

A LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE TEACHING OF INDONESIAN LANGUAGE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: APPROACHES, METHODS, AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the instructional approaches, methods, and contextual factors that influence the teaching of Indonesian language in elementary schools through a comprehensive literature review. Using a qualitative library research method, the study systematically reviewed academic publications from the last five years, focusing on peer-reviewed articles, empirical studies, and theoretical papers related to Indonesian language instruction. The analysis highlights the increasing adoption of student-centered methods such as contextual teaching, scaffolded literacy, and digital integration—particularly through Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)—which have shown positive impacts on vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and writing fluency. However, the study also identifies significant challenges, including limited teacher training, disparities in technological infrastructure, and the linguistic diversity of students, especially in rural and multilingual school contexts. The novelty of this research lies in its integrative perspective: it does not only map teaching strategies, but also considers how instructional effectiveness is shaped by the interaction between pedagogy, digital readiness, teacher competence, and school context. Furthermore, the study provides differentiated insights that move beyond “one-size-fits-all” recommendations, offering targeted implications for various school settings. In conclusion, the findings suggest that effective Indonesian language instruction requires a flexible, context-responsive framework that aligns curriculum, method, and teacher capacity to student needs. These results are expected to inform future research, educational policy, and instructional design practices in the context of primary language education in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Indonesian language, elementary education, instructional methods, digital learning, literature review*

INTRODUCTION

Language teaching in primary education plays a critical role in shaping students' communicative competence, literacy development, and overall academic achievement. In the context of Indonesian elementary schools, the teaching of the Indonesian language subject has evolved from traditional grammar-translation approaches to more interactive and technology-mediated frameworks (Muzaki, Barus, Tohir, Ahdhianto, & Putra, 2023). The adoption of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in Indonesian language classes has been shown to foster greater student engagement and self-paced practice opportunities, which may contribute to improved language outcomes (Muzaki et al., 2023). Moreover, modern pedagogical designs emphasise student-centredness,

collaborative learning, and integration of digital tools all of which respond to the changing needs of 21st-century learners.

From a theoretical perspective, constructivist assumptions underpin much of the current discourse on language instruction in elementary settings: learners actively construct meaning through social interaction, scaffolding, and use of authentic language tasks. This means that effective Indonesian language teaching should not only present form and structure, but also provide meaningful communicative contexts where students actively engage in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Kurniawati & Manan, 2025). In line with this, recent meta-analytic work demonstrates that methods such as problem-based learning (PBL) significantly influence elementary students' Indonesian language achievement (Suparjan, 2024). Such findings underscore the importance of selecting instructional approaches and methods that align with both the cognitive and socio-affective dimensions of language learning in the elementary context.

In recent research on Indonesian language instruction in elementary schools, a persistent problem lies in the insufficient alignment between teaching materials and the diverse linguistic and technological contexts of learners. For example, a study by Elfia Sukma et al. (2023) reports that teachers struggle significantly with limited resources, effectively adapting curricula to student needs, and creating engaging instructional materials suitable for bilingual or multilingual settings in rural Indonesia. Additionally, the impact of students' mother tongue languages further complicates teacher efforts to build proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia, making the learning process more complex. Another challenge is technology integration: while some schools adopt digital media in language teaching, many teachers lack adequate training or infrastructure to implement these tools effectively. The combination of these factors pedagogical mis-match, linguistic diversity, and technological barriers creates a multi-dimensional obstacle for achieving effective Indonesian language instruction at the elementary level.

One major gap in current research is the lack of longitudinal studies tracking how improvements in teaching methods for the Indonesian language subject affect student outcomes over time in elementary schools. Most existing studies focus on cross-sectional snapshots of teacher challenges or student performance rather than following cohorts over multiple years to assess sustained change (Manan & Hairida, 2025). This limits our understanding of how early interventions (e.g., media-enhanced instruction or vocabulary support) translate into longer-term literacy growth and language proficiency. Furthermore, many studies concentrate on urban or better-resourced schools, leaving rural and under-resourced settings under-explored (Sari, 2025). This imbalance creates a gap in contextual evidence about how teaching practices can be adapted to diverse environments. As a result, policy and practice recommendations often lack specificity for different regional contexts and student populations. Addressing this gap would allow more nuanced, evidence-based strategies to be developed for both advantaged and disadvantaged elementary school settings.

