

Application of a holistic approach in learning Indonesian Language for elementary school students

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to provide an in-depth description of the application of a holistic approach in Indonesian language learning and its benefits for elementary school students. The research method used is qualitative with a qualitative descriptive design. Data were collected through unstructured interviews with teachers, participatory observation in the classroom, and documentation, then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The results showed that the holistic approach, with the principles of Connectedness, Wholeness, and Being, can integrate language skills with the context of students' lives, involve various senses and emotions, and provide opportunities for exploration of interests and talents. This approach has the potential to improve students' understanding of the subject matter, develop critical thinking skills, creativity and strong character, and create a fun, democratic and humanist learning atmosphere.*

Keywords: *Indonesian Language; Holistic Approach; Elementary School*

Introduction

The holistic approach to learning has become an increasingly relevant method in modern education. It focuses on understanding information thoroughly and relating it to various other topics to build a cohesive framework of knowledge (Utomo et al., 2024). In the context of Indonesian language learning, the holistic approach aims to help students understand the material deeply by involving cognitive, emotional and social aspects. This is important to create a learning atmosphere that is not only effective but also fun and meaningful for students (Ritonga & Napitupulu, 2024).

The success of learning is strongly influenced by the approach used. The holistic approach offers a solution to overcome the limitations of traditional approaches such as lectures, which often make students passive and less enthusiastic (Aini et al., 2025). In the holistic approach, students are invited to actively participate in the learning process through activities that involve their mind, body and soul simultaneously. Thus, in line with the opinion of Sunusi et al., (2017) that this approach can increase students' motivation to learn while helping them to develop their full potential..

Indonesian language as a subject has an important role in shaping students' communication skills (Handayani, 2023). However, the learning methods often used in elementary schools still tend to be monotonous and less applicable. The holistic approach comes as an alternative to integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in a unified learning process (Karimaliana, 2023). With this approach, teaching materials are not studied separately but are interrelated so that students can understand Indonesian comprehensively.

The holistic approach also supports the development of 21st century skills and student character through democratic, humanist, and creative learning. (Pare & Sihotang, 2023). In the process, students not only learn about the subject matter but also how to become individuals with integrity and be able to contribute to society. This is in line with the principle of holistic education that emphasizes the development of students' potential and creates a comfortable and inspiring learning atmosphere (Tesrawati & Aprison, 2024).

The implementation of the holistic approach requires innovative learning strategies such as immersion, active demonstration by the teacher, and full involvement in teaching and learning activities (Hidayat & Mulyanti, 2020). These strategies allow students to experience learning that is more real and relevant to their daily lives. In addition, in line with research Afroni, (2019) that this approach also utilizes the concepts of connectedness, wholeness, and being to ensure that every aspect of learning is interconnected and supports the development of the whole student.

Previous research shows that a holistic approach can improve students' understanding of the subject matter while shaping their character (Sakinah et al., 2025). However, the implementation of this approach still requires adaptation to suit the Indonesian educational context. Therefore, further research is needed to explore how the holistic approach can be effectively implemented in Indonesian language learning in primary schools. This research article aims to provide an in-depth overview of the application of the holistic approach in Indonesian language learning and its benefits for elementary school students. In addition, this article is expected to be a reference for teachers in developing more creative and applicable learning methods so that the teaching and learning process is not only teacher-centered but also actively involves students.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach to understand the implementation of a holistic approach in Indonesian language learning in elementary schools. The research design is descriptive qualitative, which aims to provide a complete picture of how the holistic approach is implemented and its impact on students (Ardyan et al., 2023). The focus of the research includes the learning process, teacher-student interaction, and student learning outcomes in one of the schools in Karangan Sub-district, Trenggalek Regency, East Java with research subjects of grade IV students and Indonesian language teachers.

Data collection was conducted through unstructured interviews with teachers to understand the application of the holistic approach and the obstacles faced. Participatory observation was used to directly observe the learning process in the classroom. In addition, documentation such as lesson plans, student notes, and evaluation results were collected to support data analysis. The main research instruments were interview guidelines and observation sheets.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, which include data reduction, categorization based on themes (holistic learning strategies, implementation constraints, impact on students), and interpretation to produce conclusions (Wahyuni et al.,

2025). Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources (teacher interviews, student observations) and methods (interviews, observations, documentation), as well as rechecking the results of interviews with informants. The results of the study are expected to provide an overview of the application of the holistic approach, identification of obstacles, positive impacts on student understanding, and recommendations for optimizing the application of the holistic approach in Indonesian language learning.

Results and Discussion

This research was conducted through an interview with Mrs. Siti, a grade IV teacher. The interview focused on the Indonesian learning approach used and the teacher's perception of the holistic approach. Here are some of the main questions and answers from the interview:

Question 1: What learning approach do you use most often in Indonesian language learning?

Answer: "I mostly use the lecture learning approach because it is practical, economical, and does not require many tools. This method is effective enough to overcome the scarcity of literature or reference sources of information due to the low purchasing power of students and the distance from book shopping centers."

Question 2: What obstacles do you face during the learning process using the lecture approach?

Answer: "Students become passive, easily sleepy due to boring learning, there is an element of compulsion to listen, and the teaching process becomes verbalism. Students are also often bored if they only watch videos. In addition, Indonesian subjects are very difficult when used for concrete learning media unlike math subjects, IPAS."

Question 3: What do you think about the holistic approach in Indonesian language learning?

Answer: "I am very supportive and interested because the holistic approach is suitable for use in all subjects, especially Indonesian language which is useful and can be used in everyday life by combining all aspects of language skills. I hope there is a new learning method that can arouse students' enthusiasm in learning Indonesian like the holistic approach."



