Development of Teaching Materials for Popular Scientific Articles Using Contextual Approach for Grade VIII Students

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Abstract: This study aims to develop a popular scientific article teaching book based on a contextual approach for eighth-grade students. The research method used is Research and Development (R&D) with the 4D model, limited to the development stage. The research subjects involve teachers and eighth-grade students from MTs Negeri 1 Kota Magelang, with feasibility assessments conducted by two subject matter experts and two media experts. Data analysis used quantitative descriptive techniques through the calculation of the average expert validation score, supported by qualitative analysis of improvement suggestions. The results show that the developed textbook received a 'highly suitable' category, with scores of 95.3% from subject matter experts and 96.6% from media experts, resulting in an overall average of 95.9%. Therefore, the textbook is deemed highly suitable for use as a learning support tool for popular scientific article texts in junior high schools/MTs.

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Introduction

Writing is one of the basic competencies in Indonesian language learning that plays an important role in improving students' critical thinking and expression skills (Mahardika & Silalahi, 2025). However, in reality, students' interest and writing skills in Indonesia are still relatively low. According to the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey conducted in 2022 and released by the OECD, Indonesia's reading literacy score ranked 69th out of 80 countries, indicating a low overall literacy level, including writing skills (OECD, 2023).
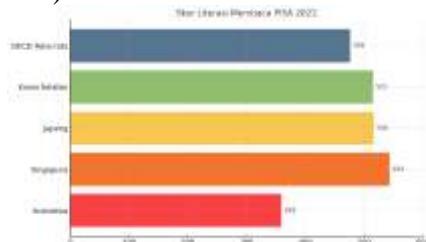

Figure 1. PISA Literacy Scores for 2022
Source: OECD (2023)

In popular scientific writing, students often find it difficult to combine factual scientific elements with communicative and interesting popular presentation of material (Wulan et al., 2024). As a result, students not only face challenges in terms of language, but also in understanding the structure and style of non-fiction writing, making it necessary to develop instructional materials that can bridge this gap (Susanti et al., 2025).

Teaching materials used in the learning process should ideally be aligned with students' needs, interests, and life contexts so that learning becomes more meaningful (Sitompul et al., 2024). However, many teaching materials in schools are still general in nature and less relevant to the real situations faced by students (Holis & Silvia, 2024). According to Rasita's research (2021), it was found that most of the teaching materials in circulation are not fully contextual and do not sufficiently encourage students' active engagement in learning. This poses a challenge in developing students' critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills, which are actually the focus of the Merdeka Curriculum (Khalimah et al., 2022). One subject that requires teaching materials is popular scientific articles (Nurjamilah & Suharyan, 2023).

Popular scientific articles are one of the materials in Grade VIII in Indonesian language textbooks in the Kurikulum Merdeka that are related to writing instruction because they bridge the gap between academic scientific language and a more communicative and easily understandable style for the general public (Nurhasanah, 2022). This type of text is highly suitable as teaching material, especially at the junior high school level, as it not only helps students develop the ability to write logically and systematically but also enhances their skills in presenting information in an engaging and non-rigid manner (Adisty, 2024).

Through practising writing popular scientific articles, students are encouraged to think critically about information, organise it into a coherent structure, and convey it in language that is familiar to everyday life (Lumban Gaol, 2025). Such learning aligns with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasises the development of functional literacy and effective communication (Lahagu et al., 2025). In other words, popular scientific articles not only strengthen language skills but also foster reflective, creative, and socially engaged students who can interact with a broader environment.

Based on initial observations at MTs Negeri 1 Kota Magelang, teaching popular scientific articles still faces various obstacles. The textbooks provided by the government as the main learning resource tend to present examples of popular scientific articles that are general in nature and lack relevance to themes that are closely related to students' lives (Sukmawati, 2025). As a result, students often struggle to understand the learning material and connect it to their daily experiences. According to Prastica et al. (2025), non-contextual learning can reduce students' interest and motivation to learn because the material feels foreign and lacks meaning for them. Therefore, the implementation of contextual learning is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process (Yumarni et al., 2025). By linking learning materials to real-life situations experienced by students, the aim is to create more meaningful learning, improve conceptual understanding, and foster sustained interest and motivation in learning.

