



A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF CHARACTER EDUCATION IN INDONESIAN LANGUAGE LEARNING AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article history: Received: 2026-05-01 Revised: 2026-05-02 Accepted: 2026-05-02</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Character Education, Elementary School, Indonesian Language Subject</i></p> <p>This is an open-access article under the CC BY-SA license. Copyright © 2026 by Author. Published by Yayasan Mujtahidin Sajimah Selong (Musa Foundation), Indonesia.</p>	<p>This study aims to further explore character education in Indonesian language learning among elementary school students through a literature review approach. The findings indicate that character education is implemented through active learning strategies in Indonesian language subjects, such as communicative approaches, restitution, and the use of media that highlight local cultural richness, among others. These results show that Indonesian language learning is not only a medium for literacy development but can also be utilized as a strategy to foster students' character development holistically. The implication of this study is that teachers can optimize various learning strategies, contextual media, and literacy-based approaches to enhance the role of Indonesian language learning in strengthening character education at the elementary school level.</p>

INTRODUCTION

Character education at the elementary school level constitutes a crucial foundation for shaping national identity and the quality of future human resources. Ideally, basic education is not only responsible for transferring academic knowledge but also for cultivating religious, nationalist, independent, cooperative (gotong royong), and integrity-based values in line with the government's Character Education Strengthening (PPK) initiative. The integration of these values is expected to produce a generation capable of facing global challenges with strong moral principles.

In the curricular context, Indonesian language learning plays a strategic role as a vehicle for knowledge acquisition as well as a medium for the internalization of cultural and character values. Through language competencies, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, students are essentially encouraged to develop empathy, politeness, and critical thinking through various literary and non-literary texts. Thus, Indonesian is positioned

not merely as a subject, but as an instrument for shaping students' character at the elementary level (Primayana, 2022).

However, the reality in schools reveals a significant gap. Issues such as moral degradation, bullying, and low levels of politeness in communication are still frequently found in elementary school environments. Many Indonesian language teaching practices remain focused solely on cognitive achievements, such as memorizing text structures or grammar, without addressing the underlying character values embedded in the materials (Janah et al, 2023). As a result, the moral messages in reading texts often remain theoretical and are not translated into students' daily behavior.

This challenge is further compounded by the shift in literacy culture in the digital era, where students are increasingly exposed to instant content that may not align with the nation's core values. Recent studies indicate that without appropriate integration strategies, language learning risks losing its relevance in safeguarding students' moral development from the negative influences of social media (Arifin et al, 2023). Therefore, a comprehensive examination is needed to understand how language teaching methodologies and media can be optimized to effectively integrate character education.

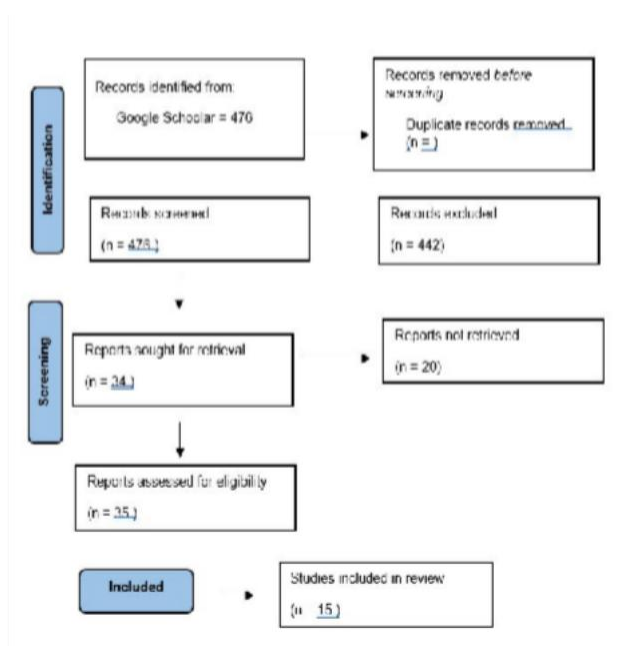
Various studies have attempted to offer solutions through the use of folklore-based media, local wisdom-based modules, and role-playing methods in language learning. However, the existing literature remains fragmented and has yet to provide a comprehensive overview of trends and the long-term effectiveness of these approaches (Ibid). This indicates an urgent need for a systematic mapping of best practices conducted by researchers and educational practitioners.

