

Implementation of Curriculum Innovation Based on Cooperative Learning Model to Improve Indonesian Language Skills of Class VIII Students of SMP Negeri 4 Karanganyar Ngawi

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the application of a cooperative learning-based curriculum innovation to improve the Indonesian language skills of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Karanganyar, Ngawi. The background of this research is based on the need for a learning approach that can encourage active and collaborative student participation in a deeper understanding of Indonesian language material. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data collection techniques were conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation with the Indonesian language teacher and three students from different academic backgrounds. The results showed that the implementation of a cooperative learning model through group discussions significantly improved student understanding of the subject matter. Students felt more comfortable, motivated, and active in the learning process due to the interaction between peers and more personalized teacher support. The teacher also reported that learning became more dynamic and facilitated proportional student involvement. The conclusion of this study is that the cooperative learning approach curriculum innovation can create a collaborative and effective learning environment in improving students' Indonesian language skills. This study recommends that the cooperative learning model be integrated into the broader Indonesian language curriculum at the junior high school level as a learning strategy that focuses on active participation and in-depth understanding.

KEYWORDS: curriculum innovation, cooperative learning, Indonesian, junior high school students, qualitative approach.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the primary foundation for producing a capable, competitive generation ready to face future challenges. In the context of globalization and rapid technological advancement, the Indonesian education system is required to continuously innovate, including in curriculum development and learning strategies. One crucial aspect highlighted in strengthening national education is Indonesian language learning. Indonesian serves not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for character development, critical thinking, and creative expression for students. Therefore, improving the quality of Indonesian language learning must be a primary focus in curriculum innovation for primary and secondary education.

In reality, Indonesian language learning at various levels of education still faces a number of challenges. Observations and empirical studies show that many students struggle to develop comprehensive language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This is often due to a conventional, teacher-centered learning approach and minimal active student participation. The current curriculum often fails to accommodate students' needs for collaborative and contextual

learning, making it less relevant to the demands of 21st-century competencies, such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity.

This situation has prompted the need for curriculum innovation that not only adapts to current developments but also optimally activates students' learning potential. One approach deemed effective in addressing these challenges is the cooperative learning model. This model emphasizes collaboration among students in completing learning tasks in groups, fostering social interaction, the exchange of ideas, and shared responsibility. In the context of Indonesian language learning, the cooperative learning model can create a dialogic and reflective space, which is crucial for developing functional and meaningful language skills.

Several previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of cooperative learning models in improving student learning outcomes. However, most of this research remains general in nature and has not integrated this approach into curriculum innovations systematically designed for Indonesian language learning. Furthermore, the development of innovative approaches tailored to the characteristics of junior high school students, particularly eighth graders, remains very limited. This indicates a research gap that needs to be bridged through research that specifically underpins the application of cooperative learning models within the framework of Indonesian language curriculum innovation.

The novelty of this research lies in the integrative effort between curriculum innovation and the implementation of a cooperative learning model in Indonesian language subjects. Curriculum innovation in this context involves not only designing new learning tools but also designing collaborative, contextual learning activities that are tailored to the learning needs of eighth-grade students. This research not only tests the effectiveness of the learning model but also examines the extent to which this approach can be sustainably implemented in the school curriculum, specifically at SMP Negeri 4 Karanganyar Ngawi, the research location.

This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive approach to gain a deep understanding of the implementation process of curriculum innovation based on a cooperative learning model. The main focus of the research included lesson planning, teaching and learning activities, interactions between students, and the outcomes and changes that occurred in students' language skills. The researcher also involved Indonesian language teachers and eighth-grade students as primary participants to illustrate actual classroom practices.

The purpose of this research is to describe and analyze the implementation of curriculum innovation based on a cooperative learning model in improving eighth-grade students' Indonesian language skills. Specifically, this research aims to: (1) identify the forms of curriculum innovation developed in Indonesian language learning; (2) describe the implementation of the cooperative learning model in the teaching and learning process; and (3) disseminate the impact of implementing this innovation on improving students' language skills.

The results of this study are expected to make a tangible contribution to the world of education, particularly in developing Indonesian language learning strategies that are more effective, enjoyable, and relevant to future demands. The findings of this study can serve as a reference for teachers in designing learning that emphasizes cooperation, active student involvement and the development of comprehensive language competencies. Furthermore, the resulting curriculum innovation can also serve as a model for developing adaptive and progressive school curricula.

