Preservation of Tolaki Mekongga Language Through Merdeka Curriculum-Based Local Subject Teaching Modules

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Abstract—To expedite the implementation of the "Merdeka Curriculum," the government of North Kolaka District has established a policy regarding the subject of local language to show the identity of the Tolaki Mekongga community. However, this policy has not yet been realized in the form of teaching modules, particularly at the elementary school level. This research aims to create a teaching module based on the "Merdeka Curriculum" that accommodates the learning of the Tolaki Mekongga language at the elementary school level in North Kolaka District, Province of Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. This study employs a developmental research approach using the ASSURE model. This study's trial subjects (users) are teachers and students from SDN 3 Lambai, SDN 5 Kodeoha, and SDN 8 Kodeoha in North Kolaka District. Data were collected through expert validation and user trial questionnaires (teachers and students). The data of the research were processed and analyzed descriptively. The validation test results scored 83%, meeting the validity and suitability criteria. The user trial results (teachers and students) gained a score of 85%, meeting the practicality criteria. Therefore, the module resulting from this research is considered appropriate and practical for use in teaching the local subject of the Tolaki Mekongga language at the elementary school level in North Kolaka District.

Index Terms—teaching modules, local subject, Merdeka Curriculum, Tolaki Mekongga

I. INTRODUCTION

The Tolaki Mekongga tribe is one of the indigenous tribes on the mainland of Southeast Sulawesi. Around the 10th century, the mainland of Southeast Sulawesi had two significant kingdoms, namely the Konawe Kingdom (in the Konawe Regency area) and the Mekongga Kingdom (in the Kolaka Regency area). These two kingdoms were closely related and collectively known as the Tolaki tribe (Sultan et al., 2018).

The cultural domain of Tolaki Mekongga is a term used to refer to the territory formerly under the rule of the Konawe and Mekongga Kingdoms, the areas of authority of the leaders and traditional leaders of Tolaki Mekongga in the past (Husba, 2015). The boundaries of this territory are considered to have historical narratives regarding the formation of the areas of authority, both in terms of geography and as customary regions. The Tolaki Mekongga community engages in traditional storytelling activities as a communication system in their interactions (Mattulada, 1985, p. 152; Taridala, 2005). On the same note, the Tolaki community, as cultural practitioners, tends to lack a sense of personal responsibility as heirs to tradition.

Recently, speakers of the Tolaki Mekongga language have become increasingly integrated with immigrant communities, and inter-ethnic marriages (amalgamation) have become more prevalent. A child born from a marriage within the Tolaki Mekongga ethnic group may not necessarily be proficient in the Tolaki Mekongga language. This is influenced by the social environment and interactions with other ethnic groups now inhabiting the region, leading to a gradual reduction in Tolaki Mekongga language speakers. Generally, active speakers of the Tolaki Mekongga language in Kolaka are, on average, forty years old or older. This situation marks the early signs of the decline of the Tolaki Mekongga language.

Meanwhile, the future speakers (children) of the Tolaki Mekongga ethnic group are increasingly unable to master the Tolaki Mekongga language proficiently. It aligns with the phenomenon of the lexicon shift in Konawe District due to modernization (Takwa et al., 2022). The Tolaki Mekongga ethnic group has many rituals, with language as an element of culture (Takwa et al., 2022). It also works with all ethnicities, such as Toraja, where the rituals are full of symbols with valuable meanings (Hasyim et al., 2020; Hasyim et al., 2023). In this context, every ritual aspect refers to valuable meanings (Arafah et al., 2020).

The advancement of information technology has changed the way of thinking (Arafah & Hasyim, 2019; Arafah & Hasyim, 2023b). As we live in a digital age, the internet has become a new communication medium (Hasyim & Arafah, 2023a; Arafah & Hasyim, 2023a). The young generation tends to use the internet in a significant portion of their daily activities, as simple as just one click away from their gadgets (Arafah et al., 2023; Purwaningsih et al., 2020). Technology can still be helpful depending on how users utilize it (Suhadi et al., 2022). People can also learn and find online materials (Hasyim & Arafah, 2023b). The important thing is to keep modernity from eroding the cultural heritage and natural resources (Arifin et al., 2022; Manugeren et al., 2023).