Based on the gap between curricular expectations and classroom realities, this article aims to conduct a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on character education in Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level. Through a systematic analysis of studies published over the past five years, this research seeks to formulate a new synthesis of the most effective instructional strategies and to identify future research directions in strengthening students' character through literacy (Farida & Sandra, 2023).⁵

METHOD

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. According to Syahputra (2022), SLR is a research method that systematically identifies, evaluates, and interprets all relevant findings on a particular research topic in order to answer specific research questions. This method is used to synthesize scientific evidence regarding the integration of character education in Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level over the past five years (2021–2025). The use of the SLR method is intended to ensure that the process of identifying and selecting articles is conducted in a transparent and structured manner, thereby producing a robust synthesis of findings. The article selection process was carried out rigorously following the PRISMA Flowchart guidelines as developed by Page et al. PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic

Reviews and Meta-Analyses) is an evidence-based reporting framework designed to enhance transparency and comprehensiveness in reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses.⁶ The process began with the identification of the total number of articles retrieved from each database, followed by a screening stage to remove duplicates and irrelevant articles based on their titles and abstracts (Ringo, 2023). Subsequently, during the eligibility stage, the remaining articles were examined in full text to ensure that they explicitly met the inclusion criteria (Puspitaningtyas et al, 2025).



Gambar 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

The primary data were obtained through the Google Scholar search engine as the main database, supported by the Publish or Perish (PoP) tool to ensure broad and high-quality literature coverage. The search was conducted using specific keywords: (“Pendidikan Karakter” OR “Character Education”) AND “Bahasa Indonesia” AND (“Sekolah Dasar” OR “Elementary School”). The collected data were then analyzed qualitatively to synthesize empirical findings and to identify research gaps, with the aim of providing recommendations for future research.⁹

Table 1. Inclusion dan Exclusion Criteria

No	Aspect	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
1	Research Topic	Articles discussing character education within Indonesian language learning.	Does not address character education or is unrelated to language learning.
2	Outcome Variables	Examines implementation, strategies, moral values, or the impact of character on students.	Focuses solely on linguistic aspects (syntax, phonology) without any connection to character.



3	Research Subjects	Elementary school students (SD/MI level).	Subjects are not elementary level (early childhood, junior high, senior high, or university students).
4	Type of Publication	Scientific journal articles and national/international conference proceedings.	Books, undergraduate theses, dissertations, opinions, or non-peer-reviewed articles.
5	Type of Study	Empirical studies (qualitative, quantitative, RSD, or mixed-methods).	Popular articles or other literature reviews (SLR).
6	Text Availability	Full-text articles available openly (Open Access) on Google Scholar.	Only abstracts available or full text inaccessible.
7	Language	Indonesian or English.	Languages other than Indonesian and English.
8	Publication Year	Published within the last 5 years (2021–2025).	Published before 2021.

This study was conducted over a period of two months, encompassing stages such as literature collection through Google Scholar, screening using PRISMA criteria, evaluation of article quality, and the synthesis of data leading to the final report writing. The object of this study consists of empirical research findings relevant to the topic under investigation. The data include scientific journal articles and conference proceedings that specifically examine practical implementations of Character Education Strengthening in Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level.

The data collection technique was carried out through systematic documentation of secondary data using the Publish or Perish software. The search was focused on the Google Scholar database to obtain widely indexed scientific articles. The data collection instrument was based on the PRISMA protocol, which ensures that the identification process is conducted sequentially, starting from duplicate checking to full-text analysis, in order to produce accurate and relevant research recommendations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 2. Extraction of Included Data

No	Article Title	Year	Method	Conclusion
1	Building Elementary School Students' Character in Indonesian Language Learning through Digital Literacy	2025	Qualitative Descriptive	Digital media can be utilized by teachers as an effective tool to instill character values in a contextual and engaging manner.