Figure 1. Interview with class IV teacher

An interview with Mrs. Siti, a grade IV teacher, revealed a gap between the dominant learning practice used, namely the lecture approach, and the potential of the holistic approach in improving the quality of Indonesian language learning. Although the lecture approach is considered practical and economical in conditions of limited resources, Mrs. Siti acknowledged significant obstacles, such as student passivity, low motivation, and trapped learning in verbalism. This finding underscores the need for a paradigm shift in learning approaches.

The limitations of the lecture approach are in line with criticisms raised by constructivists such as Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. Constructivism theory emphasizes that students actively construct their own knowledge through interaction with the environment and meaningful learning experiences (Djalal, 2017). The lecture approach, which tends to be passive and teacher-centered, provides less opportunity for students to be actively involved in the knowledge construction process, so the understanding gained is often shallow and easily forgotten.

On the other hand, Ibu Siti showed enthusiasm for the holistic approach, which was seen as a potential solution to overcome the existing constraints. The holistic approach, as explained by Siti, focuses on understanding information thoroughly and relating it to other topics to build an integrated knowledge framework (Aspahani, 2019). This approach is in line with whole language theory, which emphasizes that language should be learned as a whole and meaningful, not as a collection of separate skills (Suparya, 2021).

In the context of Indonesian language learning, the holistic approach can be formulated as learning that integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in activities that are interrelated and relevant to students' daily lives. The application of this approach is based on three main principles, namely Connectedness, Wholeness, and Being (Afroni, 2019). The principle of Connectedness is realized by linking the subject matter to the context of students' daily lives, for example through the use of texts relevant to their experiences or assignments that encourage the application of language skills in real situations. The Wholeness principle is implemented through activities that involve students' various senses and emotions, such as role-playing, singing, or creating artwork inspired by the stories or poems studied, thus facilitating a deeper and more meaningful understanding. Meanwhile, the Being principle is realized by providing opportunities for students to explore their interests and talents through creative projects, self-reflection, and assignments that encourage character development, so that they feel motivated and have a sense of responsibility for the learning process.

To implement the holistic approach in Indonesian language learning, teachers can use various strategies, such as immersion (creating a language-rich learning environment), demonstration, and active student involvement (Widanta, 2023). The immersion strategy can be done by providing various reading sources, encouraging group discussions, and using Indonesian consistently in all learning activities. Demonstration can be done by giving examples of good and correct use of Indonesian, and modeling the desired language skills. Active student involvement can be achieved by providing opportunities for students to participate in discussion activities, presentations, role plays, and collaborative projects.

The holistic approach, which emphasizes interconnectedness and holistic understanding in learning, has significant relevance to deep learning, which is now widely discussed in Indonesian education. While referring to the learning process that results in deep understanding, transfer of knowledge, and the ability to apply concepts in new situations, deep learning is a term used to describe the process of learning (Akmal et al., 2025). The holistic approach with the principles of Connectedness, Wholeness, and Being, provides a strong foundation for deep learning by encouraging students to relate new information to existing knowledge, involve all aspects of personality in learning, and actively develop their potential (Afroni, 2019). Thus, the implementation of a holistic approach in Indonesian language learning can be a catalyst to encourage students to achieve a deeper level of understanding and mastery of the material, which in turn will prepare them to face the challenges of an increasingly complex and dynamic world.

In addition, the holistic approach also emphasizes the importance of creating a pleasant, democratic and humanist learning atmosphere. A pleasant learning atmosphere can increase student motivation and reduce anxiety in learning Indonesian (Rudiansyah et al., 2016). A democratic learning atmosphere provides opportunities for students to have their say and participate in decision-making. A humanistic learning atmosphere respects the diversity of students and provides the emotional support needed (Mustafida, 2021).

By applying a holistic approach in Indonesian language learning, it is expected that students not only master language skills, but also develop critical thinking skills, creativity, and strong character (Andriyani et al., 2024). This approach can also help students to better appreciate Indonesian as an effective and relevant communication tool in various life contexts. Therefore, this research provides important implications for curriculum development and teacher training, as well as encouraging the application of a holistic approach in Indonesian language learning in elementary schools.

This finding also underscores the importance of the teacher's role as a facilitator and mediator in the learning process. Teachers are not only responsible for delivering the material but also for creating a conducive learning environment, providing support to students, and facilitating meaningful interactions between students and the learning material (Haq & Fitriani, 2024). In the context of a holistic approach, teachers need to have a deep understanding of effective learning principles, as well as the skills to implement various innovative learning strategies.

Conclusion

The application of a holistic approach in Indonesian language learning at elementary schools offers a solution to overcome the limitations of traditional approaches such as lectures, which tend to make students passive and less motivated. Through the principles of Connectedness, Wholeness, and Being, this approach integrates language skills with the context of students' daily lives, engages various senses and emotions, and provides opportunities for the exploration of interests and talents. Research results show that the holistic approach not only enhances students' understanding of the subject matter but also

develops critical thinking skills, creativity, and strong character. Therefore, the implementation of a holistic approach in Indonesian language learning has important implications for curriculum development, teacher training, and the creation of a pleasant, democratic, and humanistic learning environment, thus preparing students to face the increasingly complex and dynamic challenges of the world.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their gratitude to Universitas Negeri Malang for providing research facilities, as well as to the principal, my courses lectures Mrs. Shirley Rizki Kusumaningrum and Mr. Mardhatillah, my research supervisor Mrs. Aynin Mashfufah and Mr. Yusuf Hanafi, teachers, and students in one of part school in Karanganyar District, Trenggalek City, for their active participation in this study. Special thanks are also extended to colleagues and family members who have provided motivation and moral support throughout the research process. The support and cooperation from all parties involved have been invaluable in completing this research.

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