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ENHANCING PUPILS' INTEREST IN READING IN INDONESIAN LANGUAGE LESSONS THROUGH TEACHERS' CREATIVITY IN YEAR 4 AT SDN 10 MAHIKAM

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Abstract
The low reading interest of primary school pupils remains a persistent issue that affects their learning outcomes, particularly in Indonesian language learning. Reading skills serve as a fundamental foundation that determines pupils' academic success. One strategic solution to address this problem is through teachers' creativity in designing instruction. Creative teachers are able to create interactive, enjoyable, and experience-based learning environments that foster pupils' motivation to read. This study aims to improve students' reading interest through the implementation of creative teaching strategies in Year 4 at SDN 10 Mahakam. The method used was Classroom Action Research (CAR) based on the Kemmis and McTaggart spiral model, conducted in two cycles comprising planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research subjects were 14 students with varying reading abilities. The results showed an increase in learning implementation from 2.54 to 3.47 and in students' reading interest from 2.47 to 3.57. It can be concluded that the application of creative teaching strategies effectively improves learning implementation and reading interest whilst fostering an independent reading culture in the classroom.
Keywords: Reading Interest; Teacher Creativity; Indonesian Language Learning

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading interest is a fundamental aspect of Indonesian language learning in primary schools as it plays a role in broadening horizons, fostering empathy and imagination, developing critical thinking skills, and supporting text comprehension. During the golden age of development, the cultivation of reading interest through enjoyable activities serves as a foundation for academic success and character development, as well as a strong foundation for literacy. Research by Herawati et al. (2023) indicates that 56% of primary school pupils have a 'good' level of literacy interest, whilst the remainder remain at a 'moderate' level. These findings suggest that the strengthening of a reading culture in primary schools still requires improvement through more effective and engaging teaching strategies.

National policies such as the School Literacy Movement (GLS), the Indonesia Reads Programme, and the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum have provided opportunities to strengthen reading culture in schools. However, the effectiveness of their implementation is heavily influenced by teachers' creativity in developing varied, contextual, and enjoyable learning activities. Pujianti's (2022) research found that primary school pupils' interest in reading during online learning was in the moderate category due to the use of monotonous teaching methods that led to learning fatigue. These findings demonstrate that less innovative teaching strategies can affect pupils' engagement in literacy activities.

National data also indicates that the reading culture among primary school pupils remains relatively low. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS, 2025) notes that only 20.7% of primary school pupils read books regularly every day. This situation highlights that strengthening reading interest is an urgent need requiring intervention through creative and sustained learning.

The low reading interest among pupils is influenced by various external and internal factors. Research by Nurhidayatika et al. (2025) indicates that an unsupportive family environment, the dominance of gadget use, a lack of library facilities, and low intrinsic motivation are the main factors causing low reading interest among pupils. These findings are reinforced by research by Hapsari et al. (2023) and Nisa (2025), which revealed that a lack of engaging reading materials, low parental involvement, and the influence of the social environment also weaken reading habits among primary school pupils. Furthermore, research by Nuraeni et al. (2024) indicates that family socio-economic background and a lack of a reading culture at home are significant barriers to the development of pupils' interest in reading.

Advances in digital technology have also had an impact on pupils' reading habits. Research by Rauf and Fatimah (2022) indicates that high levels of gadget usage have a negative correlation with pupils' literacy motivation, as the majority of time is spent on entertainment rather than reading books. Aditya's (2022) study also found a significant relationship between high gadget usage and a decline in students' reading interest, both in terms of frequency and the quality of reading material. These findings suggest that the development of digital technology can pose a challenge to the strengthening of literacy culture if not balanced with creative and relevant learning strategies that align with students' lives.

