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Integrating Cultural, Linguistic, Digital, and Psychological Literacies in Curriculum Development A Case Study from Tarakan, North Kalimantan

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the integration of cultural, linguistic, digital, and psychological literacies within curriculum development in Tarakan, North Kalimantan, Indonesia. Using a mixed-methods approach, this research investigates how multiliteracy frameworks can be effectively implemented in educational settings characterized by cultural diversity and rapid technological advancement. Data were collected through surveys, interviews, and classroom observations involving 150 participants including teachers, students, and curriculum developers. Results indicate significant challenges in balancing traditional cultural preservation with digital innovation, while psychological considerations remain underrepresented in

current curricula. The study reveals that successful integration requires teacher professional development, community engagement, and culturally responsive pedagogical approaches. Findings suggest that holistic literacy education enhances student engagement, critical thinking, and cultural identity formation. This research contributes to understanding multiliteracy implementation in indigenous and culturally diverse contexts.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary educational landscape demands a reconceptualization of literacy that extends beyond traditional reading and writing skills to encompass cultural, linguistic, digital, and psychological competencies. As globalization and technological advancement reshape educational paradigms, educators and policymakers face the challenge of developing curricula that prepare students for an increasingly complex and interconnected world (Cope & Kalantzis, 2021) and (Mulyana et al., 2021). This multiliteracy approach recognizes that literacy is not a singular skill but rather a constellation of competencies that enable individuals to navigate diverse contexts, communicate across cultural boundaries, and engage critically with digital environments. The integration of these multiple literacies represents a fundamental shift in educational philosophy, moving from transmission models of education toward transformative pedagogies that emphasize meaning-making, identity construction, and social participation (Rowse & Walsh, 2022).

In the Indonesian context, and particularly in culturally diverse regions such as North Kalimantan, the imperative for multiliteracy education is especially acute. Tarakan, as a urban center in North Kalimantan, exemplifies the complexities of implementing multiliteracy frameworks in settings characterized by linguistic diversity, indigenous cultural practices, and varying levels of technological access (Suryanto & Ismail, 2023). The region's educational institutions serve students from multiple ethnic backgrounds including Tidung, Bulungan, and Dayak communities, each with distinct linguistic traditions and cultural practices that must be honored while simultaneously preparing students for participation in national and global contexts. This dual mandate—preserving cultural heritage while facilitating modern competencies—creates unique pedagogical challenges that require innovative curricular solutions (Ariani et al., 2022).

Cultural literacy, defined as the ability to understand, appreciate, and navigate diverse cultural systems and practices, serves as a foundational component of education in multicultural societies (Muhsyanur, Suharti, et al., 2022). Garcia and Kleifgen (2020) argue that cultural literacy encompasses not only knowledge of cultural artifacts and practices but also the capacity for intercultural dialogue, empathy, and critical reflection on one's own cultural positioning. In Tarakan, where students navigate between indigenous cultural practices and mainstream Indonesian culture, cultural literacy education must address questions of identity, belonging,

and cultural continuity (Widodo, 2023). Furthermore, linguistic literacy in this context cannot be separated from cultural considerations, as language serves as both a vehicle for cultural transmission and a marker of cultural identity. The multilingual reality of North Kalimantan, where students may speak regional languages at home, Bahasa Indonesia in school, and increasingly encounter English in digital spaces, necessitates pedagogical approaches that recognize and leverage this linguistic diversity as an educational asset rather than a deficit (Cummins, 2021).

Digital literacy has emerged as an essential competency in the 21st century, yet its implementation in diverse educational contexts remains uneven and often disconnected from other literacy domains (Muhsyanur, 2025b). Pangrazio and Sefton-Green (2021) conceptualize digital literacy as encompassing technical skills, critical evaluation of digital content, creative production, and ethical digital citizenship. In Tarakan, the digital divide presents significant challenges, with urban schools having better technological infrastructure than rural areas, creating disparities in students' digital literacy development (Pratama & Lestari, 2022). However, digital literacy education offers unique opportunities for cultural preservation and innovation, as students can use digital tools to document indigenous knowledge, create multilingual content, and connect with global communities while maintaining local identities. The challenge lies in developing curricula that integrate digital competencies with cultural and linguistic objectives rather than treating technology as a separate domain (Greenhow et al., 2022).

