

The Effectiveness of a Local Wisdom-Based Children's Literature Module to Enhance Short Story Writing Skills in Grade IV Elementary Students

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ABSTRACT

Writing instruction in Indonesian elementary schools often relies on traditional methods such as lectures and rote exercises, resulting in low student engagement and underdeveloped writing skills. This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a children's literature module incorporating Grobogan local wisdom in enhancing short story writing skills among Grade IV students at SDN 1 Penganten. A quantitative pre-experimental approach was employed using a one-group pretest-posttest design. A total of 27 students participated in the intervention. Writing skills were assessed before and after the use of the module. Data were analyzed using the Shapiro-Wilk test for normality, paired sample t-test to assess significance, and N-Gain to measure learning improvement. Results indicated that both pretest and posttest data were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$), validating the use of parametric testing. The paired t-test showed a statistically significant improvement in writing performance ($p = 0.000$). The average N-Gain score of 0.47 falls within the moderate improvement category, suggesting that the module was effective in enhancing students' writing skills. The integration of familiar cultural elements into the module fostered greater student motivation, authentic expression, and reflection, contributing not only to literacy development but also to cultural awareness and character education. These findings support the goals of Indonesia's Independent Curriculum and highlight the pedagogical value of culturally responsive learning materials. The study offers practical implications for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in developing relevant instructional strategies grounded in local wisdom.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a fundamental skill in elementary education that plays a crucial role in students' academic development, particularly in the context of Indonesian language instruction. It serves not only as a means of communication and creative expression but also as a powerful tool to foster critical thinking, self-reflection, and cultural awareness. Among various writing genres, short story writing holds a strategic position in shaping students' ability to articulate ideas, reflect on personal experiences, and explore diverse perspectives. As a component of children's literature, it offers an accessible and engaging medium through which students can connect their learning with lived realities. In contemporary educational discourse, writing is increasingly recognized as a gateway to broader intellectual and social competencies—particularly when it is situated within culturally relevant contexts (Sodik et al., 2023).

Aligned with this view, the Merdeka Belajar initiative in Indonesia advocates for a more flexible, student-centered learning environment that empowers learners to explore knowledge through meaningful and contextualized experiences (Hanipah et al., 2023). As part of this movement, the Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum) positions writing not merely as a technical skill but as a developmental domain that cultivates the Profil Pelajar Pancasila. This profile emphasizes key 21st-century competencies, including creativity, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and character development. Writing activities are thus expected to foster personal growth, civic engagement, and socio-cultural awareness (Mustafafi, Utaminingsih, & Amaliyah, 2023). In this regard, early exposure to writing tasks has been shown to improve cognitive functioning, support metacognitive development, and enhance performance across various subjects (Karnita et al., 2025; Sodik et al., 2023).

Despite these curricular aspirations, classroom practice often falls short of delivering writing instruction that is engaging, relevant, or transformative. A preliminary needs analysis at SDN 1 Penganten—based on interviews with Mrs. Anita Wartanti, S.Pd., a fourth-grade teacher—revealed that writing instruction remains dominated by conventional approaches. These include textbook-based exercises, teacher-centered lectures, and rote memorization. Such methods offer limited opportunities for students to engage in creative or reflective writing. Moreover, the school lacks a dedicated children's literature module within its Indonesian language curriculum, highlighting a critical gap in the integration of culturally responsive materials.

As a result, students perceive Indonesian language learning as monotonous and uninspiring. They struggle to connect with the material, leading to reduced interest and poor performance in writing tasks. These issues are compounded by a broader perception that language learning is less important than subjects like Mathematics or IPAS (Ilmu Pengetahuan Alam dan Sosial). Many students assume that because Bahasa Indonesia is spoken daily, mastery of its written form requires little effort—an assumption that undermines motivation and hinders the acquisition of essential communication skills (Pramesti, Masfuah, & Ardianti, 2023). Observations at SDN 1 Penganten support this view, showing low levels of student engagement and subpar outcomes in writing assessments.

This phenomenon is not unique to SDN 1 Penganten. National and international studies confirm that writing skills in elementary school students are often underdeveloped due to insufficient instructional support and a lack of access to engaging media. Amaliyah and Santoso (2022) found that students face considerable difficulties in writing tasks, often attributed to the scarcity of instructional tools and inadequate pedagogical strategies. Similarly, Irwinsa et al. (2022) noted that traditional lecture-based teaching hampers students' progress in acquiring expressive writing abilities. These findings highlight the urgent need for alternative instructional models that can revitalize writing education and foster active student participation.

One promising direction is the adoption of culturally responsive pedagogy, which emphasizes the inclusion of local cultural elements in teaching materials. Studies show that when students are exposed to content that resonates with their background and lived experiences, their engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes significantly improve (Windi & Suryaman, 2022; Sodik et al., 2023).

