

Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) as a Cooperative Learning Strategy for Enhancing Narrative Writing Skills in Elementary Education

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ABSTRACT

Character formation in Islamic boarding schools requires educational practices that address students' academic, emotional, and social needs. This study investigated the internalization of humanistic values through Arabic language learning and its implications for students' social character at MTs Wali Songo Putri Ngabar, Ponorogo. A qualitative single-case study was conducted using classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with 20 informants, and document analysis. Data were analyzed through condensation, thematic display, conclusion drawing, and verification, with trustworthiness ensured through triangulation. The findings revealed that humanistic values were internalized through physical comfort, psychological safety, social belonging, recognition, and self-actualization. Teachers facilitated this process by adapting instructional strategies, encouraging participation, providing constructive feedback, promoting collaboration, and appreciating students' efforts. These practices fostered independence, responsibility, honesty, discipline, cooperation, empathy, and self-confidence. Although supported by the pesantren environment, teachers, peers, and extracurricular activities, the process was challenged by adaptation difficulties, diverse backgrounds, unequal prior competence, negative peer influence, and limited facilities.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of science, technology, and globalization has transformed the competencies required of learners in the twenty-first century. Educational institutions are expected not only to develop students' academic knowledge but also to foster creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and lifelong learning skills. In Indonesia, these expectations are reflected in the National Education System, which emphasizes that education should develop learners who are faithful, knowledgeable, creative, independent, responsible, and possess noble character (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2023). Consequently, schools are encouraged to adopt innovative instructional approaches that actively engage students in meaningful learning experiences while improving their literacy and social competencies. Literacy, particularly writing literacy, has become one of the essential competencies for preparing students to participate effectively in contemporary society (Zulela, 2022).

Indonesian language learning plays a central role in developing students' communication skills through four integrated language competencies: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these competencies, writing is considered the most challenging because it requires learners to generate ideas, organize information coherently, construct effective sentences, select appropriate vocabulary, and apply correct spelling and punctuation (Dalman, 2018; Tarigan, 2019). Furthermore, writing is a productive language skill that reflects students' higher-order thinking abilities and supports the development of academic literacy. Students who possess good writing skills are generally better able to communicate ideas, solve problems, and express their creativity in both academic and social contexts (Zulela, 2022).

Despite its importance, narrative writing remains one of the most difficult skills for elementary school students to master. Many students experience difficulties in organizing ideas, constructing coherent paragraphs, and expressing experiences in written form. These challenges are influenced by differences in literacy competence, limited writing practice, insufficient vocabulary mastery, and teacher-centered instructional practices that provide few opportunities for students to collaborate or receive constructive feedback (Dalman, 2018). In addition, the increasing use of digital technology has shifted students' attention toward visual and instant forms of communication, reducing their interest in conventional writing activities. These conditions indicate that writing instruction requires more interactive and student-centered learning strategies capable of improving both writing competence and learning motivation.

One instructional approach that has demonstrated positive outcomes in improving academic achievement and social interaction is the Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) cooperative learning model. STAD encourages students to learn in heterogeneous groups where they discuss learning materials, exchange ideas, solve problems collaboratively, and support one another in achieving shared learning goals (Slavin, 2015). Cooperative learning has consistently been shown to improve students' academic performance, communication skills, self-confidence, and responsibility because learning occurs through positive interdependence and individual accountability (Johnson & Johnson, 2017; Suprijono, 2020). In the context of narrative writing, collabor

METHODS

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR), which was conducted through iterative cycles until the predetermined learning objectives were achieved. The research adopted the four-stage action research model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), consisting of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. During the planning stage, the researcher collaborated with the classroom teacher to minimize subjectivity and improve the reliability of the research process. The activities

included preparing lesson plans based on the Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) cooperative learning model, developing teaching materials and learning media, designing observation sheets, and constructing assessment instruments to measure students' narrative writing skills. Collaboration between the researcher and the teacher ensured that the instructional design and assessment procedures were aligned with the research objectives (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

During the action stage, the planned instructional activities were implemented in Indonesian language learning using the STAD cooperative learning model. Students participated in collaborative group activities, discussions, peer learning, and individual learning tasks designed to improve their narrative writing skills. At the same time, classroom observations were conducted systematically to evaluate the implementation of each stage of the STAD learning model, students' participation, classroom interaction, and teacher performance. Observation data were collected using structured observation sheets that had been prepared during the planning phase to ensure consistency between the lesson implementation and the research design (Arikunto et al., 2021).