Psychological literacy (Ibrahim, 2020; Muhsyanur, Suharti, et al., 2022), though less commonly addressed in curriculum discussions, represents a critical dimension of holistic education. McGovern et al. (2020) define psychological literacy as understanding psychological concepts, critical thinking about psychological information, applying psychological knowledge to personal and social issues, and reflecting on one's own psychological processes. In educational contexts characterized by cultural transition and technological disruption, psychological literacy equips students with tools for emotional regulation, stress management, identity development, and social navigation (Taylor & Marin, 2023). For students in Tarakan navigating multiple cultural contexts and rapid social change, psychological literacy provides frameworks for understanding their experiences, making informed decisions, and maintaining mental well-being. Yet current curricula in Indonesia rarely explicitly address psychological competencies, instead assuming these will develop naturally through general education (Susanti et al., 2021).

The integration of cultural, linguistic, digital, and psychological literacies within coherent curriculum frameworks requires systematic approaches grounded in contemporary educational theory and responsive to local contexts (Muhsyanur, 2024; Santalia et al., 2025). Mills et al. (2023) advocate for multiliteracies pedagogy that emphasizes situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice as interconnected elements of learning. This framework acknowledges that literacy development occurs through meaningful engagement with authentic contexts, explicit teaching of metalanguage and concepts, critical

analysis of power relations and representations, and opportunities for creative application and transformation (Kalantzis & Cope, 2020). In Tarakan, such an approach would involve students engaging with local cultural practices, learning explicit frameworks for analyzing cultural and digital texts, critically examining representations of their communities, and creating new cultural and digital products that honor tradition while embracing innovation. This study examines how these theoretical frameworks can be translated into practical curriculum design and implementation in the specific context of North Kalimantan's educational system.

METHOD

This research employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to investigate the integration of multiple literacies in curriculum development in Tarakan, North Kalimantan. Quantitative data were collected through structured surveys administered to 150 participants, including 80 teachers, 50 students, and 20 curriculum developers and administrators from 12 schools across urban and peri-urban areas of Tarakan. The survey instrument assessed perceptions of current literacy instruction, challenges in implementation, and attitudes toward multiliteracy integration. Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 25 key informants, including educational leaders, experienced teachers, and cultural community representatives, as well as classroom observations of literacy instruction across different subject areas. According to Creswell and Creswell (2022), this convergent design allows researchers to obtain complementary data that provides a comprehensive understanding of complex educational phenomena. The integration of quantitative and qualitative strands occurred during data analysis and interpretation, with findings from each strand informing and enriching the other to develop a nuanced understanding of multiliteracy implementation in this specific cultural context (Johnson & Christensen, 2020).

Data analysis followed established procedures for mixed-methods research, with quantitative data analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify patterns and relationships among variables, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis following the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021). Interview transcripts and observation notes were coded inductively to identify emerging themes related to literacy practices, challenges, and opportunities for integration. Trustworthiness was established through triangulation of data sources, member checking with participants, and prolonged engagement with the research context. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and engaging respectfully with indigenous knowledge systems and cultural practices. The research received approval from the institutional ethics committee and was conducted in collaboration with local education authorities and community leaders, following principles of culturally responsive and participatory research (Smith, 2021). This methodological approach enabled a comprehensive examination of how multiple literacies are currently addressed in Tarakan's

educational system and how they might be more effectively integrated in future curriculum development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Cultural Literacy Integration in Current Curriculum

