

DEVELOPMENT OF DIGITAL LITERACY-BASED LEARNING INNOVATIONS IN THE SECOND SEMESTER OF THE INDONESIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE COURSE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NIAS IN THE ERA OF INDEPENDENT LEARNING

Riana^{1a*}

¹ Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program, Nias University, Indonesia

rianampd123@gmail.com

(* Corresponding Author

rianampd123@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the development of digital literacy-based learning innovations within the second-semester courses of Indonesian Language and Literature at Universitas Nias, situated within the broader framework of the *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) policy. The research is grounded in the growing urgency for higher education institutions to adapt pedagogical strategies to the digital transformation era, particularly in remote or under-resourced regions. The central research question explores how the integration of digital literacy enhances the effectiveness and engagement of students in language and literature learning. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through classroom observations, interviews with lecturers and students, and documentation of learning media. The findings reveal that implementing digital tools—such as interactive e-modules, virtual discussion forums, and digital storytelling platforms—not only increases students' motivation and participation but also fosters critical thinking and creative expression. However, challenges such as limited infrastructure and digital competencies among both students and lecturers persist. The study concludes that while the integration of digital literacy into the curriculum presents significant opportunities for pedagogical renewal, it requires continuous support in terms of technological access and capacity building. This research contributes to the discourse on localized innovations in Indonesian higher education and underscores the relevance of context-sensitive strategies in implementing national education policies.

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INTRODUCTION

The transformation of higher education in Indonesia is currently entering an important phase with the implementation of the Independent Learning-Independent Campus (MBKM) policy by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. This policy encourages educational institutions to be more adaptive to technological developments and the needs of the times, especially in the development of digital literacy-based learning. In this context, learning innovation is an urgent need so that the teaching and learning process is not only

academically relevant, but also contextual to the global challenges of the 21st century (Kemendikbudristek, 2020).

One of the main challenges in the implementation of MBKM is the development of learning methods that are able to integrate digital technology effectively. Digital literacy, which includes the ability to search, evaluate, use, and create information through digital technology, is now a key competency in higher education (Ng, 2012). In the realm of learning Indonesian Language and Literature, digital literacy is not only needed to support students' cognitive processes, but also to open up a wider space for creative expression.

The University of Nias as one of the universities in the archipelago faces unique geographical and infrastructure challenges. Limited access to technology in several regions in Nias makes digital-based learning innovation not only a curricular demand, but also a form of strategic intervention to bridge inequality in access to education. Therefore, it is important to design a learning model of Indonesian Language and Literature based on digital literacy, but still pay attention to the local context of students.

Indonesian Language and Literature learning in the second semester generally focuses on strengthening language skills and appreciation of literary works. In this digital era, such learning can no longer be done conventionally. Students need to be trained to access literary works through digital platforms, make literary reviews in the form of videos or podcasts, and engage in critical discussions through online forums. Innovations like this can increase student participation and involvement in learning (Walsh, 2010).

Several studies have shown that the use of digital media in language and literature learning can increase student motivation and learning outcomes. Digital storytelling, for example, has proven to be effective in developing students' literacy and communication skills as a whole (Robin, 2008). In addition, learning platforms such as Google Classroom, Padlet, and Canva have been successfully adapted to support the delivery of more interactive and engaging materials (Almurashi, 2016).

The development of digital literacy-based learning innovations also faces various obstacles, such as low digital competence of lecturers and students, limited devices, and lack of infrastructure support. Research by Tondeur et al. (2017) confirms that institutional readiness and managerial support are important factors in the successful implementation of technological innovations in education. In this case, strengthening lecturer capacity and providing adequate digital resources are determining factors.

In addition to the limitations of digital competence, there are still fundamental problems in terms of the readiness of curricula and learning modules that are able to support the integration of digital literacy. Many universities, especially in underdeveloped areas such as Nias, do not yet have a curriculum that is flexible and responsive to the development of digital technology. The rigid curriculum makes it difficult for lecturers to innovate in developing contextual and technology-based learning models (Miarso, 2007).

The limitation of human resources who understand the integration of technology in learning is also a challenge. Lecturers with a conventional education background need continuous training to be able to master blended learning, flipped classroom, or digital-based learning methods. According to Suyanto (2016), educational innovation requires systemic changes that include increasing the capacity of educators, developing interactive teaching media, and shifting pedagogical orientation from teaching to learning.

