

An Analysis of Learning Difficulties of Elementary School Students in the Pancasila Education Textbook

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Abstract. This enquiry was motivated by the predicament of learning difficulties encountered by students in the Pancasila Textbook grade 1, authored by Warsito Adnan. This research intends to analyse students' learning difficulties in the Pancasila education textbook. This research is a descriptive content analysis. This enquiry was carried out in the West Satar Mese cluster, Manggarai Regency, in the 2024/2025 academic year. The research subjects are 59 first-grade students. The technique used to determine the sample was purposive sampling. Data collection techniques included documentation and observation. The documents used are the Pancasila Education book for grade 1 and students' learning outcome scores. The results of the research indicate the difficulties encountered by students in using the Grade 1 PPKn book written by Warsito Adnan, namely, unclear directions in the book, which are hard to understand for students. The form of HOTS practice questions in the Pancasila education book for grade 1 students has sentences that are too long. This affects students' assignment scores in the KKM standard. The lesson content is not yet in line with the cognitive development level of grade 1 students, which was caused by the lesson presentation in the form of texts with long sentences, while in the early semester, the students were introduced to the alphabet. Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the students experienced difficulties when they used the Pancasila textbook by themselves, either at home or at school.

Keywords: Learning difficulties, SD students, Pancasila Education texts book.

1 Introduction

One of the key strategic elements of an education system is the curriculum. This assumption underlies the notion that a curriculum not only encompasses the objectives to be achieved but also provides a framework for understanding the learning process [1], [2]. The content of a curriculum includes various components, one of which is the textbook.

Curriculum and textbooks are two interrelated components that are closely connected [3]. In a broad sense, the curriculum is defined as a comprehensive plan that includes classroom activities and provides opportunities for students to learn and gain meaningful learning experiences [4]. Meanwhile, textbooks represent the implementation of the curriculum, as they contain instructional materials used by both teachers and students.

Currently, a new curriculum known as the Merdeka Curriculum is being implemented. This curriculum has been introduced by the government across educational levels, from elementary to higher education. It is designed to enable students to learn in a relaxed, stress-free, and enjoyable environment while accommodating their individual talents and potentials [5].

The transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum has also led to changes in the textbooks used, aligning them with new approaches, objectives, and learner characteristics [6] [8]. During classroom instruction, textbooks function as primary references as well as supplementary learning materials for both teachers and students [9], [10].

Textbooks must be aligned with the appropriate grade level to ensure that students can effectively comprehend the material. The readability level of a text serves as an important indicator of a textbook's quality as a source of information suited to students' developmental stages. A high-quality textbook is reflected in the clarity and meaningfulness of its content. In addition to being visually appealing, the material should be well-structured to facilitate comprehension. Therefore, the readability of a text must correspond to students' reading abilities at each grade level. Ensuring this alignment is essential for enabling students to understand the content effectively [11].

Textbook authors should adhere to curriculum development principles to ensure the accountability and relevance of the content. Furthermore, textbooks should provide comprehensive information, making them valuable learning resources that support students in understanding and enriching their knowledge within specific subject areas [12], [13]. The language used in textbooks must also be accessible and appropriate to students' cognitive levels to facilitate comprehension of key concepts and learning materials [14], [15].

The textbook written by Warsito Adam and published by PT Tiga Serangkai Pustaka was selected as the object of analysis because teachers and first-grade students widely use it as the main instructional material in Pancasila Education classes. Preliminary interview data with teachers revealed that students experience difficulties in understanding the content of this textbook. This is evident from the extensive amount of discourse presented in the early sections of the book, despite students having relatively limited alphabet recognition skills. Students are exposed to long texts without first being introduced to letters, syllables, or simple sentences. Ideally, a discourse should consider word length and difficulty level, which can be indicated by the number of syllables in each word [16].

Students' difficulties in understanding the first-grade PPKn textbook contribute to low reading motivation, which in turn affects their academic performance. In contrast, early reading skills form the foundation for learning across various subject areas [17],[19]. These learning difficulties contradict the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasize providing students with sufficient time to explore, develop, and strengthen their competencies in a relaxed, enjoyable, and pressure-free learning environment. The curriculum also highlights the importance of recognizing students' natural talents and positioning teachers as facilitators of learning [20]–[22].