The findings reveal significant gaps between curriculum intentions and classroom practices regarding cultural literacy education in Tarakan. While official curriculum documents acknowledge the importance of cultural education, implementation remains superficial and disconnected from students' lived cultural experiences. Survey data indicated that 73% of teachers reported including cultural content in their lessons, yet observations revealed that such content typically consisted of celebratory approaches to culture—learning traditional dances or crafts—rather than deep engagement with cultural knowledge systems, values, or contemporary cultural issues. This aligns with Banks's (2020) critique of the "contributions approach" to multicultural education, which treats culture as additive elements rather than transformative frameworks for understanding. Teachers expressed uncertainty about how to authentically incorporate indigenous knowledge systems, particularly given their own limited training in local cultural traditions and the predominance of Java-centric national curriculum materials (Muhsyanur et.al, 2024).

Interview participants emphasized the disconnect between school-based literacy and community-based cultural practices. One indigenous community leader noted that students learn about their culture as historical artifacts in school while actively living cultural practices at home and in community contexts, creating a problematic separation between "school knowledge" and "cultural knowledge." This fragmentation undermines cultural literacy development and can contribute to cultural alienation, particularly among adolescent students navigating identity formation. Paris and Alim (2021) argue for culturally sustaining pedagogy that positions cultural practices not as static traditions but as dynamic, evolving resources for meaning-making and community participation. In Tarakan, this would require curriculum approaches that engage students in documenting living cultural practices, interviewing elders, analyzing cultural change, and critically examining power relations that have historically marginalized indigenous knowledge (Muhsyanur, 2023).

The research identified promising practices in several schools where teachers collaborated with community cultural practitioners to develop integrated learning experiences. In one observed lesson, students worked with a local elder to document traditional ecological knowledge about medicinal plants, then researched scientific properties of these plants, created digital presentations, and reflected on connections between indigenous and scientific knowledge systems. This approach exemplifies what Moje et al. (2020) describe as "third space" pedagogy, where school and community knowledge are brought into productive dialogue. Students in such programs demonstrated higher engagement and more sophisticated understanding

of both cultural content and literacy skills, suggesting that authentic cultural integration enhances rather than detracts from academic learning.

However, significant barriers to cultural literacy integration persist. Teachers cited lack of curricular resources, limited professional development, and pressure to cover standardized curriculum content as major obstacles. Additionally, 45% of teachers expressed concern about their own competence to teach cultural content, particularly when teaching about cultures different from their own. Ladson-Billings (2021) emphasizes that culturally responsive teaching requires ongoing learning, humility, and willingness to position students and community members as knowledge holders. The findings suggest that successful cultural literacy integration in Tarakan requires systemic support including curriculum resource development in collaboration with cultural communities, sustained professional learning opportunities, and assessment approaches that value cultural knowledge and competencies alongside standardized academic outcomes (Gay, 2018).

Furthermore, students' perspectives revealed desire for education that honors their cultural identities while preparing them for broader opportunities. One student articulated, "I want to understand my culture deeply, not just perform it for tourists, but also learn skills for university and careers." This sentiment reflects what scholars term "additive approaches" to cultural education—enhancing rather than replacing students' cultural knowledge and identities (Cummins, 2021). The challenge for curriculum development in Tarakan lies in creating educational experiences that genuinely achieve this integration, moving beyond tokenistic cultural inclusion toward curriculum frameworks where cultural literacy is foundational to all learning.

Linguistic and Digital Literacy Convergence

The intersection of linguistic and digital literacy emerged as a critical area of both challenge and opportunity in Tarakan's educational context. Analysis revealed that 68% of students regularly engage with multiple languages in digital spaces—using regional languages with family on messaging apps, Bahasa Indonesia in school-related digital communication, and English in gaming, social media, and entertainment contexts. This multilingual digital practice, termed "translanguaging" by scholars, represents a sophisticated linguistic competency that remains largely unrecognized and underutilized in formal education (García & Li, 2021). Teachers generally viewed students' multilingual digital practices as peripheral to "real" literacy development, missing opportunities to leverage these practices as foundations for academic literacy and critical digital engagement (Muhsyanur, 2025a; Muhsyanur, Larisu, et al., 2022).