The availability and reliability of digital infrastructure is still a serious issue. Unstable internet networks, the absence of standard digital devices, and lack of technical support are the main obstacles in the implementation of digital learning. This is strengthened by findings from the Data and Information Center of the Ministry of Education and Culture (2020) which noted that more than 60% of universities in the archipelago experience obstacles to access adequate digital infrastructure.

To answer these challenges, collaboration between educational institutions, local governments, and local communities is needed in creating a sustainable education digital ecosystem. The participatory approach model in the development of digital learning has proven to be effective, especially when it involves lecturers, students, and other stakeholders in the planning and evaluation process. As stated by Haryanto (2015), learning innovations must be based on local needs and involve the learning culture of the local community so that its implementation is more effective.

Understanding digital literacy must go beyond technical capabilities and include ethical, critical, and creative dimensions (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). In the context of learning Indonesian Language and Literature, digital literacy can be directed to foster appreciation for literary works through interactive media, as well as to form a generation of students who are able to think reflectively and productively digitally. According to Suparman (2012), digital literacy skills are an integral part of 21st century life skills that need to be instilled early in higher education.

This study aims to identify and describe forms of digital literacy-based learning innovations developed in the Indonesian Language and Literature course at Nias University, as well as analyze the effectiveness and challenges of their implementation in improving the quality of the teaching and learning process. The main focus is to explore digital strategies, media, and methods applied by lecturers in responding to the demands of the Freedom of Learning policy, as well as adapting them to the characteristics and needs of students in the archipelago. In addition, this study also analyzes the extent to which these innovations are able to increase student active participation, build critical and creative thinking skills, and identify various technical, pedagogical, and cultural obstacles faced during the learning process.

The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on the development of digital literacy-based learning innovations in Indonesian Language and Literature courses in the archipelago, especially Nias University, in the context of the Merdeka Learning policy. In contrast to previous research that generally discussed digital literacy in general in urban institutions or only highlighted its technological aspects, this study emphasizes the integration of contextual, local needs-based learning strategies, as well as examines the effectiveness and challenges of its implementation in depth. Thus, this research presents an original contribution to the development of state-of-the-art digital learning in 3T (disadvantaged, frontier, and outermost) areas, as well as providing a new perspective on how educational innovations can be designed and adapted inclusively in the midst of limited infrastructure and resources.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach that aims to understand in depth the process of developing digital literacy-based learning innovations in the second semester of Indonesian Language and Literature courses at Nias University. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to capture complex social, pedagogical, and cultural dynamics in learning practices (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This research does not attempt to test hypotheses, but rather to explain how innovations are designed, implemented, and responded to by students and lecturers in the context of the Freedom of Learning policy. The location of the research was purposively determined at the University of Nias, as this institution represents the geographical context of the archipelago that faces specific challenges in the integration of educational technology.

The data in this study was obtained through three main techniques: participatory observation of the learning process in the classroom, in-depth interviews with 3 teaching lecturers and 10 students participating in the course, and documentation of the digital learning tools used (Moleong, 2017). Observations were carried out to record direct practice of learning strategies and the use of digital media. The interview focuses on the perceptions, constraints, and experiences of educational actors in the innovation process. Meanwhile, documentation is used to study RPS, digital modules, and platforms used in learning. The data obtained were then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques through the process of data reduction, categorization, and iterative conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). The validity of the data is strengthened by triangulation of sources and techniques, as well as member checks on the main informants so that the findings have a high level of validity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Forms and Strategies of Digital Literacy-Based Learning Innovation

Digital literacy-based learning innovations are an important part of the implementation of the Merdeka Learning policy, especially in the second semester of Indonesian Language and Literature courses at Nias University. This policy encourages more flexible, technology-based learning, and adapts to the needs and potential of students in various regions, including archipelago areas such as Nias (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021).

In the context of Nias University, learning innovation is not only limited to integrating technology, but also includes the design of teaching methods that are relevant to the local conditions of students. One of the prominent forms of innovation is the use of digital platforms such as Google Classroom and Whatsapp Group to distribute materials, assignments, and interact directly with students. This medium was chosen because of its high level of affordability and ease of use (Simanjuntak, 2020).

In addition, lecturers also develop interactive presentation-based learning media using Canva and PowerPoint which are integrated with visual and audio elements. This innovation aims to attract the attention of students and provide a more varied and non-monotonous learning experience. This visual approach is in line with the learning style of the majority of students who tend to be visual-auditory (Suharyadi, 2019).

In order to develop students' digital literacy skills, several lecturers also direct course assignments to be completed through digital products, such as making poetry review videos, literary criticism podcasts, to reflective blogs about the experience of reading literary works. This learning model encourages students to not only become consumers of information, but also content producers (Rohiat, 2011).