Previous studies have also examined students' difficulties in understanding elementary-level learning materials. These include challenges arising from the frequent use of foreign terminology and heavy memorization demands [23], difficulties in PPKn due to broad and complex content [24], [25], and the use of materials that are not developmentally appropriate for first-grade students [26]. In addition, excessively long and verbose question formats are not aligned with the cognitive development of lower-grade students [27].

The novelty of this study lies in its analysis of the Grade 1 PPKn textbook in terms of instructional content, language use, clarity of instructions, and the appropriateness of assessment questions for first-grade students. This study specifically examines students' learning difficulties when using the *Pendidikan Pancasila* textbook (Merdeka Curriculum) by Warsito Adam, which has not been previously investigated. This study aims to analyze the learning difficulties students face in understanding the material, including difficulties interpreting

instructions, question formats, content appropriate to their developmental level, and the language used in the textbook.

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Currently, a new curriculum known as the *Merdeka Curriculum* is being implemented. This curriculum is being piloted by the government across educational levels, from elementary to higher education. It is designed to enable students to learn in a relaxed, calm, stress-free, and enjoyable environment, while also accommodating their individual talents and potentials [5]. The transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum has also led to changes in the textbooks used, aligning them with new approaches, objectives, and learner characteristics [6]–[8]. During classroom instruction, textbooks function as primary references as well as supplementary learning materials for both teachers and students [9], [10].

Textbooks must be aligned with the appropriate grade level to ensure that students can effectively comprehend the material. The readability level of a text serves as an important indicator of a textbook's quality as a source of information suited to students' developmental stages. A high-quality textbook is reflected in the clarity and meaningfulness of its content. In addition to being visually appealing, the material should be well-structured to facilitate comprehension. Therefore, the readability of a text must correspond to students' reading abilities at each grade level. Ensuring this alignment is essential for enabling students to understand the content effectively [11].

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2 Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. The approach involved content analysis of the textbook and an investigation of students' difficulties in understanding the Grade 1 Pendidikan Pancasila textbook. The research was conducted in the Satar Mese Barat cluster, Manggarai Regency, during the 2023/2024 academic year.

The participants consisted of 76 first-grade students from the Satar Mese Barat cluster. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling. Data collection methods included document analysis and classroom observation. The documents analyzed consisted of the Grade 1 *Pendidikan Pancasila* textbook and students' learning outcomes. Observations focused on students' ease or difficulty in using the textbook during the learning process.

During the observation, coding techniques were applied to classify students based on their level of understanding. Students who appeared enthusiastic, active, and engaged in asking questions were categorized as having ease in understanding the material. In contrast, students who appeared less enthusiastic, struggled to complete tasks, or remained passive were categorized as experiencing difficulties. Subsequently, students' work was collected and matched with observation data to ensure consistency.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman [28], which includes data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification [29]. The analysis began with collecting data from textbooks (teacher and student editions) and interviews with Grade 1 teachers. After data reduction, the findings were organized and presented systematically. The final step involved synthesizing the findings into clear and comprehensive insights. This study was conducted over a period of two months.

2.1 Type And Design

The type of research employed was descriptive qualitative with a case study design [30]. This approach was supported by textbook content analysis, which aimed to examine how instructional materials are designed in accordance with the characteristics of first-grade

students. Additionally, classroom observations were conducted to identify students' difficulties and ease in understanding the textbook content.

2.2 Population And Sample

The population of this study consisted of all 76 students in the Satar Mese Barat cluster. A total of 40 students were selected as the sample using purposive sampling [31]. The selection was based on specific criteria, including students' previous learning outcomes that did not meet the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM). Additionally, initial observations of students' reading and writing abilities, as well as their level of difficulty in using the textbook, were taken into consideration.

2.3 Data Collection

Direct Observation

Direct observations were conducted while students were using the *Pendidikan Pancasila* textbook during classroom learning activities. Observations were carried out twice a week across five schools within the Satar Mese Barat cluster. The aim was to examine students' activities while engaging with the textbook.

The researcher observed students' abilities to read letters, words, and sentences, as well as their ability to write, based on textbook tasks. During the observation process, the researcher was assisted by classroom teachers in recording and documenting students' reading and writing activities.