Contextualized learning strategies—particularly those that leverage students' sociocultural environment—have proven effective in enhancing writing competence and promoting deeper cognitive engagement.

Children's literature offers a powerful platform for integrating cultural narratives into writing instruction. As a pedagogical tool, it provides students with relatable characters, settings, and themes that can inspire personal storytelling and reflection. According to Fauziddin et al. (2022), literature rooted in local culture helps shape student identity and strengthens academic development. Sa'adah et al. (2023) further noted that such materials instill cultural pride and increase learning motivation. However, despite its potential, culturally grounded children's literature remains underutilized in Indonesian writing classrooms, particularly in structured module form.

To address this gap, scholars and practitioners have advocated for the development of learning modules based on local wisdom. Educational resources grounded in regional traditions—such as folklore, values, and community practices—can enrich the curriculum while promoting a sense of identity and belonging (Fauziddin et al., 2022). When incorporated into writing instruction, these modules provide meaningful contexts for narrative construction, thereby encouraging creativity, critical reflection, and language mastery. Furthermore, this approach aligns closely with the goals of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which seeks to nurture holistic learners through inclusive and culturally relevant education.

Although several studies have explored the development of such modules in general subjects like science or mathematics (e.g., Putra & Rahmi, 2023; Turnip & Karyono, 2023), few have examined their implementation in language learning—particularly through the lens of children's literature. Even fewer studies have empirically tested the effectiveness of such modules in improving student outcomes in actual classroom settings. This represents a notable gap in the existing literature.

Without empirical validation, it is difficult to determine whether local wisdom-based modules can genuinely enhance students' writing skills or merely serve as supplementary materials. Testing their effectiveness through classroom trials is therefore essential to inform instructional practice and policy. Addressing this gap, the present study evaluates a children's literature module rooted in Grobogan local wisdom, designed specifically to enhance short story writing skills among Grade IV elementary students. The module combines structured writing instruction with culturally embedded content, aiming to stimulate student creativity, increase motivation, and improve narrative competencies.

By situating writing instruction within the cultural environment familiar to students, the study seeks to demonstrate how localized educational materials can foster authentic learning experiences. The Grobogan region, with its rich tradition of folklore and oral storytelling, provides a fertile ground for culturally responsive pedagogy. Through this research, we aim to generate practical insights for teachers, curriculum designers, and educational policymakers on how to develop and implement literature-based instructional modules that are both academically effective and culturally meaningful.

Thus, the objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness of a children's literature module based on Grobogan local wisdom in improving short story writing skills at SDN 1 Penganten. The findings are expected to contribute to the broader discourse on culturally responsive teaching in elementary education, supporting efforts to design contextually relevant learning strategies that advance both literacy and cultural identity formation among young learners.

2. METHODS

This study applied a quantitative pre-experimental method using a one-group pretest-posttest design to evaluate the effectiveness of a short story writing module based on local wisdom. The research followed a simplified Borg & Gall development model, adapted into six stages: Potential and Problems, Data Collection, Product Design, Product Validation, Product Revision, and Product Trial. This model was selected because it is grounded in needs analysis, ensuring that the developed product directly addresses educational challenges. Its comprehensive structure—from initial problem identification to

broad testing—supports iterative refinement and enhances product validity through repeated trials, resulting in significant learning outcomes (Waruwu, 2024).

The study was conducted on fourth-grade students at SD 1 Penganten, with a total sample of 27 students. The sampling technique chosen was saturated sampling, where the entire population was used as the sample (Amin et al., 2023). Data were collected through short story writing tests administered before and after the intervention. Each short story was assessed using a four-point scale based on adherence to the writing criteria:

Table 1. Test assessment criteria

Score	Criteria
1	The story does not follow the required writing guidelines.
2	The story contains more than three writing errors based on the specified criteria.
3	The story contains two writing errors based on the specified criteria.
4	The story contains no writing errors and fully meets the required writing guidelines.

The total score was calculated using the formula:

$$Skor = \frac{\text{score obtained}}{\text{maximum score}} \times 100$$

The Minimum Mastery Criteria (MMC), or Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM), was set at 70, representing the threshold for satisfactory performance. Students who scored 70 or above were considered to have achieved mastery. Data analysis was performed using SPSS. The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to assess data normality as a prerequisite for hypothesis testing. A paired sample t-test was conducted to determine the significance of differences between pretest and posttest scores (Rachmayani et al., 2022). To measure learning improvement, the normalized gain (N-Gain) was calculated using Sukarelawan et al. (2024), the formula:

$$g = \frac{\text{Posttest Score} - \text{Pretest Score}}{\text{Maximum Score} - \text{Pretest Score}}$$

The resulting gain scores were interpreted using the criteria proposed by Sukarelawan et al. (2024):

Table 2. N-Gain Score Criteria

Average N-Gain	Criteria
$0.70 \leq g \leq 1.00$	High
$0.30 \leq g \leq 0.70$	Medium
$0.00 \leq g \leq 0.30$	Low

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

To assess the effectiveness of the children's literature module based on Grobogan local wisdom, a pretest-posttest was administered to measure students' short story writing performance before and after the intervention. The assessment focused on key writing criteria, including structure, coherence, creativity, and adherence to language conventions. A total of 27 fourth-grade students participated in the trial. The comparison between pretest and posttest scores provides insight into students' learning gains and the impact of the module. Table 3 below presents a detailed recapitulation of the students' performance results during the product trial.