The researcher acknowledges the importance of preserving the Tolaki Mekongga language, manifested through developing a local subject module. This research, when connected to the existence of the Merdeka Curriculum, represents a step toward safeguarding regional assets, which constitute a facet of the national curriculum. The aspects referred to include the national unity aspect that encompasses the national unit and the local aspect that encompasses the linguistic characteristics of the region. Therefore, preserving the Tolaki Mekongga language as a local subject must incorporate elements of local wisdom that will nurture the connection between schools and their environments. The Tolaki language is one of the components of local subjects aimed at maintaining the integrity of schools with their surroundings. Based on this explanation, this research examines the nature of the curriculum-based teaching module content that can be included in local learning content at schools within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The development of the Merdeka Curriculum has significantly impacted school learning preparedness, as highlighted by Nurwiatin (2022). The transition to the Merdeka Curriculum also influences students' learning interests, as Rahmadhani et al. (2022) noted. The challenges and difficulties of teaching in different dimensions are experienced by teachers and students that demand rapid adaption (Arafah et al., 2023; Sunardi et al., 2018). Both teachers and students require appropriate methods to adjust to the curriculum quickly (Kuswanty et al., 2023). Issues related to the impact of the transition to the Merdeka Curriculum pose challenges in several regions of Indonesia (Cholily et al., 2022), such as in North Kolaka District. The urgency lies in the need for dynamic changes in mindset among teachers, the lack of suitable teaching materials and learning tools for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, and the necessity to enhance the competency of human resources in education. Due to the difficulties and limitations, these may be overcome by introducing and implementing the curriculum more often so that as time goes by, a positive impact will always be the result (Arnawa & Arafah, 2023; Arafah et al., 2020).

Consequently, if all the teachers and students are severely affected during the implementation, they will achieve the goal (Mokoginta & Arafah, 2022; Kaharuddin et al., 2023). Furthermore, teachers sometimes need to adjust to the curriculum, making them complain about the system (Arafah & Kaharuddin, 2019). Sometimes, the time given needs to be increased, making teachers and students need more time to adapt (Mardiana et al., 2023).

In an ideal context, Suryaman (2020) emphasizes the importance of dynamic and periodic studies and evaluations of the education curriculum in line with the developments in time, knowledge, and technology. Prasetyo and Hamami (2020) state that the shift towards curriculum development should be carefully planned. It needs to be appropriately examined to determine whether its effectiveness is applicable to use (Anggrawan et al., 2019). Since Indonesia's independence, the curriculum has undergone eleven changes, the most recent change being from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum. Ritonga (2018) demonstrates that the dynamics of curriculum changes also impact the learning environment, highlighting the significance of considering student factors, education, society, and the role of curriculum developers, particularly teachers (Ahmad, 2014). The current Merdeka Curriculum is regarded as an improvement over the 2013 Curriculum, aiming to produce a future generation ready to face the challenges of societal development (Firdaus et al., 2022).

Several essential objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum that educators and teachers need to understand include creating an enjoyable education experience for students and teachers by emphasizing the development of skills and character aspects in line with Indonesian values; addressing the learning setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic by giving students the freedom to choose their interests in learning; nurturing the potential of students through a simple, flexible curriculum that focuses on essential content and competency development at specific stages; and providing an advantage in terms of students' freedom (Inayati, 2022).

The research is grounded in several recent research findings and relevant methodologies, including Ardiansyah's (2022, p. 73) research, "Cultivating the Use of Javanese Krama Language to Preserve Local Culture at MI Al-Islah Kandalrejo", reveals that the practice of using Javanese Krama is a form of cultural preservation at MI AL - Islah Kendalrejo. Javanis Day has emerged due to concerns among the teaching staff about the impact of globalization in Indonesia, leading to a decline in the mastery of Javanese Krama, particularly among the younger generation. Factors hindering Javanis Day include the environment and students' habits. Supportive factors include posters, extra-curricular programs, and parental support. Secondly, Salamet et al.'s (2022) study, "Development of Local Subject Learning Models in Schools Based on Sapeken's Unique Cultural Excellence in Sumenep Regency," emphasizes that the development of the Bajo language local subject education should be supported by qualified human resources, especially local cultural teachers. Teachers need cultural knowledge, especially in language, the ability to develop effective lesson plans, and competence in implementing the teaching and learning process. The Bajo language local subject learning model aims to guide local cultural teachers at all school levels and as a reference for preserving language diversity in Sapeken Island by establishing four important languages to be studied in local subject materials.