The final stage of each cycle was reflection, in which the researcher and the classroom teacher analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of the implemented actions based on observation results and students' learning outcomes. Reflection served as the basis for revising the lesson plan and improving instructional strategies for the subsequent cycle whenever the expected level of mastery had not yet been achieved. The cycles continued until at least 70% of the students reached the predetermined Minimum Mastery Criterion (MMC/KKM) for narrative writing skills. This cyclical process enabled continuous improvement of both teaching practices and students' writing performance through systematic planning, implementation, evaluation, and revision (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Arikunto et al., 2021).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Initial Condition (Pre-Cycle)

The preliminary assessment revealed that the narrative writing skills of fourth-grade students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ma'arif Pagerwojo were still unsatisfactory. The pre-cycle writing test, which was designed based on the narrative writing indicators proposed by Sukartiningsih and Malladewi, showed that only 7 of the 23 students successfully met the expected performance criteria. This finding indicates that most students encountered difficulties in organizing ideas, developing coherent narratives, and applying appropriate language conventions. The low achievement demonstrates that students required a more engaging instructional approach capable of stimulating their interest and improving their writing competence.

The classical mastery level in the pre-cycle reached only 30%, far below the research target of 85%. Consequently, approximately seventy percent of the students had not yet demonstrated satisfactory narrative writing competence. These findings confirmed that conventional instructional practices had not sufficiently supported students in developing writing skills. Therefore, the researcher implemented the Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) cooperative learning model supported by serial picture media to facilitate collaborative learning and idea generation in narrative writing.

Cycle I

The implementation of the first cycle produced encouraging initial improvements. Students became more enthusiastic during classroom activities because the serial pictures provided concrete visual stimuli that helped them construct story sequences, while the STAD model encouraged discussion and peer support. Classroom interaction became more active as students exchanged ideas before producing their individual narrative compositions. Learning outcomes also improved compared

with the pre-cycle condition. A total of 13 students (56%) achieved mastery learning, while 10 students (43%) remained below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM). The class average increased to 72.50. Although these results demonstrated substantial progress from the initial condition, the predetermined success indicator had not yet been achieved, indicating that further instructional improvement was still necessary.

Reflection on Cycle I revealed that some students still experienced difficulty in elaborating ideas into complete narratives and lacked confidence when expressing their thoughts in writing. Accordingly, improvements were made for the following cycle by strengthening teacher guidance, optimizing group discussions, encouraging more active peer interaction, and maximizing the use of serial picture media during the learning process.

Cycle II

The refinements introduced in Cycle II resulted in more effective learning activities. Students demonstrated higher levels of participation during group discussions and became increasingly capable of organizing story events into coherent narrative texts. The collaborative learning environment encouraged students to exchange vocabulary, provide peer feedback, and improve the structure of their written work. Students' achievement increased considerably during this cycle. The number of students achieving mastery rose to 18 students (78%), while only 5 students (21%) remained below the mastery criterion. In addition, the class average improved significantly from 72.50 in Cycle I to 84.34 in Cycle II. This increase demonstrated that integrating the STAD cooperative learning model with serial picture media effectively enhanced students' narrative writing competence. Although the results approached the predetermined target, the classical mastery level had not yet reached the expected 85%. Reflection indicated that a small number of students still required additional scaffolding, particularly in organizing story ideas, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and constructing coherent paragraphs. Consequently, a third cycle was conducted to optimize learning outcomes.