Document Analysis

Document analysis involved examining the *Pendidikan Pancasila* textbook and students' learning outcomes after its use. The findings from document analysis were then triangulated with observation data to draw comprehensive conclusions regarding students' difficulties and ease in using the textbook.

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman [28], which consists of data collection, data reduction, data display, and verification [29]. The process began with observing students' activities while using the textbook. The researcher then matched the learning themes with textbook content and assigned codes to aspects such as content, language, instructions, and questions that were perceived as either difficult or easy. The coded data from observations and textbook analysis were subsequently compared with students' learning outcomes (daily assignments, midterm tests, and final examinations) to generate comprehensive findings.

3 Result And Discussion

3.1 Result

This study aimed to examine students' learning difficulties based on an analysis of the *Pendidikan Pancasila* textbook used in the Satar Mese Barat Cluster. The textbook, written by Warsito Adam and published by PT Tiga Serangkai Pustaka Mandiri, serves as the primary instructional material for Grade 1 students. The findings regarding students' difficulties in using the textbook are presented as follows:

Difficulty in Understanding Terms, Instructions, Symbols, or Icons in the Textbook.

The analysis of the *Pendidikan Pancasila* textbook revealed inconsistencies between the instructions provided and the tasks that students were expected to perform. One example of unclear instructions is illustrated in Figure 1.

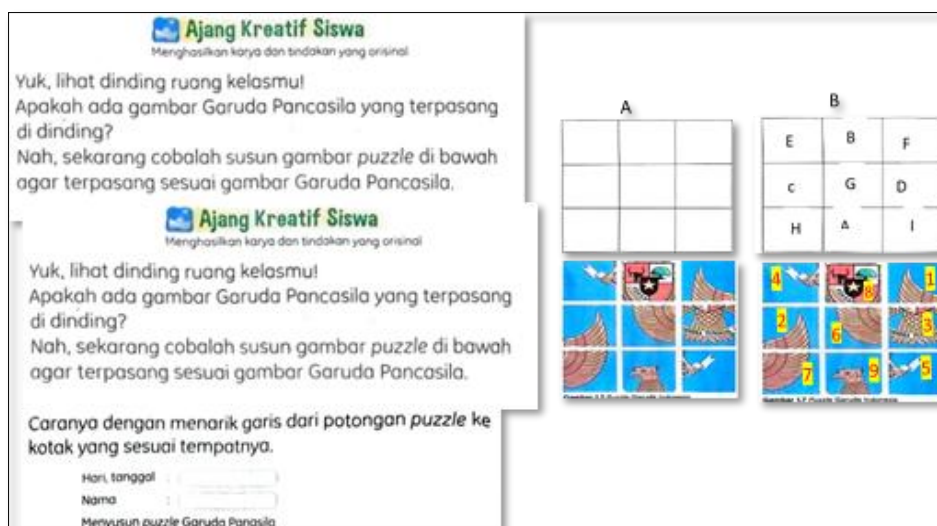


Fig.1. Example of unclear instructions in the Grade 1 PPKn textbook (p. 6).

Comprehend the picture above from page 6 of the student textbook, the way of arranging the pieces of pictures and the Pancasila symbol must be numbered in order for students to easily arrange the pictures. There are no guidelines that can be followed by students to fill in the empty boxes. The proper direction is to cut the pictures based on the numbered boxes and place them into the empty boxes to form a complete Pancasila picture. This activity cannot be properly completed because the PDF format does not allow the images to be moved. The following presents the results of observations on students' difficulties in the Satar Mese Barat cluster in understanding the instructions in the textbook, Table 1.

Table 1. Comprehension percentage of students in the instruction of the PPKn book, grade 1.

School Name	Understand the instructions in the textbook		Terminology comprehends	
	Difficult	Easy	Difficult	Easy
SDI Pong Pahar	10 persons (77%)	3 persons (23%)	13 persons (100%)	-
SDI Bangka Keli	9 persons (64%)	5 persons (36%)	11 persons (78,6%)	3 persons (21,4%)
SDK Narang 1	10 persons (62,5%)	6 persons (37,5%)	12 persons (75%)	4 persons (25%)
SDK Narang 2	11 persons (78,6%)	3 persons (21,4%)	13 persons (93%)	1 person (7%)
SDI Lelit	13 persons (68,4%)	6 persons (31,6%)	17 persons (89,5%)	2 persons (10,5%)

Overall, the findings indicate that unclear instructions and the absence of a glossary significantly contribute to students' difficulties in understanding the learning materials.