Project-based learning strategies are a pedagogical approach that is widely applied in this context. Students are directed to create digital projects collaboratively that integrate linguistic aspects, literary aesthetics, and technological capabilities. This strategy has been proven to increase creativity as well as the ability to work in a team (Muslich, 2011).

The main consideration in choosing this strategy is because Nias University students come from diverse social and educational backgrounds, with uneven levels of access to technology. Therefore, lecturers prefer to use lightweight and accessible applications that do not require a high internet connection, but still provide a meaningful space for learning exploration (Sagala, 2017).

Differentiated learning is also an approach used by lecturers to adjust to students' abilities and learning styles. In practice, lecturers provide a choice of digital assignment forms that can be adjusted by students, whether in the form of videos, infographics, or online platform-based writing. This provides a sense of inclusiveness and mineralizes learning gaps (Zubaedi, 2012).

The use of Google Forms and Quizizz is also applied for formative evaluation during the lecture process. This media allows lecturers to conduct fast, accurate, and data-based assessments. In addition, this form of evaluation is preferred by students because it is interactive and can be accessed through their devices (Yamin, 2013).

Lecturers also use the Youtube channel as an additional learning medium, by creating learning content in the form of short videos that explain basic literary concepts, writing techniques, and text analysis. This video can be accessed at any time, thus providing flexibility to students in managing their study time (Arsyad, 2015).

Innovation also appears in the form of online discussion-based learning that is scheduled synchronously through Zoom and Google Meet. Although network challenges are an obstacle, this activity is still regularly pursued to build two-way interaction between lecturers and students, as well as foster academic culture in virtual spaces (Sudjana, 2010).

The use of local LMS (Learning Management System) developed independently by institutions has also begun to be introduced, although it is still limited. The LMS is used as a learning management center, which includes modules, discussion forums, and task storage. This effort reflects the initial steps of the University of Nias in building an integrated digital learning system (Sanjaya, 2010).

The adoption of the flipped classroom learning model has also begun to be tested by several lecturers. In this model, students are required to study the material through videos or digital modules before the online meeting takes place. The online discussion time is then used for further concept exploration and problem-solving. This

strategy is considered effective in saving time and improving student understanding (Mulyasa, 2013).

In addition to the internal classroom strategy, innovation is also carried out through collaboration between students across majors in the digital literacy culture project. Indonesian Language and Literature students, for example, work with students majoring in Informatics to develop a simple application containing digital poems or interactive short stories. This not only increases digital literacy, but also fosters a collaborative spirit across disciplines (Tohirin, 2014).

Lecturers also apply the principles of contextual teaching and learning in the use of digital literacy, by relating the literary texts studied to the socio-cultural reality in Nias. Students were asked to write a digital essay on local poetry or make a mini documentary related to regional oral literature. This innovation encourages emotional involvement and pride in local culture (Trianto, 2009).

The use of contextual learning approaches in digital literacy opens up space for students to develop critical thinking skills and be reflective of their socio-cultural environment. Through direct engagement with material close to their lives, students not only understand the content of literary texts academically, but also capture the local values contained in them. This gives a deeper meaning to the learning process because students feel that they have a personal relationship with the material being studied.

One form of implementing this strategy is to encourage students to explore traditional Nias folklore, legends, or poetry and present them again in digital format. They can use media such as video documentaries, podcasts, or blogs that reflect their interpretation of those cultural values. This process facilitates the transformation of traditional literacy into a contemporary form that is more relevant to the digital age. By actively engaging in the production of digital works based on local wisdom, students also learn to respect cultural diversity and strengthen their regional identity. This is also an effort to preserve culture, as the digital works produced can be archived and disseminated through various platforms, reaching a wider audience outside the classroom.

Students are also encouraged to do small research on the historical or social context of the local literary texts they raise, such as the background of community life, customary values, or the symbols used in the work. Thus, learning is not only text-oriented, but also in the context that surrounds it, making learning activities more meaningful and rooted in reality. The involvement of students in this activity triggers their enthusiasm to become active learners. They no longer only receive information from lecturers, but become learning agents who seek, process, and convey information according to their understanding and creativity. This process also fosters confidence as they are able to create authentic and useful work.

Digital-based contextual learning allows lecturers to assess students' abilities more comprehensively. The assessment is based not only on the final results, but also on the process of thinking, exploration, and teamwork during the project. This encourages students to be more responsible for their own learning process.

