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The Ability to Understand Expository Texts Through the Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Model for Class VIII-A Students

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Abstract

Expository text comprehension represents a critical component of Indonesian language learning for eighth-grade students in Islamic junior high schools. However, students in class VIII-A at MTs Al-Hilaal Morella demonstrate significant deficiencies in understanding expository texts, primarily attributed to limited instructional diversity and over-reliance on traditional lecture methods. This study investigated the effectiveness of the Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Model in enhancing expository text comprehension among 26 eighth-grade students at MTs Al-Hilaal Morella. Using a descriptive quantitative methodology, data were collected through observations, interviews, questionnaires, and assessments. Results indicated that prior to intervention, students achieved an average score of 49.62, well below the minimum passing standard of 70. Following implementation of the Jigsaw model, 24 out of 26 students (92.3%) achieved the minimum passing standard with an average score of 81.73, representing a significant improvement in comprehension outcomes. The findings demonstrate that the Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Model positively influences students' ability to understand expository texts through enhanced peer collaboration, individual accountability, and active learning engagement.

Keywords: *Cooperative Learning; Expository Text; Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Model; Middle School Education; Reading Comprehension.*

INTRODUCTION

Expository text comprehension represents a fundamental literacy skill essential for academic success across all subject areas (Meyer et al., 2018). Defined as informational texts that explain, describe, or inform readers about specific topics, expository texts present unique challenges for middle school students due to their complex organizational structures, specialized vocabulary, and abstract concepts (Westerveld & Armstrong, 2022). Unlike narrative texts, expository materials require readers to navigate various text structures such as cause-and-effect, compare-and-contrast, problem-solution, and sequential patterns, demanding sophisticated cognitive processing skills (Adams et al., 2024).

Research consistently demonstrates that students experience significant difficulties with expository text comprehension, particularly in middle school years when academic texts become increasingly complex (Meyer et al., 2018). These challenges are compounded by traditional instructional approaches that emphasize passive learning through lecture-based methods, limiting opportunities for active engagement and collaborative meaning construction (Liu et al., 2021). In the Indonesian educational context, where Bahasa Indonesia instruction emphasizes various text types including exposition, students often struggle with comprehension due to insufficient scaffolding and limited exposure to effective reading strategies (Syadza & Astuti, 2024).

The current study addresses the comprehension difficulties observed among eighth-grade students at MTs Al-Hilaal Morella, where preliminary observations revealed that students consistently underperformed in expository text comprehension tasks. Keraf (2020) defines exposition as text designed to elucidate and explain main ideas, thereby enhancing readers' understanding and knowledge of subject matter. However, students' diminished engagement and poor performance indicate that traditional instructional methods fail to adequately support expository text comprehension development.

The Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Model, originally developed by Aronson and colleagues in the 1970s, represents a structured approach to collaborative learning that addresses the limitations of traditional instruction (Vives et al., 2024). Grounded in cooperative learning theory, the Jigsaw method creates positive interdependence among students while maintaining individual accountability through a systematic process of expert group formation and peer teaching (Jeppu et al., 2023).

The theoretical foundation of Jigsaw rests on several key principles that directly support reading comprehension development. First, positive interdependence ensures that each student contributes unique knowledge essential for group success, motivating active participation and careful attention to text content (Vives et al., 2024). Second, individual accountability requires each student to master their assigned text segment and effectively communicate their understanding to peers, promoting deeper processing and elaboration of textual information (Syadza & Astuti, 2024). Third, the peer teaching component inherent in Jigsaw facilitates knowledge construction through explanation and discussion, processes known to enhance comprehension and retention (Liu et al., 2021).

International research provides compelling evidence for Jigsaw effectiveness in improving reading comprehension outcomes. Elsayed (2022) conducted an experimental study with Saudi EFL learners, demonstrating that students receiving Jigsaw instruction significantly outperformed those in traditional lecture-based classes on reading comprehension measures. Similarly, Yuhananik (2018) reported substantial improvements in ninth-grade students' reading comprehension following Jigsaw implementation, with increased participation and engagement observed across multiple learning cycles.

Students encounter multiple obstacles when processing expository texts, including complex microstructure elements (vocabulary, syntax) and macrostructure demands (text organization, signal words, idea integration) that tax working memory and require extensive background knowledge (Westerveld & Armstrong, 2022). These challenges are particularly pronounced for middle school students who are transitioning from primarily narrative to increasingly expository texts across academic disciplines.

Research indicates that cooperative learning approaches like Jigsaw effectively address these comprehension challenges through several mechanisms. The segmentation of texts in Jigsaw allows students to focus intensively on smaller portions, reducing cognitive load while promoting deeper analysis of text structure and content (Meyer et al., 2018). The expert group phase provides opportunities for strategy instruction and collaborative problem-solving, enabling students to develop and share effective comprehension approaches (Adams et al., 2024). Furthermore, the teaching phase requires students to

organize and articulate their understanding, processes that strengthen comprehension through elaboration and retrieval practice (Liu et al., 2021).