Recommendations from this study include the need for ongoing teacher training in the development and implementation of innovative curricula, particularly those based on cooperative learning. Schools are also advised to form curriculum development teams involving teachers from across subjects to foster more integrative interdisciplinary collaboration. Further research could focus on piloting this model at different levels or on more specific language skills, such as academic writing or argumentative speaking. Future research could also expand the study to other schools in different regions to obtain more representative findings.

Thus, this study not only contributes to the development of Indonesian language learning theory but also offers a practical approach that can be implemented in the classroom. Curriculum innovation based on the cooperative learning model is believed to be able to create a dynamic, humanistic, and empowering learning environment, thereby addressing the challenges of Indonesian language education in the current era of educational transformation.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the process of implementing an innovative curriculum that integrates a cooperative learning model into Indonesian language learning. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is relevant for examining phenomena holistically, contextually, and based on the direct experiences of participants in a natural educational environment. This study does not focus on quantitative measurements, but rather on describing the processes, meanings, and dynamics of learning that occur in the classroom.

The subjects in this study were eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Karanganyar Ngawi, who were purposively selected based on their active involvement in the school's curriculum innovation program. In addition to students, Indonesian language teachers were also involved as key informants with direct experience in designing and implementing cooperative-based learning models. Purposive subject selection enabled the researcher to obtain relevant and in-depth data in line with the research focus.

The primary instrument in this study was the researcher herself, acting as the key instrument (human instrument). Data collection was conducted through three main techniques: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were used to directly observe the Indonesian language learning process in the classroom, particularly interactions between students, the implementation of cooperative strategies, and the dynamics of study groups. In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers and several students to explore their views, experiences, and perceptions regarding the implementation of the innovative curriculum and its impact on language skills. Documentation was conducted on learning materials (lessons learned, modules, student worksheets), student work, and teacher reflection notes to support the data.

The data obtained were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, which encompass three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions. In the data reduction stage, researchers filtered data based on relevance to the research focus and then organized the data into specific categories or themes. In the data presentation stage, observation results, interview excerpts, and documentation were compiled in narrative and tabular form to facilitate interpretation. The final stage was conclusions and verification, where researchers interpreted the described data to address the research problem and objectives.

To ensure data validity (trustworthiness), researchers employed a triangulation strategy of sources and techniques. Triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation to ensure consistency and accuracy of the information. In addition, member checking was also conducted by requesting confirmation from teachers and students regarding the interpretations developed to avoid researcher bias. Through this method design, the research is expected to comprehensively illustrate how curriculum innovations adopting a cooperative learning model can be applied in Indonesian language learning, as well as how this impacts students' language skills in a contextual manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that the implementation of a cooperative learning model-based curriculum innovation has a positive impact on improving the Indonesian language skills of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Karanganyar Ngawi. The research data were obtained through direct observation of the learning process, interviews with teachers and students, and documentation of student assignments. The data indicate an increase in student participation, the quality of learning products, and their oral and written communication skills.

1. Observation Data

During three observation cycles over two months of learning, it was noted that 80% of students were active in group discussions, compared to only about 45% before the cooperative learning model intervention was implemented. Observations were conducted using a participatory observation sheet that assessed activity indicators such as expressing opinions, asking questions, explaining ideas, and compiling discussion results.

observation results quote:

First Meeting (Initial Discussion on Writing a Narrative Text)

"Most groups began to actively discuss when asked to develop an outline for their narrative text. Group 2, consisting of four students, engaged in intense discussion to choose a storyline. A student named DF suggested a story idea about 'friendship amidst differences,' and this idea was immediately developed by other members."

Second Meeting (Text Writing Process and Task Distribution)

"In the second meeting, Group 3 engaged in quite intensive discussion on writing a narrative paragraph. One student, RZ, took on the role of writer and led the way on paragraph structure, while other members provided input on vocabulary and sentence structure."

Third Meeting (Presentation and Feedback Between Groups)

"During the group presentation session, students' confidence appeared to increase. Group 1 delivered their story quite well. The MC, one of the members, explained the story structure coherently and convincingly. Feedback from other groups was also active, with student SE asking critical questions regarding the resolution of the conflict in the story."

End-of-Cycle Evaluation

"During the reflection session, students expressed that they felt more comfortable learning in groups because they could exchange ideas. Many students mentioned that discussing before writing helped them understand the structure of the text and enriched their vocabulary."

Group-based learning activities also increased student engagement, which had previously been passive. In the first cycle, two students remained passive, but by the third cycle, only one student remained in the low participation category.