Further, Handayani et al.'s (2022) research, "Integration of Local Wisdom in the Merdeka Curriculum to Realize Pancasila Students", concludes that a Merdeka Curriculum integrated with local cultural wisdom has the potential to contribute to shaping the profile of Pancasila students. The implementation of this curriculum should be carefully and comprehensively prepared so that stakeholders in schools can collaborate synergistically to achieve the goal of shaping students' profiles under Pancasila values, as Bungai et al.'s (2022) study, "Development of Teaching Materials Based on Local Wisdom in Palangkaraya," explains that training and guidance in developing learning modules based on local wisdom have a significant positive impact on facing the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the academic year 2022-2023. Despite the need for local government training related to the Merdeka Curriculum, researchers' guidance adds to the partners' knowledge. It is relevant to Santika's (2022) research, "Strengthening Balinese Local Wisdom Values in Shaping Pancasila Student Profiles," suggests that learning integrated with Balinese local wisdom values can be easily understood by students in Bali and simultaneously strengthen the national character of students. Then the last Hak's (2019) research, "Ethnopedagogy in the Muna, Tolaki, and Bajo Communities in Southeast Sulawesi (Strategies for Integrating Local Wisdom into History Learning for Student Character Strengthening)," explains that local values such as the Samaturu concept for the Tolaki ethnic group contain cooperative or collaborative values that can be integrated and modified in cooperation to achieve learning knowledge in the classroom.

From the overall research related to the urgency of developing and integrating teaching materials based on local wisdom in the Merdeka Curriculum, it can be observed that the development to be undertaken in the current study is highly relevant in supporting the preservation of local culture, particularly the Tolaki Mekongga language, through learning. In addition to the six relevant studies mentioned, the researcher has also examined local wisdom in Southeast Sulawesi in a previous study on the Development of Teaching Materials Based on the Local Wisdom of the Bajo Tribe conducted by Halil et al. in 2020. This research explains that an alternative to maintaining and enhancing the values of local wisdom in society can be achieved through instructional material (Halil, 2020).

Based on the previous research, a limited amount of specific research focuses on developing regional languages into local subjects of teaching materials based on the Merdeka Curriculum. Furthermore, the development in previous research has yet to be specifically centred on achieving learning outcomes according to the Merdeka Curriculum and efforts to regenerate the use of language in preserving local culture among students. These aspects serve as the basis for innovation in the development of this research.

One must adhere to several characteristics in developing the learning modules on the local subject of Tolaki Mekongga language based on the Merdeka Curriculum. According to Idi (2016), the characteristics that must be fulfilled in local subjects include: 1) Local subjects must be organized sequentially, logically, and planned, consisting of various components that support and influence each other. These components include goals, materials, methods, media, learning resources, and assessment systems, with their development progressing through specific stages, starting from planning, implementation, evaluation, and follow-up. 2) Local subject materials contain locally relevant teaching materials. These are linked to the conditions, potentials, characteristics, advantages, and needs of the region and its environment (natural, social, cultural), presented as subjects with their own allocated time. 3) Local subject materials are developed based on the regulations of educational units and are not limited to skills subjects. 4) Local subject is developed following content standards, processes, and assessment standards determined by the government. 5) It is tailored to learners' interests, talents, abilities, and needs, as well as their environment and region. To achieve this goal, the local government of North Kolaka Regency collaborates with Nineteen November University Kolaka to develop the design of the Merdeka Curriculum device, mainly focusing on the Tolaki Mekongga Cultural Curriculum. This step is taken in preparation for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in 2023.

The development of this module stems from the on-the-ground reality in North Kolaka Regency, where the education sector is experiencing a lag in learning, a situation that is widespread in various regions, including remote areas in Indonesia (Adi et al., 2021). The state of learning at the elementary education level in North Kolaka Regency requires attention, particularly concerning limited internet access, a lack of technological competence and skills in the learning process, and insufficient technological facilities and infrastructure support.