Table 3. Product Trial Test Results Recapitulation

Number	Component	Types of Tests	
		Pretest	Posttest
1.	Average score	52.5	75.3
2.	Highest score	65	90
3.	Lowest value	45	65
4.	The number of students is incomplete	0	26
5.	Number of students completed	27	1
6.	Completeness of learning	0%	96.29%
The difference between the average posttest and pretest scores			22.8

The data indicate a significant improvement in the short story writing skills of Grade IV students following the use of a children's literature module based on Grobogan local wisdom. Prior to its implementation, the average pretest score was 52.5, with scores ranging from 45 to 65, and none of the 27 students met the minimum competency standard. After using the module, the average posttest score rose to 75.3, with a range of 65 to 90. Notably, 26 students achieved the minimum score, resulting in a learning completeness rate of 96.29%. These findings support Saputra et al. (2022), who emphasized that incorporating local wisdom into Indonesian language materials can effectively boost student motivation and learning outcomes.

Table 4. Tests of Normality Result

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
PRETEST	.246	27	.000	.934	27	.085
POSTTEST	.204	27	.005	.928	27	.063

Based on the table above, the normality test was conducted to determine whether the pretest and posttest data were normally distributed. Using SPSS, the pretest data yielded a significance value of 0.085, and the posttest data yielded a significance value of 0.063. Since both values are greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the data are normally distributed. Therefore, the Paired Sample T-Test can be appropriately applied to examine the difference between pretest and posttest scores. These results confirm that the data meet the assumptions for parametric testing.

Table 5. Paired Samples Test Result

		Paired Differences						Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t		df
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	PRETEST - POSTTEST	-22.593	5.437	1.046	-24.743	-20.442	-21.593	26	.000

Based on the table above, a Paired Sample T-Test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in students' writing performance before and after the intervention. The SPSS analysis showed a significance value (2-tailed) of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This result leads to the rejection of the H_0 and acceptance of the H_1 , indicating a statistically significant difference between the average pretest and posttest scores. Following this result, the N-Gain test was applied to further analyze the magnitude of improvement in students' short story writing skills. The use of the N-Gain test after

confirming a significant difference allows for a more detailed understanding of how much students' writing abilities improved following the implementation of the children's literature learning module based on Grobogan local wisdom.

Table 6. N-Gain Result

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
NGain	27	.33	.70	.4790	.10110
Valid N (listwise)	27				

The N-Gain test is used to demonstrate improvements in learning outcomes and understanding after the learning process. Based on the results, the average (mean) N-Gain score was 0.47. According to the N-Gain score category proposed by Sukarelawan et al. (2024), this value falls within the medium improvement range ($0.3 \leq g < 0.7$). Therefore, it can be concluded that after the implementation of the children's literature learning module based on Grobogan local wisdom, students' short story writing skills experienced a measurable increase, categorized as moderate improvement. This confirms the module's effectiveness in enhancing students' writing ability through culturally responsive instruction.

3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the children's literature learning module based on Grobogan local wisdom effectively enhances students' short story writing skills. This improvement stems from the module's ability to connect learning content with students' lived experiences, allowing them to write stories grounded in their daily lives while adhering to proper writing conventions. This approach fosters authentic expression and aligns with Yuliani (2022), who emphasized that teaching materials rooted in regional geographical and ethnographic contexts can cultivate character aligned with local values. Similarly, Sarmadan (2021) found that local wisdom-based materials increase student engagement and promote cultural identity formation.

Short stories, as a genre of children's literature, offer a powerful medium for integrating cultural narratives. Thenu et al. (2025) argued that embedding local wisdom in instructional content not only enriches students' knowledge but also instills pride in their cultural heritage. Kironoratri et al. (2023) further noted that the development of local values closely tied to students' environments strengthens the social dimension of character education. Shawn & Shawn (2020) stressed that curriculum design must reflect students' developmental needs and contextual realities to ensure meaningful learning.

The module's effectiveness is amplified by its engaging design, which stimulates curiosity and motivates students to explore its content. By connecting learning materials to students' everyday lives—such as the local wisdom of Grobogan—the module fosters relevance and personal connection. This contextualized approach enables students to write stories based on real-life experiences, improving their narrative skills. As highlighted by Ardianti et al. (2021), and Sari et al. (2023), using the surrounding environment as a learning resource supports optimal learning outcomes because students perceive the material as authentic and relatable.