Difficulty in Understanding the Lesson in Relation to the Developmental Level of Grade 1 Students.

Based on the research findings, the lesson content of the book has not yet considered the developmental level and characteristics of students in the Satar Mese Barat Cluster. The chosen learning material, which did not fit with the developmental level of students, could increase the students' learning difficulties. Several examples of learning material presented in the *Pancasila Education* textbook are not aligned with the abilities and developmental level of Grade 1 students.



Fig.2. Example of overly long text in the Grade 1 textbook

The analysis shows that the texts presented are too long and complex for first-semester Grade 1 students, who are generally still in the early stages of recognizing letters (A–Z). At this stage, many students are not yet able to read words or sentences fluently.

Table 2. Percentage of Students' Ability in the Satar Mese Barat Cluster in Reading Letters, Words, Syllables, and Sentences.

School Name	Reading the Alphabet		Reading Words/Syllables		Reading Sentences	
	Difficult	Easy	Difficult	Easy	Difficult	Easy
SDI Pong Pahar	11 persons (73,3%)	4 persons (26,7%)	13 persons (86,7)	12 persons (13,3%)	13 persons (86,7)	12 persons (13,3%)
SDI Bangka Keli	17 persons (70,8%)	7 persons (29,2%)	18 persons (75%)	6 persons (25%)	19 persons (79,2)	5 persons (20,8)
SDK Narang 1	12 persons (75%)	4 persons (25%)	14 persons (87,5%)	2 persons (12,5%)	14 persons (87,5%)	2 persons (12,5%)
SDK Narang 2	10 persons (71,4%)	4 persons (28,6%)	13 persons (93%)	1 person (7%)	13 persons (93%)	1 person (7%)
SDI Lelit	15 persons (79%)	4 persons (21%)	15 persons (79%)	4 persons (21%)	17 persons (89,5%)	2 persons (10,5%)

The data indicate that a significant proportion of students still struggle with recognizing letters, reading words, and understanding sentences. Many students are only beginning to learn the alphabet when they enter school, although some receive prior exposure at home. However, the textbook content is not aligned with these initial abilities. As a result, students tend to avoid reading the textbook independently due to its level of difficulty.

Difficulties in understanding HOTS Questions in Grade 1 Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) Textbooks

The *Merdeka Curriculum* emphasizes the use of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions. These include multiple-choice, complex multiple-choice (true/false, yes/no), fill-in-the-blank, short-answer, and essay-type questions. However, the findings show that Grade 1 students in the Satar Mese Barat Cluster are generally unable to complete HOTS-based questions. This is primarily because they are not yet fluent in reading words and sentences. The questions are often presented in long, complex sentence structures, which exceed students' reading abilities.

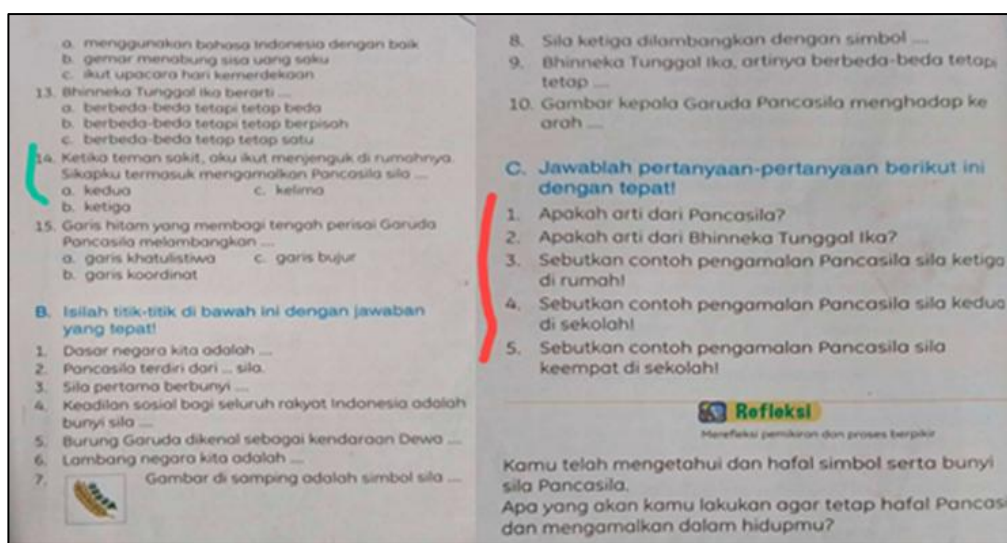


Fig.3. Example of HOTS questions not aligned with students' abilities.