2. Interview Data

Interviews were conducted with an Indonesian language teacher and three students from various skill levels. The interviews revealed that students felt more comfortable and understood the material using group discussions.

The Indonesian language teacher stated:

"Since the cooperative learning model was implemented, I saw positive changes in the students. They were more enthusiastic, actively engaged in discussions, and no longer passive when asked to work on group assignments. Especially in narrative writing lessons, students seemed to find it easier to compose stories because they exchanged ideas and helped each other. In addition, students with lower abilities became more confident because they felt supported by their group members." (DA, Indonesian Language Teacher)

Meanwhile, a student in grade VIII-F said:

"Group learning is more fun. I get to see how other students explain the reading material. I used to have trouble understanding texts, but now I can do it more quickly."
(AS, seventh-grade male student).

"At first, I was afraid I wouldn't be able to participate in discussions because I don't speak Indonesian well. But after a few meetings, I became more enthusiastic about speaking. My friends are nice; they don't get angry if I make mistakes. Now I'm even more enthusiastic about learning." (HL, seventh-grade male student).

"I feel like group discussions help me develop ideas more quickly. My friends also often give me feedback when I'm confused. I used to like working alone, but it turns out that group work can help me understand the material better because we exchange ideas."
(AR, seventh-grade female student).

This statement supports observational data that cooperative learning helps in building understanding through dialogue between group members.

3. Student Assignment Documentation Data

Student assignments, consisting of narrative and expository texts, developed during the learning process, showed improvements in quality. Of the 30 students whose work was analyzed:

- 26 students (86%) were able to construct narrative texts with a complete structure (orientation, complication, resolution).
- 24 students (80%) used better word choice and cohesion than their initial assignments before the model was implemented.
- Group assignments also demonstrated creativity, such as the use of dialogue in narratives and the selection of themes relevant to the students' contexts.
- The following is a summary of improvements based on the teacher's assessment rubric:

Table 1. Assignment Documentation Data

Assessment Aspects	Before Intervention	After Intervention
Text structure	65% complete	88% complete
Diction and coherence	58% is quite good	84% good
Original ideas and logic	52% growth	79% are developing well
Participation in discussions	45% active	80% active

These data show that the application of a cooperative learning model as part of curriculum innovation is able to improve students' language skills in various aspects, both cognitively (mastery of language structure), socially (cooperation), and affectively (self-confidence and motivation).

The research results show that the implementation of a curriculum innovation based on a cooperative learning model has had a positive impact on improving the Indonesian language skills of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Karanganyar, Ngawi. This innovation was realized through the integration of a cooperative approach into the planning and implementation of Indonesian language learning, where students actively interacted in small groups, discussed, completed project assignments, and collaboratively presented their work. Observations, interviews, and documentation revealed that students improved their reading comprehension skills, wrote narrative and expository texts, and expressed their opinions orally with greater structure and confidence.

One key finding was increased student participation in learning. The cooperative learning model allowed each student to play a role in the learning process, eliminating passive participation. Furthermore, the classroom atmosphere became more open, supportive, and fostered productive interactions. This aligns with Slavin's (1995)

perspective, which emphasizes that cooperative learning encourages shared responsibility, positive interdependence, and face-to-face interaction that strengthens social and cognitive mastery of the material. In this context, students learn not only from the teacher but also from their peers, strengthening understanding through dialogue and collaboration.

Another finding was an improvement in the quality of students' learning outcomes. Writing assignments completed in groups demonstrated significant progress in paragraph structure, diction, and sentence coherence. Students' listening and reading skills also showed improvement through the strengthening of critical reading strategies developed in group discussions. This improvement reflects the achievement of the research objective, namely, improving students' language skills through the implementation of curriculum innovations that prioritize collaboration and active learning.

Theoretically, the results of this study reinforce Vygotsky's social constructivism framework, where learning is viewed as a social process involving interactions between individuals to construct knowledge. The cooperative learning model accommodates students' zone of proximal development (ZPD) through scaffolding provided by peers and teachers. As students discuss and compare opinions, a process of negotiating meaning enriches their understanding and language skills. Thus, this model is oriented not only toward academic outcomes but also toward the development of social, communication, and reflective thinking skills.