The issue of low reading interest was also observed among Year 4 pupils at SDN 10 Mahikam. Based on the pre-intervention results, pupils' engagement in Indonesian language lessons remained relatively low. Most pupils lacked focus during reading and discussion activities and had not fully grasped the learning objectives. Interview results showed that pupils tended to prefer certain genres of reading material, such as adventure and fantasy, and still relied on recommendations from teachers or friends when choosing what to read. Some pupils also experienced difficulty reading long texts, so they rarely read independently outside school.

Interviews with teachers revealed that pupils' independent reading habits remain low, interest in new books has not yet developed, and pupil engagement in post-reading discussions remains minimal. Literacy activities such as reading corners and literacy competitions are also not enthusiastically participated in by students, as they are more interested in play activities and the use of mobile devices. Classroom observations show that only a small proportion of students demonstrate high enthusiasm for reading activities, whilst the majority of students are not yet accustomed to reading without the teacher's instruction.

Data from the reading interest questionnaire showed an average score of 1.34 with a total score of 394. Although some students showed an interest in reading activities, their involvement was still limited to specific types of reading material and did not yet indicate a habit of regular reading. Furthermore, the results of the Indonesian language assessment

on the theme “The Beauty of Togetherness” and the sub-theme “Togetherness in the Family” showed that the average score for students’ active participation was 19.29 and for discipline 19.36, whilst the aspects of independence and group work remained low with an average of 15.93. Students’ final marks ranged from 49 to 54, with an average of 50.24. These data indicate that students’ collaborative skills and independent learning abilities still need to be improved to support more optimal learning.

Based on these empirical findings, efforts are required to improve learning that can enhance pupils’ interest in reading through creative, contextual, and enjoyable strategies. Therefore, this study aims to enhance the reading interest of Year 4 pupils at SDN 10 Mahikam through Classroom Action Research (CAR) conducted systematically through the stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. It is hoped that this study will make a tangible contribution to improving the reading culture of primary school pupils whilst also serving as an alternative strategy for literacy learning that is more effective, interactive, and sustainable.

2. METHODS

This study utilised the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method, which is reflective, collaborative, and cyclical, to enhance pupils’ reading interest through teachers’ creativity in Year 4 at SDN 10 Mahikam. The research drew upon the model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), comprising the stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research was conducted in the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year with 14 Year 4 pupils and the class teacher as the action implementer. The research focus was directed at improving pupils’ interest in reading, encompassing attraction, engagement, and a positive attitude towards literacy activities.

The research instruments included questionnaires, observations, interviews, and documentation. The questionnaire used 21 Likert-scale statements based on seven aspects of reading interest; observations covered 10 indicators of reading behaviour; semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and pupils; whilst documentation was used to collect supporting evidence in the form of photographs and pupils’ work. Data were collected during the pre-intervention phase, Cycle I, and Cycle II, and were subsequently analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative analysis involved calculating means and percentage increases, whilst qualitative analysis involved data reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions. The intervention was deemed successful if ≥75% of students showed an increase in reading interest scores of at least 10 points and demonstrated increased enthusiasm and engagement in reading activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This classroom action research was conducted in Class IV of SDN 10 Mahikam, located in Ketuat Hamlet, Keluas Hulu Village, Melawi Regency, West Kalimantan, during the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The main focus of this research was to improve students’ reading interest through the application of teachers’ creativity in the Indonesian language learning process. The research subjects consisted of 14 pupils, comprising 7 boys and 7 girls. The research was carried out through two action cycles covering the stages of planning, implementation of actions, observation, and reflection, in accordance with the procedures in the Classroom Action Research (CAR) model. Data

were collected using several techniques, namely a reading interest questionnaire, an observation sheet on the implementation of learning, in-depth interviews, and documentation of learning activities. All data were analysed using qualitative descriptive methods with the aim of obtaining a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of the creative learning strategies applied by the teacher in fostering reading interest and strengthening a culture of literacy within the classroom environment.