The implementation of this approach also trains students to develop multimodal literacy skills. They not only learn to structure narratives in the form of text, but also consider the visual, audio, and structure elements of effective presentation. This skill is especially important in the digital age, where communication no longer relies solely on written text.

This activity also opens opportunities for students to utilize technology wisely and productively. They learn to use various digital applications not just for entertainment, but for academic and cultural activities. Thus, the digital literacy developed is transformative, because it changes the way they view and use technology.

Lecturers who apply this approach also create inclusive learning spaces and stimulate active participation. Students with various backgrounds of abilities are given space to express their ideas and understanding through a form that best suits their potential. This is in line with the spirit of Freedom of Learning which emphasizes the freedom of thinking and learning according to interests and talents. Digital literacy-based contextual learning is not only a teaching strategy, but also a means of student empowerment. Through this approach, learning Indonesian Language and Literature is not only a place to learn theory, but also a space for reflection on identity, cultural strengthening, and creative expression of the younger generation in the digital era.

Effectiveness and Challenges of Implementing Digital Learning Innovation

The implementation of digital literacy-based learning innovations at the University of Nias has a significant positive impact on the teaching and learning process, especially in increasing student active participation. With the availability of diverse digital media, students are more free to choose a learning method that suits their preferences and abilities. They can access the material anytime and from anywhere, without being bound by conventional time and classrooms (Kustandi & Sutjipto, 2013).

The effectiveness of digital learning is also reflected in the increased interaction between lecturers and students. The use of online forums, discussion groups, and project-based collaborative tasks makes academic communication take place in two directions. Lecturers are no longer the only source of information, but play the role of learning facilitators. This condition encourages students to be more responsible for their own learning process (Sadiman, 2011).

The development of students' critical and creative thinking skills has also improved through a digital approach. Tasks that require students to assess, evaluate, and create digital content indirectly stimulate their ability to think higher-level. Activities such as writing reflections on blogs, creating literary podcasts, or analyzing literary texts in video presentations are concrete examples of digital literacy-based learning that emphasizes complex cognitive aspects (Sumardi & Nugrahani, 2020).

In the context of creativity, digital learning provides a wider space for students to express their ideas. They are free to determine the format and style of delivery, as long as they meet the learning objectives. This shows that technology can be a medium to voice ideas in ways that are less rigid and more relevant to the times (Pannen, 2015).

Nonetheless, the effectiveness of digital learning innovations cannot be separated from the challenges that accompany them. The first challenge is from the technical side, namely the limited supporting infrastructure such as a stable internet network, the availability of devices, and consistent electrical power. In areas such as Nias, these obstacles are a real problem that interferes with the smooth online learning process (Ibrahim, 2017). The second challenge is the readiness of lecturers and students to adapt technology optimally. Not all lecturers have adequate digital competence, so the use of digital media in learning is still limited to basic functions. This can cause digital learning to only become a transposition from a conventional model to an online space without meaningful innovation (Wibowo, 2014).

From the pedagogical side, there are still many lecturers who have not fully integrated digital literacy into learning strategies that are in accordance with the curriculum. The use of technology is often not supported by careful instructional planning. As a result, digital learning innovations tend to be sporadic and unsustainable (Zainuddin, 2018).

The next challenge arises from the cultural aspect. In some students, especially those from low socio-economic backgrounds, there is still a perception that technology is only used for entertainment. Understanding technology as a productive and academic tool still requires continuous coaching (Musfiroh, 2019). Resistance to change is also a challenge. Some students feel uncomfortable with online learning because they consider it harder and require high discipline. The lack of direct control from lecturers makes it difficult for them to manage their study time independently (Rachmawati, 2020).

This condition is also exacerbated by the lack of a culture of independent learning among students. Digital-based learning requires a high level of personal initiative, while some students are used to a passive teaching system. Therefore, lecturers must be able to foster internal motivation and develop learning strategies that lead to self-directed learning (Hermawan, 2016).

In terms of evaluation, the challenge that arises is how to assess student learning outcomes fairly and comprehensively. Digital-based learning evaluations should not only focus on the final product, but should also consider the process, collaboration, and originality of the work. This requires an innovative and flexible assessment tool (Daryanto, 2013). Nevertheless, efforts to increase effectiveness continue to be carried out through lecturer training, the provision of digital teaching media, and the strengthening of internal policies at the

institutional level. Lecturer digital capacity building programs, such as workshops and in-house training, are an important first step in supporting the successful implementation of technology-based learning (Hendrayana, 2015).