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Model in enhancing expository text comprehension among eighth-grade students at MTs Al-Hilaal Morella. Specifically, the research seeks to: (1) assess current levels of expository text comprehension among target students, (2) implement the Jigsaw model systematically within Indonesian language instruction, and (3) evaluate the impact of Jigsaw implementation on student comprehension outcomes and engagement levels.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive quantitative methodology to examine the effectiveness of the Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Model in improving expository text comprehension. The research design incorporated pre- and post-intervention assessments, systematic observation, and qualitative feedback collection to provide comprehensive evaluation of the intervention's impact.

The research was conducted at MTs Al-Hilaal Morella with 26 students from class VIII-A participating in the study. The participants represented a typical middle school population with diverse academic backgrounds and varying levels of reading proficiency. The classroom setting provided an authentic educational environment for implementing and evaluating the Jigsaw intervention.

Data collection utilized multiple instruments to ensure comprehensive assessment of intervention effectiveness:

Pre- and Post-Assessment Tests: Standardized expository text comprehension assessments measuring students' ability to identify main ideas, supporting details, text structure, and make inferences from informational texts.

Observation Sheets: Systematic observation protocols documenting student engagement, participation patterns, collaborative behaviors, and teacher-student interactions during Jigsaw implementation.

Student Questionnaires: Survey instruments assessing student perceptions of the learning experience, self-reported comprehension confidence, and attitudes toward cooperative learning.

Semi-structured Interviews: Individual and focus group interviews exploring student experiences, perceived benefits and challenges of the Jigsaw method, and suggestions for improvement.

The Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Model was implemented following established protocols adapted for expository text instruction:

Home Group Formation: Students were divided into heterogeneous home groups of 4-5 members, ensuring diverse ability levels within each group.

Expert Group Assignment: Each home group member received a different section of the target expository text, becoming an "expert" on their assigned segment.

Expert Group Meetings: Students with identical text segments formed expert groups to collaboratively analyze their sections, identify key concepts, and develop teaching strategies.

Home Group Instruction: Expert students returned to their home groups to teach their text segments, with group members responsible for learning all content through peer instruction.

Assessment and Reflection: Individual assessments evaluated comprehension of the complete text, followed by reflection activities on the learning process.

Quantitative data from pre- and post-assessments were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and percentage calculations. Qualitative data from observations, questionnaires, and interviews were analyzed thematically to identify patterns in student experiences and perceived benefits of the intervention.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Meeting I

Questionnaire Results

Table 1 Results of the Questionnaire on the Ability to Understand Expository Texts Thru Meeting I

No.	Questions	Quantity Student's Answer	
		Yes	No
1	Do you like the Indonesian language subject?	25	1
2	Have you ever written an expository text?	10	16
3	Is the material for learning to write expository texts difficult?	4	22
4	Is the material taught for writing expository texts interesting?	18	8
5	Are you happy when the teacher gives you the task of writing an expository text?	24	2
6	Are there any difficulties encountered when writing expository text?	5	21
7	Are there any steps you take before writing an expository text?	18	8
8	Are there examples provided by the teacher in teaching expository text writing?	22	4
9	Was the explanation given by the teacher about the steps for writing expository text well understood?	16	10
10	Is there a learning model used by teachers in teaching expository text writing?	15	11
11	Have you ever heard of the Jigsaw Cooperative Learning model?	3	23
12	Has the Jigsaw Cooperative Learning model ever been implemented in schools?	4	22
13	Are you happy to follow the learning of writing expository texts using the Cooperative Learning Model of the Jigsaw type?	5	21

The outcomes of the questionnaire about the application of the jigsaw cooperative learning model for comprehending expository texts among class VIII-A students at MTs Al-Hilaal Morella during the initial session are as follows: Three students were familiar with the jigsaw cooperative learning paradigm, whereas twenty-three pupils were not. Four pupils reported the implementation of the jigsaw cooperative learning approach in the school, while twenty-two students indicated its non-implementation. This signifies that the jigsaw cooperative learning paradigm has not been applied at MTs Al-Hilaal Morella.