2	Development of Illustrated Stories Based on Character Education for Indonesian Language Learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah	2024	RSD	Illustrated story media are effective in fostering honesty and empathy.
3	Instilling Character Education in Elementary School Students through Storytelling Methods	2023	Qualitative Descriptive	Students are able to transform stories into illustrated posters.
4	Implementation of a Communicative Approach in Indonesian Language Learning to Enhance Students' Character Education	2024	Classroom Action Research (CAR)	The communicative approach improves cooperation and politeness.
5	Character Education of Fourth-Grade Students	2022	Qualitative Descriptive	Shows that 18 character values are embedded in



No	Article Title	Year	Method	Conclusion
	through Indonesian Language Learning at SDN 19 Meulaboh			fourth-grade Indonesian language learning.
6	Implementation of Storytelling in Indonesian Language Subjects for Instilling Character in Elementary School Students	2022	Classroom Action Research (CAR)	Storytelling is effective in instilling students' moral values.
7	Instructional Materials for Narrative Text Based on Character Education in Indonesian Language Subjects	2025	RSD	Narrative teaching materials enhance honesty and responsibility.
8	Building Students' Character through Reading and Writing Activities in Indonesian Language Learning	2025	Qualitative	Reading and writing activities not only strengthen literacy skills but also instill values such as good morals, critical thinking, creativity, and responsibility.
9	Implementation of Character Education Based on Children's Literature in Indonesian Language Learning in Elementary Schools	2026	Qualitative Descriptive	The use of children's literature increases students' interest in learning and creates a more active and enjoyable learning environment.
10	Implementation of Character Education through Indonesian	2024	Qualitative	Character integration improves students' positive attitudes.



No	Article Title	Year	Method	Conclusion
	Language Learning in Elementary Schools			
11	Fostering Love for the Indonesian Language through Character Education in Indonesian Language Learning	2025	Qualitative	The habituation of four “magic words” (sorry, please, thank you, and excuse me) supported by direct practice in classroom learning.
12	Strengthening Character Education Based on Local Wisdom in Indonesian Language Learning in the Era of Society 5.0	2025	Qualitative Descriptive	Character education based on local wisdom can be strengthened through technology and digitalization, including the use of digital media and social platforms.
13	The Relationship between Deep Learning and the Development of Literate Character in Elementary School Students in Indonesian Language Subjects	2025	Qualitative Descriptive	Deep learning serves as a foundation for developing adaptive, reflective, and value-oriented literate character.
14	Development of Elementary School Students' Character through a Restitution Approach to Improve Speaking Skills in Indonesian Language Learning	2025	Classroom Action Research (CAR)	Restitution fosters personal responsibility and relationship repair, creating a safe emotional learning environment and increasing students' confidence in communication.



No	Article Title	Year	Method	Conclusion
15	Analysis of Character Values through Fable Animation Media in Indonesian Language Learning for Elementary School Students	2022	Qualitative Descriptive	Most students are able to analyze, understand, and apply character values in daily life through fable animations.

The data extraction results indicate that all analyzed articles focus on Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level as a medium for instilling character education. The main research topics include the integration of character values into language materials, value-based instructional strategies, the development of teaching materials, and the implementation of character education in classroom practices. In terms of methodology, the analyzed studies are predominantly characterized by qualitative descriptive approaches, Research and Development (RSD), and experimental or quasi-experimental designs. Development studies generally produce outputs such as character-based teaching materials, illustrated stories, fable books, and literacy modules containing character values. Meanwhile, experimental and implementation-based studies tend to emphasize the effectiveness of instructional strategies in enhancing students' character through reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities.

Based on the synthesis of findings, the integration of character education in Indonesian language learning is carried out through several main approaches. The most dominant approach involves the use of narrative texts, children's literature, fables, and illustrated stories as media for internalizing moral values. In addition, character education is implemented through strategies such as storytelling methods, communicative approaches, reading-writing literacy activities, restitution approaches, and digital literacy-based learning. Several studies also highlight the integration of local wisdom and cultural values as learning contexts, as well as the strengthening of character values within the framework of the Pancasila Student Profile and digital literacy in the era of the Society 5.0 Revolution.