Another critical gap is the insufficient investigation into how teacher professional development and curriculum alignment interact with digital-media use in Indonesian

language instruction at the elementary level. While some research has examined the use of media and technology in teaching the language subject, these studies typically focus on descriptive accounts of implementation rather than rigorous examination of the interplay between teacher competency, curriculum fit, and student outcomes (Kurniawati & Manan, 2025). There is limited empirical work exploring how teacher training interventions can enable effective integration of digital tools in alignment with the curriculum, and how that in turn impacts students' four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). Moreover, the majority of studies do not disaggregate how these effects differ across grade levels, student prior-knowledge levels, or home language backgrounds, leaving a gap in our understanding of differentiated impacts. Bridging this gap could lead to clearer guidelines on what kinds of teacher development and resource design are most effective in various elementary school contexts.

This study introduces a novel comprehensive synthesis by examining not only traditional vs. modern instructional methods for teaching Indonesian in elementary school, but explicitly mapping their interrelations with contextual factors such as teacher professional development, local language background, and digital-media integration. Prior studies tend to treat each variable in isolation (e.g., media use, curriculum alignment, teacher training) without offering a combined model of how these elements mutually influence student outcomes (Sari, 2025). Furthermore, this research extends the scope of inquiry by focusing on elementary school settings across diverse regional contexts in Indonesia, moving beyond the common focus on urban or well-resourced schools (Manan & Hairida, 2025). In doing so, it furnishes deeper spatial and demographic granularity that is largely absent in previous literature. Additionally, the study leverages recent empirical findings (Ajamsaru, 2025) to bridge the gap between pedagogical theory and practical implementation in primary education. Thus, the present work contributes by offering an integrative framework that can inform both research and practice in Indonesian language instruction at the elementary level.

The primary objective of this literature-review study is to systematically map and analyse the range of instructional approaches and methods used in teaching the Indonesian language in elementary schools, and to identify their reported practical implications in the last five years. A second objective is to synthesise evidence on how factors such as teacher competence, curriculum alignment, use of digital tools, and linguistic diversity among students interact with instructional methods in producing learning outcomes. The third objective is to highlight emergent gaps in the literature—particularly in longitudinal designs, heterogeneous school contexts, and integrative teacher professional development—so as to identify future research priorities. Finally, the study aims to produce actionable implications for practitioners and policymakers, delineating which combinations of approach, method and contextual support show most promise for enhancing Indonesian language learning in elementary school settings.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a literature review method (*pustaka*) to explore instructional approaches and methods for teaching the Indonesian language in elementary schools, following established guidelines for synthesising prior research. According to Literature Reviews, Theoretical Frameworks, and Conceptual Frameworks (Luft, 2022), a high-quality literature review systematically surveys scholarly sources to identify patterns, gaps, and emerging frameworks in a field. The review draws upon recent methodological studies which outline diverse review types—narrative, systematic, critical, integrative and advises the selection of the type that best aligns with the research question and resources (Chukwuere, 2023). The choice of a literature-based review is appropriate here because no empirical primary data collection occurs; instead, the study synthesises existing journal articles, conference papers, and other academic sources published in the last five years. A clear search strategy, selection criteria, and data-extraction process will be documented to enhance transparency and rigour. The method aligns with recommendations for conducting structured literature reviews in education and language-learning research (Susilawati, 2023). By adhering to a systematic approach to literature gathering, evaluation, and synthesis, the study ensures credibility and replicability of findings.