Furthermore, it is revealed that North Kolaka has districts rich in culture and language, influencing varied language use in learning. It shows that culture and language are interdependent and affect each other (Arafah et al., 2023). In the context of language, figurative language is usually used to convey someone's idea aesthetically (Baa et al., 2023). It means that some cultural aspects are portrayed in a beautiful language even though some people understand based on what they understood and need help understanding words with multiple meanings (Hasjim et al., 2020). Therefore, communication must be done based on agreed logical principles from speaker to listener to avoid errors (Yulianti et al., 2022; Iksora et al., 2022; Asri et al., 2023). This cultural diversity also affects the implementation of culture in family, school, and community environments, which tends to fade. Field facts show that children are more interested in Western culture than their own local culture, a phenomenon acknowledged by Rohimah et al. (2019) as the impact of a lack of awareness and affection for their own culture or influenced by global trends without discretion.

In order to solve this issue and enhance a sense of belonging to local culture, the education mechanism is considered a solution (Maryamah, 2017), aligning with the national education goal emphasizing the formation of graduates with character and noble morals (Sisdiknas, 2006). Concerning culture, language is the best communication tool to preserve the cultural heritage. One way to portray culture and social reality in an academic field is to involve literary works in the lessons (Arafah et al., 2023). Literary work is an art that portrays human life with all the values related to the standard of behaviour in everyday life (Afiah et al., 2022; Mutmainnah et al., 2022). It can also help students to be open-minded by finding different personalities of characters (Fadillah et al., 2022). Other than that, literary work can also portray different issues, such as environmental issues (Arafah et al., 2021; Siwi et al., 2022), human relations (Asriyanti et al., 2022; Sunyoto et al., 2022), or animal issues (Yudith et al., 2023). Unfortunately, the cultural wealth in Kolaka Utara has not been fully integrated into the learning context, with a more dominant focus on local subject learning in English. Therefore, to provide a solution, there is a need to form a grand design of a culture-based curriculum with local subjects, referring to the Merdeka Curriculum framework, to be in line with the uniqueness of each region (Bashori & Ardinini, 2021; Mubarok et al., 2021). The primary goal of this research is to produce a cultural curriculum device design following the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum.

II. METHOD

The type of this research is Research and Development (R&D), which adopts the ASSURE model as proposed by Smaldino (2019). Smaldino elucidates that this model is an instructional design involving the following stages: (a) Analyzing learners, (b) Stating objectives and goals, (c) Selecting methods, media, and materials, (d) Utilizing methods, media, and materials, (e) Requiring learner participation, and (f) Evaluating and revising. All these stages are implemented, considering the urgency and potential for the intended outcomes.
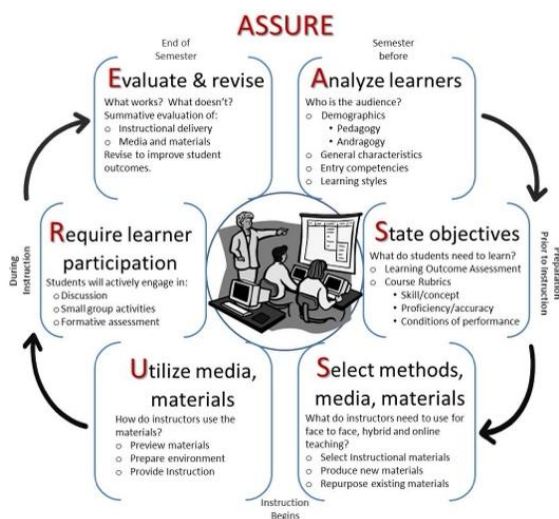

Figure 1. ASSURE Development Models

The subjects of this research consist of teachers and students from SDN 3 Lambai, SDN 5 Kodeoha, and SDN 8 Kodeoha in Kolaka Utara. Data were collected through user response questionnaires and expert validation questionnaires. After collecting the data, descriptive analysis was conducted to assess the curriculum design's validity and practicality. The level of feasibility/validity of the product was evaluated through expert validation using a questionnaire instrument (Akbar & Sriwiyana, 2011, p. 286) with the following formula:

$$V = \frac{\text{Number of TSEV}}{\text{Number of T} - \text{Smax}} \times 100\%$$