To overcome these problems, it is necessary to develop teaching materials that are more contextual and relevant to students' lives. Teaching materials in the form of popular scientific articles that address themes such as education, technology, local culture, health, and other topics close to students' experiences can serve as a solution to enhance students' engagement and understanding of the learning material. The use of examples of articles related to the environment, culture, or phenomena familiar to students will facilitate their understanding of the structure, characteristics, and writing style of popular scientific articles.

Yani and Zuve (2024) investigated the effect of the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model on the scientific writing skills of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Banuhampu using a quasi-experimental design. The results showed that the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model had a significant effect on improving the scientific writing skills of class VIII

students at SMP Negeri 1 Banuhampu compared to direct learning. Nuranjeli and Anwar (2025) studied spelling errors in scientific articles in pop-up books created by eighth-grade students at SMP Giki 2 Surabaya. The results of the study show that there are 145 spelling errors in popular scientific articles written by eighth-grade students at SMP Giki 2 Surabaya, with the most errors in the use of capital letters and punctuation marks, and the fewest in the writing of loanwords.

Karimah & Azizah (2025) investigated the application of the Jigsaw cooperative model in teaching popular scientific articles to eighth-grade students. The results showed that the Jigsaw cooperative model was effective in improving student learning outcomes in popular scientific article texts in Grade VIII at Al-Fateeh Islamic Junior High School in Semarang. Salsabila et al. (2025) investigated the implementation of the recitation method on the writing skills of popular scientific articles in Grade VIII. The results showed that the recitation method was effective in improving the scientific writing skills of class VIII students at MTs Darussalam Pasuruan by encouraging independent learning. Sutikno (2024) investigated the analysis of language errors in popular scientific articles written by Grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 1 Kebakkramat. The results of the study indicate that language errors in the popular scientific articles written by class VIII students at SMP 1 Kebakkramat cover aspects of phonology, morphology and syntax, caused by limitations in understanding and writing practice.

There is a research gap, in that studies are still limited to learning strategies and student skill analysis, while the systematic and structured development of teaching materials has not been widely implemented. This gap forms the basis of this study's objective, which is to develop teaching materials for popular scientific articles based on a contextual approach for year VIII secondary school students. The novelty of this research lies in the development of teaching materials in the form of popular scientific articles based on a contextual approach designed for eighth-grade junior high school students, with the output being a textbook validated by experts. It is hoped that this will bring about innovation in teaching materials that are relevant to the context of students' lives and strengthen scientific literacy in Indonesian language learning.

Research Method

This study used a research and development (R&D) approach by applying the 4D model developed by Thiagarajan, Semmel, and Semmel (1974). The 4D model theory consists of four main stages, namely Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate. The Define stage is the initial step to identify and analyse learning needs, including curriculum analysis, student characteristics, and issues encountered in learning popular scientific articles. The Design stage involved designing the concept and structure of teaching materials based on a contextual approach to be developed. Next, the Develop stage focused on the process of creating and refining teaching materials through expert validation and limited trials. Finally, the Disseminate stage is the stage of disseminating the developed products.
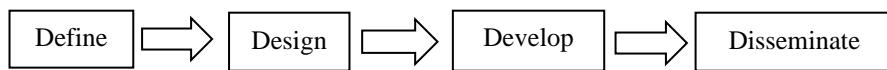
Figure 2. 4D Research Stages

This study was limited to the expert validation stage because it referred to the views of Borg & Gall (1983) and Sugiyono (2017), who stated that the Research and Development (R&D) stages could be adjusted to the objectives, time, and resources of the study. At this stage, the research focus is directed towards obtaining a theoretical assessment of product

feasibility through expert input before conducting field trials. This limitation is also intended to ensure that the developed teaching materials meet the criteria for content, language, and presentation feasibility so that they are suitable for use in further research.