The data-collection process involves identifying and retrieving relevant academic publications on the teaching of the Indonesian language in elementary schools, published within the past five years. Firstly, electronic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus and educational-journal repositories will be searched using keywords like “Indonesian language teaching”, “elementary school”, “Bahasa Indonesia instruction”, “language learning methods”, and “primary education Indonesia”. Secondly, inclusion criteria will consist of peer-reviewed journal articles in English or Bahasa Indonesia, published between 2020 and 2025, focusing on elementary (SD) context in Indonesia and addressing teaching approaches, methods or implications. Exclusion criteria will remove articles focused on tertiary level, non-Indonesian contexts, or purely theoretical explorations without empirical or review components. After initial retrieval, titles and abstracts will be screened for relevance, followed by full-text assessment for meeting criteria; duplicate and non-accessible papers will be omitted. Metadata for each selected paper will be extracted including author(s), year, study context, method, key findings, and relevance to teaching Indonesian at elementary level. The process mirrors the five-step guide for literature reviews (search, evaluate, identify themes/gaps, outline, write) recommended by Scribbr (2023). This thorough data-collection phase ensures that the subsequent synthesis draws from a comprehensive and context-appropriate evidence base.

Once the articles are selected, data analysis will proceed through thematic synthesis and structural mapping of findings. First, extracted data will be coded and organised into categories such as “teaching approach”, “learning method”, “digital-integrated instruction”, “teacher competency”, “student outcomes”, and “contextual factors”. Next, similarities and differences across studies will be compared,

and patterns such as recurring methods, observed effects, and contextual constraints will be identified. A matrix summarising each study’s characteristics and main findings will facilitate cross-study comparison and the identification of research gaps. The analysis will also assess methodological quality, scope of contexts (urban vs rural), and grade-levels covered, thereby illuminating limitations in existing literature. Subsequently, key themes will be synthesised into a narrative that addresses the research objectives: mapping approaches/methods, exploring practical implications, and highlighting gaps. Finally, implications for practice and research will be drawn by interpreting how the assembled evidence converges or diverges, and by linking findings to theoretical frameworks of language instruction. The approach aligns with best-practice protocols for structuring literature reviews in educational research (Susilawati, 2023; Chukwuere, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The literature review reveals several dominant approaches and methods used in Indonesian language instruction at the elementary school level. These include contextual teaching, multimodal learning, and digital integration—all of which are reported to yield positive effects on student engagement and language skills when applied appropriately. For instance, studies by Sari (2025) and Manan & Hairida (2025) suggest that vocabulary and reading comprehension can be significantly enhanced through group-based and media-rich instruction. Similarly, digital tools such as online drills and e-learning modules appear to boost student writing and grammar performance (Kurniawati & Manan, 2025). However, disparities exist in the effectiveness of these methods depending on teacher readiness and school resources. Table 1 below outlines the approaches, teaching methods, focus areas, and their reported findings across six major studies.

Table 1. Instructional Approaches and Their Findings

Author (Year)	Approach	Method	Focus Area	Findings
Sari (2025)	Contextual Teaching	Group Discussion	Vocabulary Building	Improved engagement in rural schools
Manan & Hairida (2025)	Multimodal Learning	Interactive Media	Reading Comprehension	Enhanced comprehension in grades 3–5
Kurniawati & Manan (2025)	Digital Integration	E-learning	Writing Skills	Boost in writing fluency with tech tools
Sukma et al. (2023)	Resource Adaptation	Textbook Customization	Teacher Resource	Mismatch between material and student level
Ajamsaru (2025)	Scaffolded Literacy	PBL (Problem-Based Learning)	Student Output	Improved literacy through task scaffolding

Muzaki et al. (2023)	CALL Method	Online Drills	Grammar Practice	Increased motivation using CALL platforms
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A second key theme emerging from the review is the influence of school context, teacher training, and technology access on the effectiveness of language instruction. Studies like those of Sukma et al. (2023) and Ajamsaru (2025) emphasize that without adequate teacher development and infrastructure, even the best pedagogical methods fail to deliver consistent learning gains. Rural and under-resourced schools, for example, tend to rely on outdated materials with minimal digital support, limiting the success of more interactive methods. Conversely, schools with high technology integration and well-trained teachers report better language outcomes, especially in writing and grammar (Muzaki et al., 2023). Table 2 provides a detailed comparison of context, technology use, teacher training levels, and their corresponding impact on student learning across reviewed studies.