Digital literacy instruction in observed classrooms focused predominantly on technical skills—using specific software, typing, basic internet searching—with minimal attention to critical evaluation, creative production, or ethical considerations. This narrow conception of digital literacy fails to prepare students for the complex literacy demands of contemporary digital environments. Pangrazio

and Sefton-Green (2021) argue that critical digital literacy must encompass understanding how digital platforms shape information, recognizing algorithmic bias, evaluating credibility of digital sources, and creating digital content that serves authentic purposes. Only 12% of observed lessons incorporated these critical dimensions, suggesting significant gaps in digital literacy education despite widespread recognition of technology's importance.

Table 1 presents the distribution of linguistic resources across digital platforms used by students in Tarakan, revealing the complex multilingual ecology that characterizes their digital lives:

Table 1. Language Use Across Digital Platforms by Students in Tarakan (N=50)

Platform Type	Indonesian (%)	Regional Languages (%)	English (%)	Mixed Languages (%)
Social Media	45	12	18	25
Messaging Apps	32	38	5	25
Gaming	15	3	62	20
Educational Apps	78	2	15	5
Video Content	28	8	48	16

This data demonstrates that linguistic practice in digital spaces defies simple categorization, with students fluidly moving between and combining languages based on context, purpose, and audience. Significantly, educational apps show the least linguistic diversity, suggesting missed opportunities to leverage students' multilingual competencies for learning. Cummins (2021) emphasizes that multilingual digital practices can serve as powerful resources for developing metalinguistic awareness and academic language proficiency when intentionally incorporated into pedagogy.

The research identified innovative practices where teachers created opportunities for students to use digital tools for multilingual production (Muhsyanur et al., 2021). In one project, students created digital stories that incorporated traditional narratives told in regional languages with subtitles in Indonesian and English, accompanied by student-produced illustrations and music. This project required linguistic translation, cultural interpretation, digital production skills, and collaborative work—integrating multiple literacies in authentic ways. Students reported that such projects made language learning more meaningful and helped them see connections between their home language practices and school literacy development (Cope & Kalantzis, 2021). These experiences also positioned regional languages as valuable resources rather than obstacles to learning, contributing to positive linguistic identity development.

Nevertheless, significant inequities in digital access create barriers to equitable digital literacy development. While 82% of students reported having smartphone access, only 34% had regular access to computers, and internet connectivity remained unreliable, particularly in students' homes. These material constraints shape the kinds of digital literacy that can be developed and privilege certain students over others. Teachers working in under-resourced contexts expressed frustration that digital literacy curriculum expectations assumed technological access that many students lacked. Greenhow et al. (2022) argue that digital equity requires not only ensuring access to devices and connectivity but also developing pedagogies that leverage whatever technologies are available while critically examining how digital divides perpetuate educational inequalities. In Tarakan, addressing these inequities requires policy interventions, infrastructure development, and pedagogical approaches that work within existing constraints while advocating for improved access.

Psychological Literacy in Curriculum: The Missing Dimension

Psychological literacy emerged as the most neglected dimension of multiliteracy education in current curriculum implementation, despite its critical importance for student well-being and success. Survey results indicated that 89% of teachers had never received professional development on psychological literacy, and 76% were unfamiliar with the concept itself, though many recognized teaching aspects of psychological competence under different labels such as "character education" or "social-emotional learning." This lack of conceptual clarity about psychological literacy resulted in fragmented, inconsistent approaches that failed to develop students' systematic understanding of psychological concepts or their ability to apply psychological knowledge to their own lives. McGovern et al. (2020) argue that psychological literacy should be an explicit educational goal, encompassing knowledge of psychological concepts, critical thinking about psychological claims, application to personal and social issues, and ethical considerations (Muhsyanur, Manivannan Murugesan, 2024; Muhsyanur, 2024).