Details:
V   = Percentage of validity
TSEV   = Total number of validator empirical scores
T-Smax   = Total expected maximum score
100%   = Constant

In general, the stages of development in this study can be seen below.
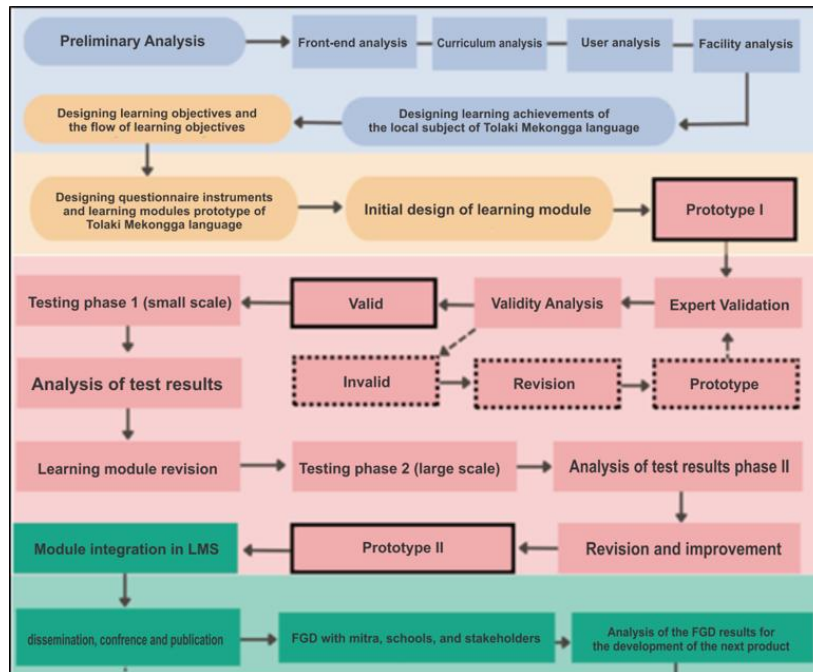

Figure 2. The Development Stage of Teaching Modules on Local Subjet Tolaki Mekongga Language

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The development of the module design was carried out based on the procedural steps outlined in the ASSURE model, which are:

a. Analyzing learners

This step involves analyzing the learning object's (students') conditions, focusing on knowledge and skills in understanding local subjects. Analyzing the student situation related to this learning is a key to achieving learning objectives (Alfin, 2014). Findings from field research indicate that more than 80% of students need more basic knowledge about local subjects, have a limited understanding of local culture, and face limitations in learning resources, both directly and indirectly. Students are more interested in foreign cultures and millennial languages, making them less enthusiastic about their regional language. These findings align with Artisna's (2022) research, which demonstrates that these habits and lifestyles continue to erode the original culture and local wisdom that are the archipelago's heritage. Interview results also reveal that more than 77% of elementary school students in grades IV, V, and VI have not memorized or are not accustomed to using their region's distinctive local language.

b. Formulating standards and objectives

Formulating objectives had to align with the expected outcomes from students in cognitive, attitudinal, and skill aspects, as suggested by Hughes and Yarbrough (2022). Formulating objectives includes defining concepts, establishing values/characteristics to be taught, and detailing activities that could enhance students' skills and creativity during and after the learning process.

c. Selecting methods, media, and materials

The selection of appropriate teaching methods, media, and materials was expected to be optimal in achieving student learning outcomes and meeting learning objectives. To develop the cultural curriculum design, relevant resources or materials were needed. The presentation of each element was adjusted to the elements referring to the scope found in the Merdeka Curriculum, namely: 1) local language and literature, 2) regional arts, 3) regional handicrafts, 4) local food, 5) customs and traditions, 6) regional tourism, and 7) history. Each presented element was then expanded into a