Prior to the intervention, initial findings indicated that pupils' interest in reading was still classified as low to moderate. Based on the results of initial observations, the majority of pupils demonstrated a high degree of reliance on the teacher's instructions and were not yet able to take the initiative to read independently. Reading activities carried out in the classroom remained conventional and monotonous, such as taking turns to read texts without any follow-up activities that were challenging or enjoyable. This situation resulted in low levels of active student participation and a lack of enthusiasm for literacy activities. The results of the pre-intervention questionnaire reinforced these findings, with the average reading interest score falling below the high category, indicating that Indonesian language teaching had not yet succeeded in fostering intrinsic motivation to read among students.

These conditions indicate the need for more creative and student-centred learning innovations. Teachers are required to provide interactive, contextual and enjoyable reading activities, so that students read not merely out of academic obligation, but out of a personal awareness and interest in the text ( ). The implementation of creative learning strategies is expected to facilitate meaningful learning experiences, strengthen students' emotional connection with reading activities, and create a literate classroom environment. Thus, through the systematically designed actions in this study, it is hoped that there will be a significant increase in students' interest in reading, which will ultimately have a positive impact on their achievement in Indonesian language learning and the development of a love of reading from an early age.

Cycle I of this classroom action research was conducted on 8 September 2025 under the theme "The Beauty of Togetherness." During the planning stage, the researcher and the collaborating teacher developed a syllabus, Lesson Plans (RPP), assessment instruments, and literacy-based creative learning strategies aimed at enhancing students' interest in reading. The primary focus of the learning was on the ability to identify the main ideas in narrative texts, which was expected to develop critical thinking skills whilst fostering pupils' curiosity about the content of the reading material. The action plan was designed with the learning needs of Year 4 pupils in mind, ensuring that learning activities were adapted to their cognitive development level and included enjoyable and interactive tasks.

During the implementation phase, the teacher applied various creative approaches, such as shared reading, discussions on the meaning of the text, and additional literacy activities including book talks and the creation of simple summaries. Observation results showed that the average score for student engagement reached 64.79, with active participation and responsibility for learning falling into the 'good' category. Pupils appeared to be showing an interest in participating in reading activities, although aspects of independence and group work still required improvement. Meanwhile, the assessment

of the lesson plan implementation yielded an average score of 2.54 in the 'good' category, indicating that the learning process had been effective. However, the core activities and learning reflections were deemed to require further strengthening to better motivate pupils to develop their independent reading skills.

The results of the reading interest questionnaire at the end of Cycle I showed an average score of 2.47, falling into the high category, indicating an increase in reading interest compared to the initial conditions. Nevertheless, there were still some students with low scores, suggesting the need for an individualised approach to provide additional support and motivation. Based on the results of interviews and joint reflections with teachers and students, there were indications of positive changes in students' attitudes towards literacy activities. Students began bringing their own books to school, showed initiative in reading outside of lesson times, and were more active in discussions about the content of their reading. These findings indicate that the creative learning strategies implemented are beginning to have a positive impact on students' reading behaviour and habits in the classroom.

However, reflections at the end of the cycle showed that consistency in reading and the ability to reflect on reading content still need further development. Therefore, improvements for Cycle II focused on enhancing cooperation among students, concentration in understanding texts, and the implementation of more engaging literacy activities, such as language games and mini-literacy projects. The results of Cycle I are consistent with the findings of Aini and Wulandari (2023), who emphasised that teacher creativity plays a significant role in enhancing student learning participation, and are reinforced by the findings of Pujianti's (2022) research, which demonstrated that creative learning is capable of fostering a meaningful interest in reading. Consequently, the results from Cycle I serve as a crucial foundation for designing more effective and sustainable learning strategies to enhance literacy culture among primary school pupils.

