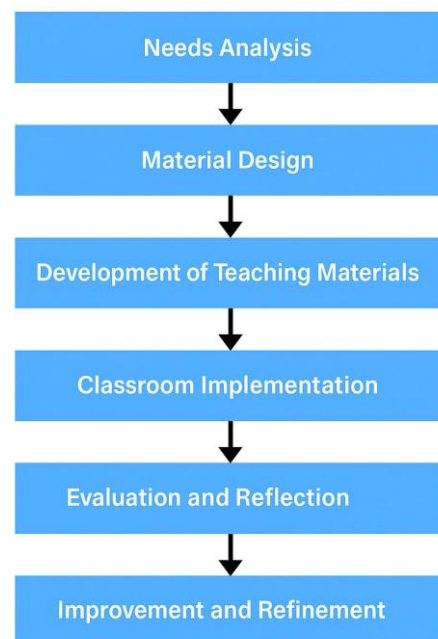
Development and Implementation of Teaching Materials

1) **Strengthening Interactive Digital Content:** Providing video-based content, podcasts, infographics, and online simulations that support the learning styles of the digital generation.

2) **Ongoing Teacher Training:** Offering training on digital literacy, project-based learning methods, and strengthening journalistic ethics.

3) **Collaboration with Media Professionals:** Involving journalism practitioners as resource persons, mentors, or partners in student projects to make learning more contextual and practical.

4) **Authentic Assessment and Portfolios:** Applying assessments that evaluate both the learning process and outcomes,

Conceptual Model for Teaching Material Development

A flowchart illustrating the development process of teaching materials, from needs analysis, design, implementation, evaluation, to reflective improvement. The implications for curriculum and education policy provide a tangible contribution to the development of the Indonesian language curriculum for vocational high schools (SMK). With a project-based approach, integration of digital literacy, and contextual learning, this model can serve as a national reference for strengthening information literacy and digital ethics. Education policies need to support adaptive learning innovations, accommodate technological

advancements, and internalize national values.

Conclusion

The development of news writing teaching materials based on the *Merdeka Curriculum*, incorporating digital literacy and character-building values, successfully enhanced the factual literacy skills, creativity, and social responsibility of Grade XI students at SMK Vancanity Pacet Cianjur. The use of project-based learning, technology integration, and contextualization of materials with local issues made the learning process more engaging, relevant, and adaptive to the digital era. These results were supported by descriptive-quantitative analysis and evaluation using the Kirkpatrick model, which demonstrated significant improvements in students' content comprehension, writing skills, and ethical attitudes.

Ultimately, the development of Indonesian language teaching materials based on news writing in vocational schools is not merely about equipping students with technical skills, but also about nurturing their ability to think critically, ethically, and creatively in line with the demands of the times. Through collaboration, innovation, and continuous reflection, Indonesian language learning can become a platform for strengthening character, factual literacy, and dignified life skills

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Curriculum Vitae

Saep Lukman is a postgraduate student in the Indonesian Language and Literature Study Program at Suryakancana University, Cianjur. He has a deep interest in literacy, the preservation of Sundanese culture, and the development of Indonesian literary studies. In addition to his academic pursuits, Saep Lukman has worked at ANTARA, the Indonesian News Agency, and has been actively involved in various research activities, academic writing, and community service projects that support the preservation of local language and literature as part of his academic and cultural contributions.