description of the material that matched the phase level in each elementary school class. For example, phase A is for grades I and II, phase B is for grades III and IV, and phase C is for grades V and VI. The breakdown of the scope of this material was then developed into learning objectives that corresponded to phases A, B, and C. The following is an overview of the North Kolaka cultural curriculum design on the cover, as shown in Figure 3.
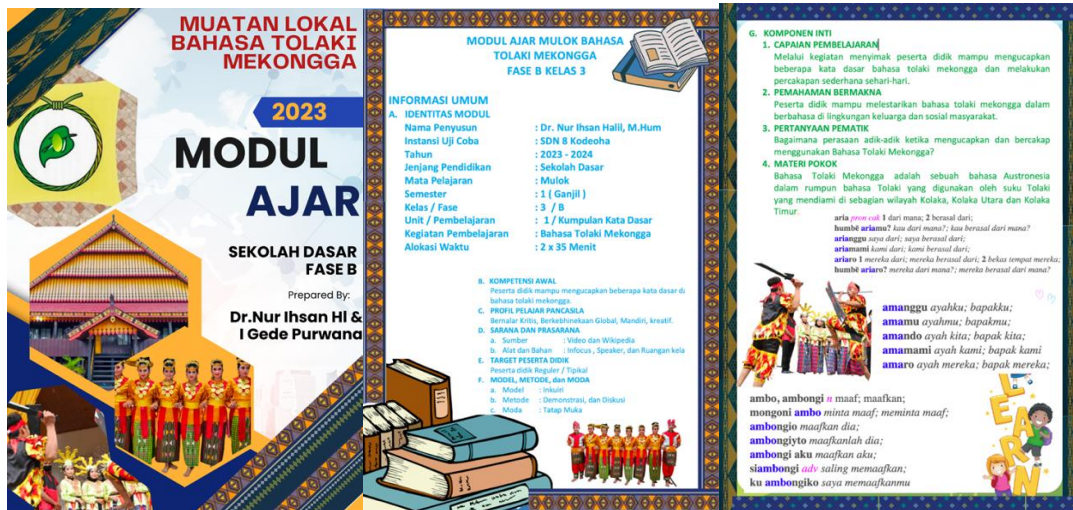

Figure 3. Cover Design and Content of the Teaching Module Local Subject Tolaki Mekongga Language

d. Utilize methods, media, and materials

This step involves evaluating the technological capacity, media availability, and materials used. Each supporting element is the foundation for developing various curriculum components, such as learning modules, media, teaching materials, and authentic assessment tools. In this phase, the completed product is then validated by curriculum experts and language experts. The validation process before field testing is considered crucial to ensure that the product is theoretically and conceptually valid before it is expanded to the community (Adams & Wieman, 2011). Content validation is performed to evaluate the feasibility of the curriculum content, both theoretically and practically. Meanwhile, language validation aims to ensure the accuracy of the Indonesian language. The results of each expert validation include critiques, corrections, and suggestions for improvement on the developed product.

TABLE 1
MODULES EXPERT VALIDATION RESULTS

Assessment Aspect	Score	Criteria
The urgency of the importance of implementing Merdeka Curriculum (local subject)	4	Highly Appropriate
Legal Basis Suitability in the development of local subject teaching module	3	Appropriate
Rational conformity of integrated learning outcomes of local subject	3	Appropriate
Suitability of local object-integrated learning outcomes objectives	4	Highly Appropriate
Clarity Characteristics of integrated elementary level subjects of local wisdom	4	Highly Appropriate
Clarity of the Scope of Elementary Learning Outcomes	4	Highly Appropriate
Clarity of description of each element of the subject of local load	4	Highly Appropriate
Completeness of presentation of each element in local subjects by the scope of local wisdom	3	Appropriate
The formulation of learning outcomes is described in full in each phase	4	Highly Appropriate
Total Score	33	
Percentage of Validity	91,6 %	Highly Valid

TABLE 2
LINGUIST VALIDATION RESULTS

Assessment Aspect	Score	Criteria
Word/diction selection	3	Appropriate
Correct spelling usage	3	Appropriate
Accuracy of Punctuation Use	4	Highly Appropriate
Not much use of the term	3	Appropriate
Minimum typos	3	Appropriate
Accuracy of capital letter	3	Appropriate
Using good, formal Indonesian	3	Appropriate
Easy to understand term selection	3	Appropriate
Does not cause double meaning/ambiguity	4	Highly Appropriate
Total Score	29	
Percentage of Validity	80 %	Valid

Based on the information presented in Table 1, the expert evaluation results of the curriculum components indicate a score of 91.6%, signifying a high level of validity for the curriculum. Despite this favourable assessment, the validators provided valuable suggestions and feedback. Specifically, they recommended including proficiency criteria for learning achievements in each class phase.