This study also supports the findings of previous research by Nurhadi (2017), which found that cooperative learning significantly improves students' narrative writing skills. Similar findings were presented by Astuti and Handayani (2019), who highlighted the effectiveness of the cooperative approach in improving critical reading and logical thinking skills. However, the uniqueness and novelty of this study lies in the integration of the cooperative learning model into a curriculum innovation that is contextually designed according to student characteristics and local school needs. This means that this innovation is not generic, but integrated with the student learning culture at SMP Negeri 4 Karanganyar Ngawi.

In practice, the curriculum innovation is implemented through three main stages: (1) planning cooperative-based teaching materials (lessons learned, modules, student worksheets), (2) implementing collaborative project-based learning activities, and (3) reflecting on and evaluating learning outcomes with active student involvement. These three stages operate synergistically and involve teacher participation in designing flexible yet targeted strategies. Indonesian language teachers, in interviews, stated that this approach requires creativity in selecting methods, compiling materials, and forming heterogeneous learning groups.

From the students' perspective, this model provides a fun and meaningful learning experience. Most students reported understanding the material better when discussing it with their peers. They felt less afraid of making mistakes because learning took place in a supportive environment. This demonstrates that the cooperative approach not only improves learning outcomes but also creates a healthy and productive psychological climate. In the long term, this model can shape students' character to be open, communicative, and able to work in teams—essential competencies in the 21st century.

However, this study also identified several challenges in implementing the cooperative learning model. Among these are the unequal participation within groups, with students still found to be passive or dependent on other members. This is an important consideration in designing group management strategies to ensure that all students have balanced responsibilities and roles. Teachers need to design assignments with clear role divisions and provide reinforcement for less active students.

Another limitation is the need for more time to effectively manage group discussions. Given the limited timetable at school, teachers sometimes struggle to complete all learning stages in a single meeting. Therefore, careful time management and planning are necessary to ensure efficient learning activities. The researchers recommend

strengthening teacher training related to the design and implementation of adaptive cooperative learning.

The long-term impact of this research includes contributing to the development of a more participatory, relevant, and student-centered Indonesian language curriculum model. The curriculum should no longer be viewed solely as an administrative document, but as a dynamic instrument that can be developed according to the needs of students and the local school context. These findings also provide input for policymakers at the school level and education offices to support curriculum innovation based on active learning, particularly in language learning that demands reflective and communicative activities.

This research also opens up space for further exploration, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, these findings can serve as a basis for developing a conceptual model for Indonesian language learning that combines cooperative learning principles, a thematic approach, and digital technology. Practically, this research could be expanded to include more grades or different school levels to test the model's consistency and flexibility. Quantitative research could also be conducted to statistically measure language skill improvement, thereby strengthening the generalizability of the findings.

In conclusion, this discussion confirms that the implementation of a curriculum innovation based on a cooperative learning model significantly improves students' Indonesian language skills. This model emphasizes not only academic aspects but also fosters a collaborative, critical, and communicative learning ecosystem. In the context of national education transformation, this innovation is highly relevant for broader implementation as part of developing an adaptive and future-oriented curriculum.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of a curriculum innovation based on a cooperative learning model significantly improved the Indonesian language skills of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Karanganyar, Ngawi. Through a qualitative approach, observation and interview data showed that students experienced improvements in cognitive (material understanding), affective (enthusiasm and self-confidence), and social (cooperation and communication skills among students).

Observations indicated active student engagement in the learning process, particularly during group discussions, presentations, and text writing. Students not only understood the material better but also demonstrated improved abilities in expressing their opinions verbally and in writing. Interviews with teachers and students from various ability backgrounds indicated that the cooperative learning model created a more inclusive and collaborative learning environment and supported individual capacity building.

These findings reinforce previous findings that cooperative learning can foster the development of 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, communication, and teamwork. However, this study also updates the approach by emphasizing curriculum innovation as a crucial aspect in integrating cooperative learning models into junior high Indonesian language classes, a concept rarely discussed in depth in local contexts and the national curriculum. The impact of this study demonstrates the importance of teachers' roles in designing collaborative and contextual learning activities, as well as the urgency for schools to adapt curricula that encourage innovation and student empowerment. This study also underscores the need for ongoing training for teachers to implement cooperative learning models effectively and sustainably.

The limitations of this study lie in its scope, which only covered one school and class, and its qualitative approach without quantitative comparisons of learning outcomes. Therefore, further research is recommended using a mixed-methods approach or quasi-experiment to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of cooperative learning models in broader contexts. In addition, further studies are needed regarding the integration of technology to support the digital

implementation of this model, as a response to the challenges and opportunities of 21st-century learning.

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