Interview data revealed that students face significant psychological challenges related to cultural identity negotiation, academic pressure, family expectations, and social media influences, yet have limited frameworks for understanding or addressing these challenges. One teacher noted, "Students struggle with stress, anxiety about their futures, conflicts between traditional and modern values, but we don't have curriculum or training to help them develop psychological understanding and coping skills." This gap is particularly problematic given research demonstrating that psychological literacy contributes to better mental health outcomes, more effective decision-making, and enhanced resilience (Taylor & Marin, 2023). In culturally transitional contexts like Tarakan, where students navigate multiple, sometimes contradictory, cultural frameworks, psychological literacy provides tools for metacognitive awareness and intentional identity development.

The few instances where psychological concepts appeared in curriculum occurred primarily in health education and counseling contexts rather than being integrated across subjects. This siloed approach limits opportunities for students to develop deep psychological literacy, as concepts remain disconnected from students' broader learning experiences. Luttrell et al. (2021) advocate for embedding psychological literacy across the curriculum, showing students how psychological concepts inform understanding of historical events, literary characters, scientific inquiry, and mathematical problem-solving. In Tarakan, such integration could also connect psychological concepts with cultural frameworks for understanding human experience, creating bridges between indigenous psychological knowledge and contemporary psychological science.

Teachers who attempted to address psychological literacy reported using informal approaches, such as class discussions about emotions, stress management conversations, or addressing conflicts through restorative practices. While valuable, these informal approaches lack the systematic development of psychological concepts and critical thinking that characterizes psychological literacy. Participants expressed desire for structured curriculum resources and professional learning to develop their own psychological literacy and pedagogical approaches. This finding aligns with research indicating that teacher psychological literacy predicts more effective support for student well-being and more sophisticated approaches to classroom management and relationship-building (Cranney & Morris, 2021). Developing psychological literacy in Tarakan's educational system requires both student-facing curriculum and comprehensive teacher education.

Significantly, cultural considerations must inform how psychological literacy is conceptualized and taught in diverse contexts. Several interview participants noted that Western psychological concepts sometimes conflict with indigenous understandings of selfhood, emotion, and mental health. For example, emphasis on individual autonomy in many psychological frameworks may not align with collectivist cultural values prominent in some communities in Tarakan. Kitayama and Uskul (2021) argue for culturally informed psychological science that recognizes diverse cultural psychologies while maintaining scientific rigor. In curriculum development, this suggests the need for approaches that explore psychological concepts through multiple cultural lenses, examine cultural variation in psychological experience, and validate diverse cultural frameworks for well-being while also providing access to psychological knowledge that can serve students in varied contexts.

Integration Challenges and Future Directions for Multiliteracy Curriculum

The overarching challenge identified in this research is the fragmentation of literacy education, with cultural, linguistic, digital, and psychological literacies addressed (if at all) in isolation rather than as integrated, mutually reinforcing competencies. This fragmentation reflects broader curricular structures that divide knowledge into discrete subjects and literacy into technical skills, undermining the

holistic understanding that multiliteracy frameworks advocate. Mills et al. (2023) emphasize that authentic literacy practice always involves simultaneous engagement with multiple modes of meaning-making—linguistic, visual, spatial, gestural—and occurs within cultural contexts that shape what counts as literate practice. Yet school curricula persistently separate these dimensions, asking students to develop cultural knowledge in social studies, language skills in language arts, digital competencies in technology classes, with psychological concepts rarely addressed systematically at all (Muhsyanur, 2024).

Structural barriers to integration include rigid subject boundaries, standardized testing that assesses narrow skill sets, and teacher preparation programs that train educators as subject specialists rather than multiliteracy facilitators. Teachers expressed frustration with curriculum expectations that acknowledge the importance of multiple literacies in policy documents but provide insufficient time, resources, or flexibility for meaningful integration. As one teacher noted, "The curriculum says we should develop 21st-century skills, cultural appreciation, digital literacy, but then gives us detailed content to cover in every subject with high-stakes testing on traditional academic content. Something has to give." This tension between innovative literacy goals and conservative assessment practices creates what scholars term the "implementation gap"—the disconnect between curriculum intentions and enacted practice (Priestley et al., 2021).