Moving forward to Table 2, the evaluation conducted by language experts yielded a score of 80%, meeting the criteria for validity. The validators advised paying more attention to terms that might not be widely recognized and recommended selecting terms from various languages (English/Latin). This ensures that readers can comprehend the intended meaning of the cultural curriculum draft.

e. Requires learner participation

This phase involves the product's trial with users, engaging teachers and students. The testing process aims to elicit user responses to the developed curriculum design. The trial is conducted on a limited scale, specifically in the fourth-grade class at Elementary School in SDN 3 Lambai, SDN 5 Kodeoha, and SDN 8 Kodeoha, involving 57 students in Phase B. The outcomes of the user trial serve as a foundation for the evaluation and reflection on the product, enabling necessary adjustments. User feedback serves as a guide to ensure the product is suitable for limited use and applicable on a broader scale. The following is a summary of the results from the product trial with users (teachers and students).

TABLE 3
RECAPITULATION TRIAL RESULTS OF THE LOCAL SUBJECT TEACHING MODULE OF TOLAKI MEKONGGA LANGUAGE

Assessment Aspect	Score	Criteria
Learning outcomes are described in sequence following Class level/phase	3	Eligible
The learning stages used in the curriculum are easily understood	4	Highly Eligible
The teaching module can be integrated with the Pancasila Student Profile Component	3	Eligible
The teaching module presentation is contextual to the area of Kolaka Utara and Tolaki Mekongga Language	3	Eligible
The aching module presentation, in general, is easy to implement	3	Eligible
Minimum class hours: 2 hours per week	4	Highly Eligible
Total Score	20	
Percentage of Eligibility	83%	Eligible

According to the explanations provided in Table 3, the outcomes of the user trial for the curriculum product indicate a score of 83%, with an assessment that the product is Eligible for testing on a larger scale. This finding aligns with the perspective that Kuncahyono (2018) presented, asserting the importance of testing the practicality of a product for comprehensive field application. However, in the context of this research, a large-scale trial was not conducted due to the need for refinement in the culturally based curriculum design and the addition of Teaching Modules for all grade levels, from Grade IV to Grade VI.

f. Evaluate and revise

In this step, efforts are made to assess the learning impact after the trial of the curriculum design product. Evaluation becomes a crucial aspect as an indicator of the success of the learning process (Duffy & Jonassen, 1992; Cappel & Hayen, 2004). This evaluation phase encompasses assessments during and after the implementation of the learning process. Subsequently, the developers clarify the data obtained from the questionnaires, which include responses from teachers and students after participating in the learning process using the curriculum Merdeka based on the local wisdom of North Kolaka District. Overall, we can show the result of data interpretation in three categories of assessment for teaching modules in this research, as in the diagram below.

Figure 4. Diagram of Analysis Validation and Trial Result of Teaching Modules

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this research, several key points can be concluded: First, the local subject module for the Tolaki Mekongga language, based on the Merdeka Curriculum, has proven to be valid and eligible to be effectively

used in local subject learning at the elementary school level. This is a concrete effort to preserve the Tolaki Mekongga language. Second, the data interpretation results indicate the need to improve the variety of learning media integrated into the Tolaki Mekongga language module. This ensures the module can be implemented widely across the Southeast Sulawesi region. Third, the developed curriculum follows the Merdeka Curriculum's principles at each elementary school phase. This involves learning outcomes integrated with various cultures in North Kolaka District, Southeast Sulawesi.

For further research, it is kindly suggested that: First, it is crucial for teachers and students to consistently implement local subject learning for at least 2 hours per week. Schools are expected to develop local subject learning in intra-curricular and extra-curricular contexts and Merdeka. Second, the implications of implementing a local wisdom-based curriculum in North Kolaka suggest that teachers can implement learning and develop learning tools by the applicable curriculum standards. Further research is needed to explore the impact of Merdeka Curriculum implementation on other variables. Third, methods, media, and materials must be applied judiciously in the learning process, in line with the concept of "utilize methods, media, and materials" to enhance learning effectiveness.

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