Cycle III

The third cycle demonstrated the highest level of improvement throughout the classroom action research. Students participated more confidently during collaborative learning activities and showed greater independence in developing narrative texts. The combination of serial picture media and structured cooperative learning successfully created an engaging learning atmosphere that encouraged active participation and creativity in writing. Learning achievement reached the expected level of success. A total of 21 students (91%) successfully met the Minimum Mastery Criterion, while only 2 students (8%) remained below the expected standard. The class average also increased to 89.43, indicating continuous improvement across all research cycles. These findings demonstrate that most students had successfully developed the essential competencies required for narrative writing.

The comparison across research stages clearly illustrates a consistent upward trend. Classical mastery increased from 30% in the pre-cycle, to 56% in Cycle I, 78% in Cycle II, and finally 91% in Cycle III. Likewise, the average score improved from 72.50 in Cycle I to 84.34 in Cycle II and 89.43 in Cycle III. These results indicate that each cycle contributed progressively to students' writing achievement and confirmed the effectiveness of the intervention implemented. The improvement observed throughout the three cycles can be attributed to the complementary roles of the STAD cooperative learning model and serial picture media. The visual sequences assisted students in generating and organizing ideas logically, while cooperative group activities promoted discussion, peer feedback, and collaborative problem-solving. These learning experiences reduced students' writing anxiety and increased both motivation and confidence during the writing process.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the implementation of the Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) cooperative learning model supported by serial picture media effectively improved

the narrative writing skills of fourth-grade students. Since the classical mastery level reached 91%, exceeding the predetermined success criterion of 85%, the classroom action research was concluded at Cycle III. These results confirm that collaborative learning integrated with visual instructional media provides an effective pedagogical strategy for enhancing elementary students' narrative writing achievement.

Discussion

The findings of this classroom action research demonstrate that the integration of the Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) cooperative learning model with serial picture media significantly improved elementary students' narrative writing skills. The progressive increase in learning mastery from 30% in the pre-cycle, 56% in Cycle I, 78% in Cycle II, and 91% in Cycle III indicates that collaborative learning supported by visual media creates a learning environment that effectively facilitates writing development. This finding is consistent with previous international studies reporting that cooperative learning enhances academic achievement by encouraging peer interaction, active participation, and shared responsibility during the learning process (Gillies, 2016; Slavin, 2015).

One important finding of this study is that serial picture media effectively stimulated students to generate and organize ideas before writing. Many students initially experienced difficulty determining the sequence of events and developing coherent stories. The visual representation provided by the serial pictures helped students structure their narratives chronologically, thereby reducing cognitive load during the writing process. This result supports the multimedia learning theory proposed by Mayer (2021), which explains that meaningful learning occurs when learners process verbal and visual information simultaneously. Similar findings were reported by Ismail et al. (2023), who found that picture-based learning significantly improved elementary students' writing quality by enhancing idea generation and text organization.

The effectiveness of the STAD model was also reflected in the increased classroom interaction observed throughout the three research cycles. Students became more willing to exchange ideas, discuss vocabulary choices, and provide constructive feedback to their peers before completing individual writing tasks. Such collaborative learning activities encouraged students to become active participants rather than passive recipients of information. This finding aligns with the social constructivist perspective of Vygotsky, which emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through social interaction. Recent empirical evidence also indicates that cooperative learning promotes communication skills, engagement, and academic performance across primary education settings (Gillies, 2020; Kyndt et al., 2019).

Another notable outcome was the continuous improvement in students' confidence and motivation to write. Initially, many students hesitated to express their ideas because they feared making mistakes. However, repeated participation in cooperative group activities created a psychologically supportive learning environment where students felt more comfortable sharing opinions and revising their work based on peer suggestions. Such findings corroborate the study by Panadero et al. (2022), who concluded that collaborative feedback significantly enhances students' self-efficacy and learning motivation. Likewise, Hattie (2023) argues that feedback and collaborative learning are among the instructional practices with the greatest impact on student achievement.