Beyond academic improvement, the module nurtures cultural awareness and emotional engagement. Local wisdom serves not merely as background content but as a bridge between formal instruction and the real world, sparking curiosity and encouraging active participation Amaliah (2023). Outdoor and experiential learning—such as writing inspired by local settings—can accelerate understanding and reduce stress, especially for students with attention difficulties (Lismawati et al., 2022; Pirchio & Passiatore, 2023; Parks et al, 2023). This culturally grounded approach fosters pride in regional identity and contributes to character development, motivating students to preserve their heritage while adapting to technological advancements.

The teaching materials used in this study were carefully designed to reflect the geographical and ethnographic characteristics of the Grobogan region, helping build students' character in line with local values. Santoso (2021) emphasized that understanding local culture increases students' sense of identity

and pride. Materials aligned with students' backgrounds enhance comprehension and engagement (Antunes et al., 2024; Sormin & Pasaribu, 2021). Elementary students tend to prefer entertaining learning experiences and often possess prior knowledge of their local culture (Lismawati et al., 2022). Educators and curriculum developers should proactively integrate relevant local wisdom into subjects to create holistic learning that combines academic content with cultural understanding and character formation.

Incorporating local culture is especially effective in early childhood education, where direct experience and active participation in cultural activities significantly influence character development (Sakti et al., 2024; Suryana & Kurnia, 2025; Muhammad et al., 2021). Students show increased interest and engagement when local cultural elements are included. For example, integrating local content into kindergarten curricula has been shown to improve children's attention, cultural understanding, and academic performance (Suryana & Kurnia, 2025; Ernita et al., 2021). Local culture-based learning offers a holistic approach by embedding moral and ethical values into the curriculum, addressing gaps in traditional education systems (Sholichah et al., 2021; Ilham & Fathu, 2024).

Despite the positive outcomes, large-scale implementation faces challenges, particularly the availability of structured and high-quality local wisdom-based teaching materials. One effective strategy is the development of e-modules based on local culture, which can enhance students' cultural literacy and critical thinking skills. These digital resources help overcome the scarcity of electronic teaching materials and increase student engagement (Azis & Yulkifli, 2021; Wahyudi et al., 2025).

Student interest is a key factor influencing educational success, particularly in language learning. Sormin & Pasaribu (2021) noted that interest develops through meaningful experiences and cultural interactions—both of which are central to local wisdom-based instruction. When students engage with culturally relevant content, such as stories rooted in their own communities, they are more motivated to participate and persist in learning activities. This heightened engagement supports deeper learning strategies and improves academic performance, especially in writing tasks that require creativity, reflection, and personal connection (Maisari & Usman, 2024; Verdeflor, 2024).

Technology-based interactive learning media further enhances student engagement by improving behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions (Adriyanto & Prasetyo, 2021; Yuliani, 2022). Features such as quizzes, simulations, and educational games promote active participation and ownership of learning (Pandita & Kiran, 2023). However, challenges remain, including the need for technical support, potential distractions, and unequal access to digital resources. The digital divide and lack of teacher training are significant barriers (Guaña et al., 2024). Addressing these issues requires investment in professional development and equitable access policies.

This study was conducted in a single school with a relatively small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. External factors such as students' prior exposure to local culture, parental involvement, and digital literacy may have influenced the outcomes. While the results indicate that the children's literature module based on Grobogan local wisdom effectively improved students' short story writing skills, further research is needed to validate these findings across diverse educational contexts.

4. CONCLUSION

This study confirms the effectiveness of a local wisdom-based children's literature module in enhancing short story writing skills among Grade IV elementary students. The module, rooted in Grobogan's cultural context, successfully bridges academic instruction with students' lived experiences, fostering authentic expression and improved narrative structure. Statistical analysis supports this outcome: both pretest and posttest data were normally distributed, and the paired sample t-test revealed a significant difference in writing performance (sig. 2-tailed = 0.000 < 0.05). The average N-Gain score of 0,47 indicates a moderate level of improvement, validating the module's pedagogical impact.

Beyond literacy development, the module contributes meaningfully to culturally responsive education by promoting regional identity, character formation, and emotional engagement. These findings carry important implications for teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers. Educators are encouraged to integrate local wisdom into instructional design to increase relevance and motivation. Curriculum developers should prioritize culturally grounded materials that reflect students' social environments, while policymakers must support equitable access and teacher training to ensure successful implementations.

Future research should explore the scalability of such modules across diverse regions and educational levels. In particular, testing digital e-modules based on local wisdom could offer an innovative solution to address resource gaps and expand access to culturally rich learning experiences in the digital age.

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