Cycle II of this classroom action research was conducted as a follow-up to the reflections from the first cycle, with the aim of addressing the weaknesses identified previously. The implementation of this cycle continued to follow the four main stages—planning, implementation of actions, observation, and reflection—in accordance with the fundamental principles of classroom action research. During the planning stage, the teacher developed teaching modules integrated with the Pancasila Student Profile, emphasising collaborative, creative, and critical thinking values in learning. The learning strategies employed were oriented towards a contextual literacy approach, namely linking reading and writing activities to students' real-life experiences at school and in their surrounding environment. Furthermore, observation and interview instruments were updated to ensure greater validity and reliability, and to comprehensively capture data regarding changes in pupils' reading interests and the effectiveness of the implemented learning strategies.

During the implementation phase, the learning theme was "Cooperation at School", with a focus on developing narrative writing skills as a form of integration between reading and writing abilities. Teachers used various creative methods such as story mapping, reading corners, and peer sharing to motivate students to actively participate in every literacy activity. The results of the observations showed a significant increase in

student enthusiasm and engagement compared to Cycle I. The average learning process score reached 76.71, an increase of 11.92 points from the previous cycle. Students appeared more confident in expressing their ideas through writing and discussing with their classmates.

Observation data revealed a notable improvement in the implementation of learning, with the average score rising from 2.54 to 3.47, placing it in the 'very good' category. The aspects of reflection and core activities saw the highest increases, each rising by nearly one point, indicating that the teacher successfully addressed the weaknesses identified in the previous cycle. The results of the reading interest questionnaire also showed significant progress, rising from 2.47 to 3.57, placing it in the very high category. All pupils demonstrated consistent improvement; indeed, three pupils saw their scores rise by more than two points, illustrating the positive impact of implementing contextual literacy learning strategies on enhancing reading interest.

Based on the results of observations and in-depth interviews, it was found that pupils began to show initiative in reading without the teacher's instruction, actively discussed the content of the reading material, and recommended books to their peers. This indicates that a culture of literacy has grown into a positive habit within the classroom environment, no longer merely an instructional activity. This finding aligns with the research results of Putri and Kurniawan (2024), which confirm that learning based on the context of students' lives can significantly increase participation and motivation in reading. Furthermore, the findings of Nugroho and Purnomo (2022) reinforce that a high interest in reading contributes to the development of students' character, fostering reflection, responsibility, and a strong sense of curiosity. Thus, the implementation of Cycle II demonstrates the success of creative and contextual learning strategies in building a sustainable culture of literacy in primary schools.

A comparative analysis of the two cycles reveals a significant improvement across all aspects of learning, both in terms of process and outcomes. Quantitatively, the implementation of learning improved from 2.54 in Cycle I to 3.47 in Cycle II, an increase of 0.93 points, placing it in the 'very good' category. An increase was also observed in pupils' reading interest, which rose from 2.47 to 3.57—an increase of 1.10 points—placing it in the 'very high' category. Meanwhile, the average score for the learning process rose from 64.79 to 76.71, an increase of 11.92 points. This rise indicates that the implemented learning strategies successfully enhanced students' motivation, engagement, and independence in literacy activities.

Qualitatively, improvements were also evident in changes to pupils' reading behaviour and habits in the classroom. In the first cycle, most pupils were just beginning to show an interest in reading independently and were starting to take an interest in fiction. However, by the second cycle, pupils were able to read without being told to do so by the teacher, were more active in discussing the content of the texts, and were enthusiastic about participating in school literacy activities such as reading corners and book swaps. Interviews with teachers indicated that the implementation of creative learning strategies based on contextual literacy was able to create a more interactive, enjoyable, and literate learning atmosphere. This demonstrates development that is not only academic in nature

but also social and affective, whereby students became more confident, collaborative, and responsible for their learning activities.

This improvement in learning outcomes and reading interest demonstrates that creative learning strategies based on contextual literacy are proven effective in fostering students' intrinsic motivation and active participation. Teachers' creativity in designing activities such as reading corners, paired reading, and writing narratives based on personal experiences plays a crucial role in fostering curiosity and independent learning. This aligns with humanistic learning motivation theory, which emphasises that students will demonstrate high learning interest when they are in a positive, creative, and meaningful learning environment. A pleasant learning atmosphere serves as a key stimulus for the development of reading interest, as students feel valued, free to express themselves, and emotionally engaged in every literacy activity.