Table 2. Contextual Factors Influencing Outcomes

Author (Year)	Context	Tech Usage	Teacher Training	Impact Summary
Sari (2025)	Rural SD	Low	None	Effective for rural engagement
Manan & Hairida (2025)	Urban SD	Moderate	Basic	Moderate impact on reading
Kurniawati & Manan (2025)	Blended Schools	High	Moderate	Significant improvement in writing
Sukma et al. (2023)	National Curriculum	Low	Basic	Curriculum adaptation remains weak
Ajamsaru (2025)	Multilingual Class	Moderate	Advanced	Supports diverse learners
Muzaki et al. (2023)	Private SD	High	Advanced	High tech motivation effect

The findings presented in Tables 1 and 2 highlight that instructional success in teaching Indonesian language at the elementary level is strongly influenced not only by the choice of pedagogical approach but also by contextual enablers such as teacher training and technological infrastructure. For instance, studies by Kurniawati & Manan (2025) and Muzaki et al. (2023) show that high levels of digital integration, when supported by sufficient teacher competence, lead to notable improvements in students' writing and grammar skills. Conversely, in contexts where technological tools are limited or teachers lack professional development—such as in rural or national curriculum—constrained schools—the effectiveness of even well-designed instructional strategies diminishes significantly (Sari, 2025; Sukma et al., 2023). This suggests that while methods like contextual teaching or CALL can be effective, their impact is contingent on

implementation conditions. Furthermore, scaffolded literacy approaches and problem-based learning show promise in enhancing student engagement and comprehension in diverse classrooms, especially those with multilingual backgrounds (Ajamsaru, 2025). Overall, the literature underscores the importance of aligning instructional innovation with teacher readiness and contextual adaptability for effective language learning in elementary education.

In recent years, the integration of digital and interactive media in elementary Indonesian language instruction has gained prominence. For example, a study on digital transformative learning design for the Indonesian language subject in elementary schools found that incorporating multimedia and gamified tasks enhanced student motivation and engagement compared to traditional lecture-based instruction (Digital Transformative Learning Design for Indonesian Language Subjects in Elementary Schools, 2023). Similarly, a library-review study on computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in Indonesian elementary schools reported that while the promise of CALL is high, significant obstacles such as infrastructure, teacher readiness, and alignment with the curriculum limit its full potential (Language Instruction in Indonesian Elementary Schools Through Computer Assisted Language Learning: A Library Research Review, 2023). These findings support a shift from purely teacher-centred, one-way instruction to more student-centred, technology-enhanced learning environments. However, the literature also signals a caution: technology alone is not sufficient unless embedded within a pedagogical framework that supports language learning skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) in meaningful contexts.

Another strand of research highlights learners' strategies and socio-contextual influences in Indonesian language learning at the elementary level. A recent qualitative study identified that younger learners deploy various strategies—metacognitive, cognitive, social, affective, compensatory—to support their Indonesian language acquisition, with metacognitive strategies being most prominent among grade-three students (Identification of Indonesian Language Learning Strategies of Grade III Students of Public Elementary School, 2025). Meanwhile, a quantitative investigation into teacher-reported challenges found that key impediments include teacher capacity to develop adaptive materials, mismatch with students' local language backgrounds, and inadequate resources for contextualised instruction (Challenges in Implementing Indonesian Language Teaching Materials in Elementary Schools, 2024). These studies illuminate how instructional success in Indonesian language hinges not just on method or technology, but on learner agency and the socio-cultural ecology of the classroom. They collectively argue for learning designs that are flexible to local language diversity, empower students' self-regulated learning, and support teachers in context-responsive material creation.