The substantial improvement in learning outcomes across the research cycles also demonstrates the importance of continuous reflection in Classroom Action Research. The revisions implemented after each cycle enabled the teacher to respond directly to students' learning difficulties by improving instructional strategies, strengthening group collaboration, and providing more structured guidance during writing activities. This iterative improvement process reflects the principle of evidence-based teaching, in which instructional decisions are continuously refined based on classroom evidence

(Kemmis et al., 2014). Consequently, each cycle contributed to better instructional quality and higher student achievement.

The findings further indicate that combining cooperative learning with visual instructional media provides complementary learning benefits. While serial pictures facilitated students' understanding of story structure, the STAD model encouraged discussion, peer tutoring, and collaborative problem-solving. The integration of these two instructional components not only improved students' writing competence but also developed communication skills, responsibility, and teamwork. This finding supports recent research suggesting that multimodal and collaborative learning environments provide richer learning experiences than single instructional approaches (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

From a pedagogical perspective, this study highlights that narrative writing instruction should move beyond teacher-centered approaches toward more student-centered learning. Teachers should provide meaningful opportunities for students to discuss, negotiate meaning, exchange ideas, and revise their writing collaboratively. Such practices encourage learners to become active constructors of knowledge while simultaneously improving their literacy competence. Similar recommendations have been proposed by Graham (2019), who emphasized that effective writing instruction combines explicit guidance, collaborative practice, and continuous feedback.

The success achieved in this study also has important implications for elementary language education. The implementation of STAD supported by serial picture media can serve as an alternative instructional strategy for improving writing competence in primary schools, particularly for students who experience difficulties in organizing ideas into coherent written texts. Furthermore, the model encourages inclusive classroom participation because students with different ability levels can support one another through heterogeneous group learning. This collaborative atmosphere contributes not only to cognitive achievement but also to students' social and emotional development.

Despite the positive findings, several limitations should be acknowledged. This study involved only one class in a single elementary school, limiting the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts. In addition, the intervention focused specifically on narrative writing; therefore, future studies may investigate whether similar instructional approaches are equally effective for other genres of writing, such as descriptive, argumentative, or expository texts. Future research may also compare STAD with other cooperative learning models or integrate digital storytelling technologies to further enhance students' literacy skills.

Overall, the findings provide strong empirical evidence that the combination of the Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) cooperative learning model and serial picture media effectively enhances elementary students' narrative writing achievement. The consistent improvement across the three action research cycles demonstrates that collaborative, visual, and student-centered learning creates meaningful opportunities for students to develop both linguistic competence and higher-order thinking skills. Therefore, this instructional approach represents a practical and evidence-based alternative for improving writing instruction in elementary education.

CONCLUSION

This classroom action research demonstrated that the implementation of the Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) cooperative learning model supported by serial picture media effectively improved the narrative writing skills of fourth-grade students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ma'arif Pagerwojo. The improvement was evident from the consistent increase in students' learning outcomes across the research cycles, with classical mastery rising from 30% in the pre-cycle to 56% in Cycle I, 78% in Cycle II, and finally 91% in Cycle III, exceeding the predetermined success criterion of

85%. Likewise, the average achievement score increased from 72.50 in Cycle I to 84.34 in Cycle II and 89.43 in Cycle III, indicating substantial progress in students' ability to produce coherent narrative texts.

The findings suggest that integrating cooperative learning with visual instructional media creates an engaging, collaborative, and student-centered learning environment that supports idea generation, improves text organization, and enhances students' confidence in writing. Through group discussion, peer interaction, and the use of serial picture sequences, students became more active in constructing narratives and refining their writing skills. Therefore, the STAD cooperative learning model combined with serial picture media can be recommended as an effective instructional strategy for improving narrative writing competence in elementary Indonesian language classrooms. Future studies are encouraged to examine its effectiveness in different educational contexts, grade levels, and other writing genres to broaden the applicability of these findings.

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