The findings of this research indicate significant practical implications for improving the quality of Indonesian language learning in primary schools, particularly in strengthening literacy culture. Until now, Indonesian language learning has tended to focus on cognitive aspects whilst neglecting the affective and contextual dimensions that play a vital role in fostering a love of reading. A creativity-based approach introduces a new paradigm in which pupils are not merely recipients of information but active participants in the process of knowledge construction. Through dynamic, contextual, and participatory lesson design, teachers are able to create a meaningful and enjoyable learning environment. Pedagogical creativity has proven to be a determining factor in building a literate and sustainable learning environment in primary schools.

Creativity in learning encompasses not only a variety of methods or media, but also the teacher's ability to link teaching materials to pupils' experiences and real-life situations. Activities such as reading corners, paired reading, and narrative writing encourage a paradigm shift in reading from a passive activity towards an exploratory one that fosters intrinsic motivation. Teachers act as facilitators who guide pupils' critical and reflective thinking processes, rather than merely delivering content. This approach fosters meaningful social interaction in the classroom, strengthens communication among pupils, and instils collaborative values. Creativity-based learning not only enhances literacy skills but also shapes pupils' character, making them reflective, independent, and adaptable to change.

Although the research findings indicate a significant improvement, the implementation of creative literacy strategies faces several challenges. Differences in reading ability among pupils, as well as a lack of engaging reading materials, are factors that affect the effectiveness of learning. To address this, teachers employ a differentiated approach and provide individual support so that each pupil can develop in line with their abilities and needs. The use of visual media such as images, word cards, and short videos has proven effective in helping students understand the context of the text and enhancing their emotional engagement. This multisensory approach fosters an interactive and inclusive learning experience, whilst strengthening students' intrinsic motivation to read. Thus, teachers' creativity serves not only as technical innovation but also as a pedagogical strategy in creating a humanistic and literate learning environment.

Overall, the research findings confirm the effectiveness of teacher-led creative learning interventions in enhancing students' interest and learning outcomes. Empirical data shows a significant increase in indicators of reading interest (from 2.47 to 3.57), the implementation of learning (from 2.54 to 3.47), and learning outcomes (from 64.79 to 76.71). This improvement indicates that learning designed in a creative and contextual manner is capable of optimising pupils' potential comprehensively. The literacy culture that has flourished in Class IV of SDN 10 Mahikam reflects the success of humanistic, collaborative, and transformative learning strategies. Thus, Indonesian language learning serves not only as a means of language mastery but also as a vehicle for character development, critical thinking, and a lifelong love of literacy.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of the classroom action research conducted over two cycles indicate a significant improvement in the implementation of learning and pupils' interest in reading. The average score for the implementation of learning increased from 2.54 in Cycle I to 3.47 in Cycle II. This increase indicates that the application of creative learning strategies successfully created a more effective, interactive, and enjoyable learning atmosphere. The reflection aspect was the component with the highest improvement, signifying the active involvement of teachers and students in evaluating and improving the learning process.

Students' reading interest also saw a significant increase, with the average score rising from 2.47 to 3.57. All students demonstrated positive development, particularly in terms of enthusiasm for reading activities and participation in discussions about the texts. The implementation of creative strategies, such as the use of engaging media, interactive reading activities, and the development of reading corners, proved capable of fostering students' intrinsic motivation to read and strengthening reading habits within the classroom environment.

In addition to quantitative results, observational data and interviews indicate a tangible growth in reading habits among the pupils. They have begun to read independently without coercion, even recommending reading material to their peers. These findings confirm that teacher-led creative learning not only enhances reading interest but also fosters reading awareness and sustainable independent learning.

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