The researchers used Indonesian language students and teachers at MTs Negeri 1 Kota Magelang in grades VIII A and VIII B as research subjects with structured interview guidelines, needs analysis questionnaires, and expert validation sheets (Mukholifah et al., 2020) as instruments. The researchers collected data through observation, in-depth interviews, and the distribution of validation questionnaires using a Likert scale checklist system, then analyzed them qualitatively for needs analysis and quantitatively for product validation (Waruwu, 2024). The researcher applied a 4-point Likert scale with values ranging from 1 to 4, from 'Not Suitable' to 'Very Suitable,' to enable statistical analysis of the data (Saputri, 2023).

The validation calculation formula used by subject matter experts and media experts employs a rating scale which is then converted into a percentage to determine the level of suitability of teaching materials developed using quantitative descriptive techniques.

$$V = \frac{TSe}{TSh} \times 100\%$$

Explanation:
V = Validation Percentage
Tse = Total empirical score obtained
Tsh = Total maximum expected

The results of the analysis were then grouped based on predetermined percentage ranges, as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Percentage of Teaching Material Assessment

Percentage Range	Criteria	Description
75% - 100%	Very Suitable	The product can be used without revision.
50% - 75%	Quite Suitable	The product can be used with minor improvements.
25% - 50%	Less Suitable	The product needs significant improvement.
0% - 25%	Very Unsuitable	The product cannot be used/needs to be remade.

(Sugiyono, 2017)

Results and Discussion

Based on the selected research and development method, the researchers used the 4D (Four-D Model) development model, which consists of the define, design, develop, and disseminate stages. However, in this study, it was limited to the development stage to focus on product validation and feasibility. The details of the research that has been implemented are as follows.

The first step was to define the initial needs of teachers and students. Based on the results of a questionnaire analysis of the needs of 43 eighth-grade students at MTs Negeri 1 Kota Magelang, it was found that most students were unfamiliar with the term popular scientific article. Many students stated that they had never heard of the term, while only a few admitted to having heard of it. This indicates that the concept of popular scientific articles is

still relatively new to most students (Simon et al., 2016). Additionally, nearly all students expressed the need for teaching materials that are easy to understand, engaging, and relevant to their daily experiences. Students also desire teaching materials accompanied by concrete examples and practical exercises to make the learning process feel more real and less boring.

In addition to the student questionnaire, the researchers also conducted interviews with two Indonesian language teachers who teach eighth grade. From the interview results, both teachers said that so far there haven't been any teaching materials that specifically discuss popular scientific articles in a contextual way. Teachers feel that the teaching materials used are still general in nature and not fully relevant to the needs and backgrounds of students. Both teachers strongly support the development of teaching materials based on a contextual approach, so that students can more easily understand the material and relate it to real life. Teachers also emphasise the importance of teaching materials that align with the curriculum and the characteristics of today's students, who tend to be more interested in interactive and meaningful learning.

Figure 2. Teacher Interview and Student Questionnaire

The design stage is the second step in the 4D development model, which aims to design teaching materials based on the results of the needs analysis in the define stage (Irawan et al., 2018). In this study, the design phase was conducted to develop a textbook for popular scientific articles using a contextual approach tailored to the characteristics of eighth-grade junior high school students. The design process utilised two primary applications: Canva for creating visually appealing designs and Microsoft Word 2010 for structuring and organising the instructional materials. This textbook design was developed by considering the five components of the contextual approach: relating (connecting with students' experiences), experiencing (learning through exploration), applying (applying knowledge), cooperating (working together), and transferring (using knowledge in new situations) (Holtzblatt & Beyer, 2016).

The structure and content of the teaching materials are designed in a systematic format that is easy for students to understand. At the beginning of the book, learning outcomes (CP), learning objectives (TP), and the Pancasila Student Profile (Widari et al., 2025) are presented. Each chapter in the textbook begins with an opening activity such as learning objectives, prompting questions, followed by an explanation of concepts through examples of popular scientific articles, and ends with application exercises and reflection. The visual aspects of the book cover are designed using Canva, selecting colours, fonts, and images appropriate for middle school students while still supporting learning. Special templates are created for each type of activity, such as word exploration to identify difficult-to-understand words, tables to explain the structure of article texts, and tables to analyse the characteristics of popular scientific article language. All visual elements are designed consistently to make it easy for students to understand and follow the learning process.