2. Meeting II

Results of the Assessment of the Ability to Understand Expository Texts

Table 2. Results of Assessing the Ability to Understand Expository Texts Thru Meeting II

No.	Student Code	Aspect					Score	Value	Description
		Text Purpose	Linguistic Elements	Text Features	Text Type	Text Structure			
1	S1	4	4	4	2	4	18	90	✓
2	S2	2	4	4	2	4	16	80	✓
3	S3	2	3	4	4	4	17	85	✓
4	S4	3	2	4	2	4	15	75	✓
5	S5	2	4	4	2	4	16	80	✓
6	S6	4	4	3	4	4	19	95	✓

Table 2 indicates that, of the 26 students, 24 have attained the minimal passing grade , while 2 have not. The cumulative score is 2,125, and the mean score for comprehending expository texts through the jigsaw cooperative learning methodology is 81.73, above the minimal passing mark for the Indonesian language. Hypothesis testing is a process that culminates in a decision to either accept or reject the hypothesis. Hypothesis testing is used to assess the research variable about the comprehension of expository texts through the jigsaw cooperative learning paradigm.

This research hypothesizes that the jigsaw cooperative learning paradigm can ascertain students' comprehension of expository texts. The analysis of expository text comprehension, as presented in Table 4.2, reveals that among 26 students assessed across five focal areas—purpose, linguistic elements, text characteristics, text types, and text structure—24 students achieved the minimum passing grade, while 2 did not. The cumulative score is 2,125, with an average of 81.73, which satisfies the minimal passing grade for

the Indonesian language. The study commenced with an examination of students' proficiency in the Indonesian language. The learning outcomes of class VIII-A students at MTs Al-Hilaal Morella regarding expository text content remain significantly deficient. This is apparent as numerous pupils have yet to attain the minimum passing score of 70.

Student interview results reveal that educators often employ the lecture style in class, leading to pupils possessing limited understanding of the learning material. The medium employed by the instructor lacks engagement, resulting in pupil disinterest throughout instruction. Interviews with the Indonesian language instructor, Mr. Latukau, revealed that he had only employed the lecture style in the educational process to date. As a result, it is less stimulating for students throughout the educational experience. This issue presents challenges for students, adversely affecting their learning outcomes, especially in expository text resources. Consequently, the researcher and Indonesian language instructor endeavored to identify and address the deficiencies in learning activities, specifically regarding expository text material, through the use of the jigsaw cooperative learning model. This document presents a detailed account of the research findings from the pupils of class VIII-A at MTs Al-Hilaal Morella.

The meeting I was held in class VIII-A at MTs Al-Hilaal Morella on January 25, 2023. This lesson begins with an aperception, which involves presenting examples of expository texts: text 1 "Healthy Lifestyle" and text 2 "Environmental Conditions," followed by a question-and-answer session with the students. In this meeting, the researcher presented the basic competencies, learning objectives, indicators to be achieved, and motivated students to learn.

The reportable findings from the meeting II are as follows: Results of the Assessment of the Ability to Understand Expository Texts Based on Table 4.2, it is known that in the 1st meeting, out of 26 students, 24 students achieved the minimum passing grade, while 2 students did not. From the 5 assessment focuses, namely: text purpose, linguistic elements, text characteristics, text types, and text structure, most students have achieved the expected results. Data Results of Student Difficulties Based on Table 3, it is known that the difficulties experienced by students in class VIII-A of MTs Al-Hilaal Morella in following expository text learning thru the jigsaw cooperative learning model are as follows: 21 students still experience difficulties in accurately understanding the text's purpose, linguistic elements, and text types. Meanwhile, 5 students were able to understand the expository text learning material well, namely students (S6), (S11), (S12), (S16), and (S18).

The observation stage was conducted in the classroom during the learning process. Observations were made using an observation guide containing questions about student behavior during the learning process. Observations were made during the teaching and learning process thru observation sheets. The sequence of teacher and student activities was recorded on the observation sheets. The observed aspects include student and teacher activities. Thru observation, it can be determined how individual students' attitudes and behaviors are, the activities they engage in, their level of activity in participating in learning, students' responses to questions posed by the teacher, and it can evaluate students' learning activities as well as the assessment results obtained from students' learning activities. The results of this cycle's observations can be seen in the appendix.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Model for expository text instruction in class VIII-A at MTs Al-Hilaal Morella demonstrated significant positive effects on student comprehension outcomes and engagement levels. The intervention resulted in a 64.8% improvement in average comprehension scores, with 92.3% of students achieving the minimum passing standard compared to inadequate performance under traditional instructional methods.

These improvements can be attributed to key mechanisms inherent in the Jigsaw approach, including systematic text segmentation that reduces cognitive load, collaborative strategy development in expert groups, peer teaching requirements that promote elaboration and organization of ideas, and increased student engagement through active participation. The findings align with international research demonstrating Jigsaw effectiveness across diverse educational contexts and support the integration of cooperative learning approaches in Indonesian language instruction. The study's results have important implications for educational practice, suggesting that systematic implementation of evidence-based

cooperative learning methods can effectively address widespread difficulties with expository text comprehension. However, successful implementation requires careful attention to group formation, explicit instruction in cooperative procedures, and adequate teacher preparation and support.

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