The mismatch between question types and the students' abilities in the Satar Mese Barat cluster negatively impacts learning outcomes. The following table presents the learning achievement data of students in the cluster after working on *HOTS* questions in the Grade 1 PPKn textbook:

Table 3. Students' Learning Outcomes After Completing *HOTS* Questions in Grade 1 Pancasila Education

Name of School	Minimum Competency Criteria	Learning Results	
		Not Achieved	Achieved
SDI Pong Pahar	70	17 Persons (100%)	-
SDI Bangka Keli	75	22 Persons (92%)	2 Persons (8%)
SDK Narang 1	75	15 Persons (94%)	1 Person (6%)
SDK Narang 2	75	12 Persons (86%)	2 Persons (14%)
SDI Lelit	75	17 Persons (89,5%)	2 Persons (10,5%)

Based on the table above, student performance after attempting *HOTS* questions remains below the Minimum Competency Criteria (KKM). The poor performance is largely due to students' inability to read fluently. Therefore, the questions in textbooks should consider the abilities of students in each educational unit, especially those in rural areas.

Difficulties in Understanding the Language in the Grade 1 PPKn Textbook

Analysis of the Pancasila Education textbook reveals that the language used is not appropriate for Grade 1 students. Student textbooks are not only used in the classroom but are also meant to be used independently at home. The language in the textbooks should support student comprehension and foster enthusiasm for learning. Below are some examples of

language usage in the Pancasila textbook.



Fig.4. Example of Language Usage Without a Glossary in the Student Textbook

Several sentences in the textbook are ambiguous and difficult for students to understand. The absence of explanations, glossaries, or footnotes further exacerbates comprehension difficulties. Classroom observations and teacher feedback indicate that students struggle to use the textbook independently due to unfamiliar vocabulary and complex sentence structures.

3.2 Discussion

Learning difficulties, as observable symptoms among learners, are characterized by low motivation and poor learning outcomes [32]. These difficulties among elementary school students arise not only from within the students themselves but also from external factors. Parents, teachers, and the content of the learning materials all contribute to low learning motivation [33]. Findings from the Satar Mese Barat cluster show that students face difficulties in understanding the content of the Pancasila Education textbook. This is due to the textbook's material design, which does not consider the characteristics of students in each educational setting, especially those in remote rural areas.

Student textbooks serve as learning companions not only in classrooms but also as independent learning tools at home [34]. A student's interest in reading depends heavily on the material design, including visual appeal, clear instructions, and contextually relevant content. Additionally, textbook authors must ensure that terminology, directions, symbols, or icons are understandable; that content matches the developmental stage of Grade 1 students; that HOTS questions are aligned with students' literacy and numeracy levels; and that the language used is simple and accessible. These four points form the focus of this research.

First, the terminology used in the textbook is not aligned with students' comprehension levels. Difficult terms should be supported with glossaries, footnotes, or contextual explanations. Providing equivalents in a familiar or local language can also enhance understanding [35], [36]. Additionally, instructional prompts such as "Let's read," "Let's observe," and "Let's try" must be clearly explained to guide students effectively [37]. Clear instructions are essential in helping students engage with learning activities and achieve learning objectives [38], [39], [40].

Text instructions have characteristics such as: (1) A title, to help readers interpret the purpose of an instruction, (2) Use numbers to show steps or sequence clarity, by numbering, hence the directions and instructions become clear, (3) use command sentences to do something,

(4) use explanatory sentences to guide the process [39]. In addition to clear directions, providing an example in empty boxes would help students when using the book independently at home.

Second, the material design is difficult for students to understand. Research indicates that Grade 1 students in the Satar Mese Barat cluster are still in the early stages of recognizing letters A to Z. Meanwhile, the content of the book is presented in the form of long texts, making it difficult for students to understand the learning material.