Despite these challenges, the research identified promising models for integration that offer pathways forward. Project-based learning emerged as a particularly effective pedagogical approach for multiliteracy integration, creating authentic contexts where students engage cultural content, employ multiple languages, use digital tools, and navigate psychological and social challenges simultaneously. In one observed project, students investigated environmental changes in their community, interviewing elders about traditional ecological knowledge (cultural and linguistic literacy), researching scientific literature (academic literacy), creating digital documentaries (digital literacy), and reflecting on their emotional responses and ethical responsibilities (psychological literacy). Such integrated experiences align with Kalantzis and Cope's (2020) multiliteracies framework, providing opportunities for situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice across multiple literacy domains.

Successful integration also requires reconceptualizing teacher roles and professional development. Rather than expecting individual teachers to master all literacy domains, effective models involved collaborative teaching teams with diverse expertise working together to design and implement integrated learning experiences. Professional learning communities where teachers engaged in ongoing inquiry into multiliteracy pedagogy proved more effective than one-time workshops in supporting sustained practice change (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022). Furthermore, partnerships with community members—cultural practitioners, indigenous knowledge keepers, parents—enriched multiliteracy education by bringing authentic expertise and community perspectives into curriculum

development. These findings underscore that multiliteracy integration is not merely a technical curriculum challenge but requires organizational restructuring, relationship-building, and shifts in educational culture.

Technology offers tools for integration when used strategically. Digital platforms enabled students to create multimodal texts that integrated linguistic, visual, and audio elements; connect with cultural communities beyond their immediate context; access diverse information sources; and reflect on their learning processes. However, technology can also fragment learning if used simply to deliver traditional content through digital means. The key distinction lies in whether technology enables new forms of meaning-making and social participation or merely digitizes existing practices (Rowse & Walsh, 2022). In Tarakan, effective technology integration occurred when digital tools served authentic communicative and creative purposes connected to students' cultural contexts and identities, rather than functioning as ends in themselves.

Looking forward, successful multiliteracy curriculum development in Tarakan and similar contexts requires several key elements: (1) curriculum frameworks that explicitly position multiple literacies as interconnected and central to all learning, not as add-ons to traditional content; (2) assessment approaches that value diverse literacy competencies and authentic performance, not only standardized measures of narrow skills; (3) comprehensive, sustained professional development that develops teachers' own multiliteracy competencies and pedagogical expertise; (4) partnerships with cultural communities that position indigenous knowledge and practices as valuable curriculum resources; (5) equitable technology access and critical digital literacy education that addresses digital divides; and (6) attention to psychological literacy as essential foundation for student well-being and learning. These elements must be pursued simultaneously and systemically to achieve the transformative potential of multiliteracy education (Cope & Kalantzis, 2021). The findings from Tarakan demonstrate both the challenges and possibilities of this educational transformation in culturally diverse, digitally emerging contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that while multiliteracy education—integrating cultural, linguistic, digital, and psychological literacies—holds significant promise for preparing students in Tarakan, North Kalimantan, for contemporary challenges, current implementation remains fragmented and inadequate. Successful integration requires moving beyond surface-level cultural inclusion and technical digital skills toward transformative pedagogies that honor indigenous knowledge systems, leverage multilingual competencies, develop critical digital citizenship, and foster psychological literacy for well-being and metacognitive development. The research identifies systemic barriers including rigid curricular structures, inadequate teacher preparation, inequitable resource distribution, and assessment systems misaligned with multiliteracy goals, alongside promising practices such as project-based learning, collaborative teaching, and community partnerships. Recommendations

emphasize the need for coherent curriculum frameworks that position multiple literacies as foundational and interconnected, comprehensive professional development, culturally responsive pedagogies developed in partnership with indigenous communities, equitable technology access, and explicit attention to psychological literacy as essential for student success and well-being in culturally complex, rapidly changing contexts.

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