Institutional support also plays a key role. Nias University, through its learning development unit, has started to provide a digital resource center and encourage lecturers to publish modules and teaching materials in electronic format. This policy accelerates the distribution of materials and makes it easier for students to access them (Rohendi, 2019). The synergy between lecturers and students is the main determining factor for the success of digital learning innovation. When both have the same awareness of the importance of digital literacy, learning will move more dynamically and collaboratively.

Strong institutional support is not only related to the provision of digital infrastructure, but also includes institutional commitment to building an academic culture that supports innovation. When campus policies explicitly encourage the use of technology in learning, it gives greater trust and motivation to lecturers to experiment with new methods. Clear policies, accompanied by incentives or institutional recognition of lecturers' innovative efforts, are an important encouragement in cultivating digital learning transformation.

Progressive institutions also generally have monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the implementation of digital learning. This evaluation not only assesses the effectiveness of the media used, but also pays attention to its impact on the student learning experience. With a structured feedback system, campuses can identify best practices and develop improvement strategies to face challenges in the field.

The role of academic leadership is also crucial. The Rector, Dean, and Head of Study Program have a strategic responsibility in ensuring that the entire campus ecosystem runs in line with the vision of digital transformation. Visionary leadership and openness to input from the academic community will encourage the creation of a healthy collaborative atmosphere in developing innovative learning practices.

In addition to support from the managerial level, the existence of a special unit that handles the development of learning or information technology is also very helpful in the transition process to digital learning. This unit can act as a training center, consultation, as well as an incubator for lecturers' creative ideas. Thus, lecturers do not feel alone in adopting technology, but rather feel accompanied technically and pedagogically.

Inter-institutional cooperation also needs to be built as part of the institutional strategy. The University of Nias can establish partnerships with other campuses, educational technology platforms, or local governments to strengthen its capacity and learning network. This kind of collaboration allows for the exchange of experience, quality improvement, and opening access to a wider range of digital resources.

Students' awareness and willingness to participate in digital learning do not just appear. A conducive learning environment, supported by psychosocial support from lecturers and campuses, greatly affects students' readiness to undergo a new learning model. Therefore, it is important for campuses to design mentoring and strengthening digital literacy programs for students as part of a hidden curriculum that supports their learning readiness.

Campus policies must also be sensitive to the socio-economic conditions of students. The availability of internet data scholarships, borrowing devices, or opening digital learning spaces in the campus environment are examples of affirmative policies that can help students from underprivileged families so that they are not left behind in the digital learning process. Concrete actions like this will show that digital transformation is not only technical, but also ethical and inclusive.

Student involvement in the learning design and evaluation process can also strengthen a sense of ownership of their learning process. Students who are involved in the development of teaching media, the preparation of project topics, or decision-making regarding the platform used will feel more appreciated and motivated. This also creates a democratic and participatory learning climate.

It is also important to encourage lecturers to not only master technology technically, but also to be able to build strong pedagogical relationships through digital platforms. Humanistic, responsive, and empathetic digital interactions will build trust and closeness between lecturers and students, even if they are not in the same physical space. Effective digital learning is ultimately not only a matter of tools, but also a matter of relationships.

The synergy between strategic institutional support and collective awareness between lecturers and students is the key to the success of digital literacy-based learning innovations. This success does not only lie in the ability to use technology, but also in the ability to create a new learning culture that is adaptive, collaborative, and inclusive.

CONCLUSION

The development of digital literacy-based learning innovations in the second semester of Indonesian Language and Literature courses at the University of Nias is a strategic response to the demands of educational transformation in the era of *Freedom of Learning*. This innovation not only modifies the way material is delivered, but also transforms the pattern of interaction, evaluation, and student involvement in the learning process. Through the integration of digital media, contextual approaches, and project-based pedagogical strategies, learning becomes more adaptive, participatory, and relevant to the needs of students in the archipelago. Despite being faced with infrastructure challenges, digital competence, and academic cultural readiness, the success of the implementation of this innovation is highly determined by the synergy between lecturers, students, and progressive institutional support.

Further research is suggested to develop a more measurable data-based evaluation model to assess the long-term impact of digital literacy innovations on student learning outcomes. In addition, it is necessary to conduct comparative studies in various geographical contexts and study programs to see the effectiveness of similar approaches in the diversity of social and infrastructure conditions. More exploratory research on individual student learning experiences is also important to enrich understanding of how digital literacy shapes ways of thinking, communicating, and creating in higher learning spaces.

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