Complex material that exceeds students' developmental capacity can lead to learning disorders, such as reluctance to read, write, or perform arithmetic [41]. Inappropriate content in textbooks can also undermine the achievement of learning objectives [42]; [43]; [44]; [45]. To minimize such issues, learning materials must reflect the characteristics of primary students, [46]. Many students who fail to achieve mastery do so because the instruction does not match their cognitive and developmental level [47]. The characteristic in question is that first graders are still at the stage of early literacy. Early literacy can be understood as children's basic skills in recognizing letters, connecting them with sounds, spelling, and stringing letters together to form meaningful words. This stage is an important foundation before children enter into broader literacy skills, namely reading and writing, using spoken language as the main means of understanding and conveying information [48]

Referring to previous studies [49]; [50]. The main goal of instruction in the first semester of Grade 1 is for students to recognize, identify, and classify letters, and to form syllables, words, and simple sentences. The material should not be too dense and should be delivered in clear, short, and simple sentences [51]. Additionally, content should be rooted in the students' culture and environment to help them connect learning to personal experience. Culturally relevant pedagogy allows students to engage with and express their culture in both academic and extracurricular contexts [52]; [53].

Third, the format of HOTS questions in the Pancasila Education textbook. Based on the analysis, the questions are too long and inappropriate for Grade 1 students in the Satar Mese Barat cluster. Lengthy questions exceed students' short-term memory capacity and negatively affect performance [54]. Students who do not understand the format—whether the instructions, choices, or vocabulary—are unable to complete the questions effectively. HOTS-type questions are not guaranteed to stimulate higher-order thinking unless they are tailored to students' actual conditions [55].

Low academic performance is partly linked to complex question formats in textbooks. Tasks that students do not understand demotivate them [56]. Especially if the questions are verbose or unclear [27]. Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) involve applying knowledge, reasoning, and problem-solving [57]. HOTS questions should align with students' developmental levels to ensure comprehension. Clear and simple instructions lead to better outcomes. Therefore, the questions should be simplified to allow each student to progress at their own pace.

Fourth, the language used in the Pancasila textbook. Findings indicate that the language used by the author does not align with the reading level of Grade 1 students in the Satar Mese Barat cluster. Although teachers may simplify the language during class, the textbook is also intended for independent use at home. Observations show that students are reluctant to read the

material not only due to low reading fluency but also because the language used is too complex for their developmental stage.

Difficult language in textbooks reduces students' ability to comprehend the material. Textbooks must employ language that aligns with students' developmental levels, encompassing both cognitive (intellectual) and emotional maturity [58]. Additionally, the language must be age-appropriate, effective, unambiguous, polite, and engaging. Effective sentences are those that successfully convey ideas, emotions, and instructions. Texts should be grammatically correct, use accurate word choices, follow logical structure, and be properly spelled.

An example of a sentence from the textbook, "*Ah, what a coincidence, thought Fata to himself*," was not understood by students when asked during class. This is because Grade 1 students are still using their mother tongue [59]. This suggests that the author did not fully consider that the textbook would be used across Indonesia. A good sentence is precise and unambiguous. Clarity in student textbooks helps readers understand the intended meaning of the author [60]. Textbooks must be engaging, support language skill development, and foster students' literary appreciation [61]; [62]. When designing instructional materials, it is crucial to use sufficiently simple language, especially since students often study independently [63].

4 Conclusion

Before textbooks are widely implemented as primary learning resources in elementary schools, careful consideration must be given to their content, structure, and language. Based on the analysis of the *Pendidikan Pancasila* textbook by Warsito Adam, revisions are needed in four key areas: instructional clarity, language use, content appropriateness, and the design of HOTS questions.

These revisions are particularly important given the widespread use of the textbook across Indonesia. The findings indicate that students' language abilities, especially in rural areas such as the Satar Mese Barat Cluster, differ significantly from those in urban settings. Therefore, textbook development must take into account the diverse characteristics of learners across regions.

A thorough analysis of students' initial abilities is essential before textbook development to ensure inclusivity and relevance. The inclusion of glossaries, the use of clear and simple instructions, and the adaptation of content to students' developmental levels are crucial for improving comprehension.

Furthermore, teachers should continuously evaluate the textbooks used in classrooms to identify and address students' learning difficulties. Such efforts will contribute to more effective learning processes and improved student outcomes.

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