The third stage is the development stage, which involves product development and validation by experts. The opening section of the book is systematically designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the product being developed, starting with an attractive cover that reflects the identity and main theme of the material (Rahmawati & Purwati, 2025). Following the cover, an introduction is included, containing a greeting and a brief explanation of the background of the book's development, followed by a table of contents to help readers navigate the entire book. The next section contains Learning Outcomes (LO), which explain the competencies that students are expected to achieve after studying the material in this book. Learning objectives are then outlined in more detail to provide clear direction in the learning process, and the book concludes with an explanation of the Pancasila Student Profile, which represents the character and values that aim to be nurtured and developed through learning using this book (Octavia & Tirtoni, 2024).

Figure 3. Initial View of the Book

The book consists of six chapters that are systematically arranged to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of popular scientific articles (Gusfitri & Delfia, 2021). The first chapter discusses the definition of popular scientific articles, providing a conceptual basis for the characteristics and functions of this type of article in the context of scientific communication. The second chapter reviews the characteristics of popular scientific articles, helping students understand the elements that distinguish popular scientific articles from other types of writing. The third chapter focuses on identifying facts and opinions, which are important skills in analysing and evaluating the content of popular scientific articles. The fourth chapter discusses how to collect data when writing popular scientific articles, providing practical guidance on research methods and gathering reliable information. The fifth chapter examines the writing of popular scientific articles, covering writing techniques, structure, and appropriate language style. The final chapter, Chapter 6, introduces types of comparative sentences, analogies, synonyms, and antonyms in popular scientific articles, aiming to develop students' ability to understand and use effective language variations in writing popular scientific articles.

The final layout of the book includes several important components that provide supporting information and references for readers (Marshall, 2009). This section began with a bibliography listing all the reference sources used in the compilation of the book, providing credibility and facilitating students in conducting further research on the material presented (Nasifa & Insani, 2025). Next was a glossary containing a collection of important terms and their definitions to help readers understand the specialised terminology used in popular scientific articles (Prajabka et al., 2025). The final section included the author's biography, providing information about the author's background, qualifications, and experience in the field relevant to the book's content. Finally, a synopsis was provided that summarises the

entire content of the book concisely, offering an overview of the material covered and the benefits readers can gain from studying this book.

Figure 4. Book Contents

After that, the product that had been created was then validated to ensure its feasibility and quality before implementation (Astuti et al., 2024). Validation would be carried out by two experts who had different but complementary expertise in assessing the product. The first expert is a material expert who will be tasked with evaluating content aspects, information accuracy, and suitability for learning objectives. The second expert is a media expert who will focus on technical aspects, design, and ease of use of the product. Both validators would provide objective assessments of the developed product (Kusmayati & Parai, 2025). In addition to providing assessments, they would also offer constructive comments and suggestions for product improvement. The input from these two experts will serve as the basis for revising and refining the product before proceeding to the next stage.

Table 2. Material Expert Assessment

Assessment Aspect	Assessment Results	Description
Content Suitability	92,5%	Very Suitable
Language	100%	Very Suitable
Suitability with Contextual Approach	90%	Very Suitable
Material Integration	95,8%	Very Suitable
Popular Science	100%	Very Suitable
Average	95,3%	Very Suitable

The validation results from subject matter experts showed very positive assessments of the developed product, with high scores in all assessment aspects. Subject matter experts gave a score of 92.5% for content suitability, which includes the suitability of the material with the basic competencies and learning indicators that have been set. In terms of language, the product received a perfect score of 100%, indicating that the language used in the product is appropriate, clear, and aligned with students' comprehension levels. Meanwhile, the aspect of alignment with the contextual approach received a score of 90%, indicating that the material in the product is well-connected to students' real-life contexts.