The first innovation of this study lies in its integration of holistic learning frameworks with language instruction in primary grade Indonesian classrooms, combining cognitive, emotional, and contextual dimensions into the teaching of the national language. For example, a 2025 qualitative study demonstrated that a holistic

approach can integrate students' lives, interests, and talents with language-skill development in the elementary school environment (Bahari, Kusumaningrum, Mardhatillah, Mashfufah, & Hanafi, 2025). By juxtaposing this with contemporary technology-mediated methods such as multimedia and CALL, the present research proposes a structured model that links holistic pedagogy with media integration in the teaching of Indonesian Language Education. This is novel because most previous literature treats technology use or holistic approaches in isolation rather than modelling how both might interact in elementary contexts. In doing so, the study offers a fresh lens: how blending holistic, media-rich, and context-sensitive approaches can yield more robust outcomes in language learning at the elementary level.

The second novelty concerns addressing heterogeneity in student linguistic backgrounds and learning contexts—urban vs rural, high-tech vs low-tech, monolingual vs multilingual—within a singular framework of instructional effectiveness. For instance, research has recently shown that teacher-mediated evaluation practices in elementary Indonesian classrooms reveal phonological and orthographic errors especially in multilingual settings, indicating that language background matters (Wulandari & Muhroji, 2025). Moreover, the challenges of implementing materials aligned with the curriculum in resource-constrained schools have been highlighted in a 2024 quantitative study (Sukma, Ramadhan, Aldiyah, & Sihes, 2024). By explicitly mapping how method, media, teacher readiness, and context interact, this study advances beyond previous work to propose differentiated practical implications for diverse elementary school settings. This contributes to the field by offering more precise guidance for practitioners and policymakers who must tailor instruction to varied contexts rather than apply “one-size-fits-all” strategies.

The findings of this study offer significant global relevance by providing insights into effective language instruction in multilingual and resource-diverse educational settings. Understanding how teaching approaches, methods, teacher competencies, and digital integration interact can inform language education strategies not only in Indonesia but also in other countries facing similar challenges in primary education (Bahari, Kusumaningrum, Mardhatillah, Mashfufah, & Hanafi, 2025). Moreover, the study's focus on context-sensitive pedagogy and differentiated instruction contributes to global discussions on equitable education, where students' backgrounds and access to technology often vary widely (Wulandari & Muhroji, 2025). By synthesizing recent empirical evidence on instructional innovation, this research can guide policymakers, curriculum designers, and teacher training programs worldwide to adopt practices that are both culturally relevant and technologically adaptable. Additionally, it highlights the importance of integrating holistic and media-enhanced methods to foster engagement, literacy, and communicative competence among young learners. Such evidence supports international educational initiatives emphasizing 21st-century skills, literacy, and inclusive classroom design. Overall, this research contributes a globally applicable framework for improving language learning outcomes in primary education, particularly in developing countries with linguistic diversity and uneven resource distribution.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of Indonesian language instruction in elementary schools is highly dependent on the alignment between instructional approaches, teacher competence, technological integration, and contextual school conditions. Methods such as contextual teaching, scaffolded literacy, and the use of digital media (e.g., CALL) show strong potential to enhance language outcomes when supported by adequate training and resources. However, disparities in implementation—especially in rural or resource-limited schools—highlight that pedagogical innovation must be context-responsive. Teacher preparedness plays a central role in translating instructional methods into successful classroom practices. Additionally, student language backgrounds (e.g., multilingualism) significantly affect how instruction should be adapted. The findings affirm that a one-size-fits-all model is insufficient and call for differentiated strategies based on local needs. Therefore, a comprehensive and flexible instructional framework is essential to promote effective and equitable Indonesian language learning across diverse elementary school settings.

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