A more in-depth analysis reveals that all articles report positive impacts from the integration of character education in Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level. The most frequently reported outcomes include improvements in students' positive attitudes, the development of religious character and responsibility, increased environmental and social awareness, and the strengthening of literate character and communication skills. Some studies also identify improvements in learning motivation, student engagement, and moral reflection skills through literacy and communication activities.



Discussion

Based on the literature synthesis conducted, this study identifies three key findings related to the implementation of character education in Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level: (1) Indonesian Language Learning as a Medium for Integrating Character Education through Texts and Literacy Activities, (2) Active Learning Strategies and Character-Based Media Enhance Implementation Effectiveness, and (3) The Integration of Character Education Produces Holistic Impacts on Student Development.

1. Indonesian Language Learning as a Medium for Integrating Character Education through Texts and Literacy Activities

The synthesis of findings reveals that the integration of character education in Indonesian language learning is most prominently achieved through the use of literary texts and literacy activities. The development of character-based illustrated stories has proven effective in instilling values such as honesty and empathy in elementary school students (Suhartina et al, 2024). Storytelling approaches also facilitate the understanding of moral messages while encouraging creative expression through visual works such as posters (Aziz, 2023; Jurahman, 2022). Furthermore, narrative-based teaching materials embedded with character values are able to enhance students' honesty and responsibility. Reading and writing activities not only enrich literacy skills but also foster critical thinking, creativity, and responsibility (Sulmayanti et al, 2025). Children's literature has been shown to increase students' learning interest and create a more engaging classroom environment [9]¹⁴ while the analysis of fable animations strengthens students' ability to interpret character values (Primayana, 2022).

2. Active Learning Strategies and Character-Based Media Enhance Implementation Effectiveness

The optimization of character education is highly dependent on active learning strategies and contextual media. Digital literacy has proven to be a potential tool for teachers in instilling character values in a relevant manner (Suriani & Aminasya, 2024). The communicative approach effectively enhances students' collaboration and politeness in Indonesian language learning. The development of character-oriented teaching materials, such as illustrated stories and narrative texts, demonstrates high effectiveness in the internalization of moral values. The integration of local wisdom through digital technology further reinforces the relevance of character education in the era of the Industrial Revolution 5.0. Additionally, the restitution approach creates a psychologically safe learning environment, thereby increasing students' confidence and communicative responsibility,

3. The Integration of Character Education Produces Holistic Impacts on Student Development

All reviewed studies consistently report positive impacts of character education integration on students' overall development. Indonesian language learning has been identified as encompassing 18 character values within classroom processes. with its implementation proven to enhance students' positive attitudes. The habituation of polite expressions such as "sorry," "please," "thank you," and "excuse me" reflects



the development of concrete social behaviors through Indonesian language learning. Moreover, deep learning approaches serve as a foundation for developing reflective, value-oriented, and humanistic literate character among students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the systematic literature review of relevant articles, Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level has been proven to play a strategic role as a medium for integrating character education. All analyzed studies consistently demonstrate that the internalization of character values is effectively achieved through language activities, particularly reading, writing, listening, and speaking, which are grounded in literary texts and literacy practices. The synthesis of findings identifies various implementation approaches, including the use of narrative texts, storytelling, fables, illustrated stories, and children's literature. Active learning strategies such as communicative approaches, storytelling, deep learning, digital literacy, and restitution have been shown to be effective in strengthening character development. The development of character-based media and instructional materials also serves as a key pillar for successful integration at the classroom level.

The results of the review confirm a holistic impact on elementary students' development, including improvements in positive attitudes, responsibility, politeness, social awareness, communication skills, as well as learning motivation and engagement. These findings highlight that Indonesian language learning extends beyond the development of language skills, functioning as an instrument for shaping students' personality and character from an early age. Overall, this SLR underscores the potential for systematic and effective integration of character education through Indonesian language learning in elementary schools. Teachers are encouraged to optimize active strategies, character-based media, and literacy contexts in order to maximize the contribution of learning to students' character development.

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