The assessment of material integration scored 95.8%, indicating that the integration of content in the product has been systematically organised and mutually supportive to achieve learning objectives. The scientific aspect also scored a maximum of 100%, indicating that the material is presented with a scientific approach but remains easy to understand and interesting for students. Based on the evaluation results of the five aspects, an average score of 95.3% was obtained, indicating a very high level of product suitability from the perspective of subject matter experts. This validation result confirms that the developed

product meets quality standards in terms of content and can proceed to the next stage in the development process.

Table 3. Media Expert Assessment

Assessment Aspect	Assessment Results	Description
Legal and Moral Suitability	100%	Very Suitable
Presentation Suitability	100%	Very Suitable
Design and Graphic Suitability	93,8%	Very Suitable
Layout Suitability	100%	Very Suitable
Readability and Typography Suitability	95%	Very Suitable
Media Suitability	96,4%	Very Suitable
Average	96,5%	Very Suitable

The validation results from media experts showed very satisfactory assessments with high scores in all aspects evaluated. In terms of legal and moral feasibility, the product received a perfect score of 100%, indicating that the media content does not violate copyright and complies with applicable norms. The presentation aspect also achieved a maximum score of 100%, indicating that the information in the media was presented systematically, logically, and is easy for users to understand. Meanwhile, the design and graphics aspect scored 93.8%, indicating that the visual elements in the product are attractive and effectively support the delivery of the content.

The assessment of layout feasibility showed a perfect score of 100%, confirming that the elements in the media were neatly arranged and proportionate. Readability and typography feasibility scored 95%, indicating that the font type, size, and text arrangement were appropriate and made it easy for readers to understand the information. The suitability of the product for the chosen medium received a score of 96.4%, indicating that the product aligns with the characteristics of the selected medium and can function optimally according to its development objectives. The average score from media experts was 96.6%. This expert validation confirms that, from a technical and design perspective, the developed product meets the necessary quality standards for further implementation.

Table 4. Accumulation of Assessments from Material Experts and Media Experts

Assessment Aspect	Assessment Results	Description
Material Expert	95,3%	Very Suitable
Media Expert	96,6%	Very Suitable
Average	95,9%	Very Suitable

Based on the accumulated assessments from both validators, the results were very satisfactory with a high level of product feasibility. The subject matter expert gave an overall assessment of 95.3%, indicating that in terms of content and material, the product has met the expected quality standards. Meanwhile, the media expert gave a rating of 96.6%, indicating that the technical aspects, design, and media in the product are already very good and align with the established criteria. The average rating from both experts reached 95.9%, indicating that the developed product falls into the highly feasible category and can be implemented for the next phase. These validation results provide a strong foundation for continuing the product development process with high confidence in its quality and feasibility.

Conceptually, this study contributes to enriching the study of teaching material development based on a contextual approach, particularly in popular scientific articles, which are rarely studied in secondary school education. Practically, the teaching materials developed have the potential to make it easier for teachers to provide learning resources that suit students' needs and help class VIII students understand the material in a more contextual, interesting and relevant way to their daily lives.

Conclusion

Based on the results, it can be concluded that teaching materials in the form of popular scientific articles based on a contextual approach for eighth-grade junior high school students have been successfully developed. The product obtained very high validation from subject matter experts with a score of 95.3% and media experts with a score of 96.6%, resulting in an average validity of 95.9%, indicating that the teaching materials are highly suitable for implementation. The developed teaching materials have met learning needs by presenting six comprehensive chapters of material, ranging from an introduction to popular scientific articles to the use of language variations, all of which are integrated with a contextual approach to connect learning with students' real lives. The results of this study proved that the development of teaching materials using a contextual approach is effective in providing relevant, engaging, and appropriate learning resources for eighth-grade junior high school students, thereby supporting the optimal achievement of learning objectives for popular scientific articles.

Recommendation

Based on the results of the study, teachers are advised to utilise teaching materials in the form of popular scientific articles based on a contextual approach as a learning resource that can increase student engagement in understanding the material in a more tangible and relevant way. Teachers can make adjustments according to student characteristics. Meanwhile, for future researchers, it is recommended to continue the implementation trial phase in a wider range of classrooms to measure the effectiveness of the teaching materials, as well as to adapt similar developments to other levels or types of texts to expand the contribution of this research.

Acknowledgment

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