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# APPLICATION OF *POTENSI* MODEL IN IMPROVING READING, COMPREHENSION, AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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### Abstract

This investigation was initiated in response to students' insufficient capacity to interpret written materials comprehensively and evaluate the information they encounter critically. Accordingly, the primary objective was to determine the extent to which learners' reading comprehension and critical-thinking competencies could be enhanced. A qualitative methodology employing *Classroom Action Research* (CAR) was implemented across four instructional sessions. Information was obtained through interview activities, documentary evidence, and assessment instruments before being processed using both qualitative and quantitative analytical procedures. The results demonstrated considerable progress in learners' achievement, with reading comprehension attaining the category of "all students are highly proficient," while critical-thinking performance reached the level of "almost all students are highly proficient," in accordance with the predetermined success criteria. Consequently, the *POTENSI* framework has been empirically shown to strengthen students' reading comprehension and critical-thinking abilities within Indonesian language instruction.

**Keywords:** *POTENSI* model, reading comprehension, critical thinking

**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini berangkat dari kenyataan bahwa peserta didik masih menunjukkan keterbatasan dalam menelaah bacaan secara komprehensif sekaligus mengevaluasi isi informasi yang diperoleh. Oleh sebab itu, kajian ini diarahkan untuk mengeksplorasi sejauh mana terjadi perkembangan pada kecakapan memahami isi teks beserta peningkatan kapasitas bernalar secara kritis yang dimiliki siswa. Pelaksanaan riset menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui rancangan *Classroom Action Research* (PTK) yang diselenggarakan selama empat sesi pembelajaran. Proses perolehan data ditempuh dengan memanfaatkan kegiatan wawancara, pengarsipan dokumen, serta pelaksanaan pengujian, sedangkan pengolahannya dilakukan melalui perpaduan metode analisis kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Hasil kajian memperlihatkan adanya perkembangan yang signifikan pada kompetensi menginterpretasikan bacaan maupun kecakapan berpikir kritis peserta didik hingga memenuhi tolok ukur keberhasilan yang telah ditentukan. Capaian kemampuan memahami isi bacaan berada pada kategori "semua siswa sangat terampil", sementara kemampuan bernalar kritis memperoleh kategori "hampir semua siswa sangat terampil". Berdasarkan hasil tersebut, dapat disimpulkan bahwa penerapan model POTENSI efektif dalam memperkuat kompetensi literasi membaca sekaligus mengoptimalkan kemampuan berpikir kritis peserta didik pada pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia.

**Kata kunci:** Model POTENSI, pemahaman bacaan, berpikir kritis

## Background

The continuous transformation of education in the twenty-first century requires learners to acquire a broad range of competencies that enable them to participate successfully in modern instructional environments. Such expectations arise alongside the rapid advancement of information and communication technologies, which increasingly demand that students possess the ability to interpret, evaluate, and apply various sources of information accurately and responsibly in diverse learning contexts. (Rosdiana et al., 2025)

To ensure educational effectiveness within today's learning landscape, Indonesian language instruction serves a fundamental function in preparing learners through the development of essential language competencies. Particular emphasis is placed on reading and writing because these abilities contribute significantly to students' intellectual growth while simultaneously fostering their social interaction and emotional development, thereby supporting holistic educational outcomes, as well as play a role in fostering a proud attitude towards Indonesian as a language of unity and the language of the state (Ali, 2020). Thus, reading comprehension skills are one of the abilities that students need to have in order to be able to process and understand information appropriately.

The importance of reading comprehension skills to master is because with reading comprehension students can be trained to learn to understand the content of reading in depth and obtain information (Frans et al., 2023). Students can be considered to have reading comprehension skills if they have mastered the following four components; (1) describe the main idea; (2) knowing the idea of an explanatory one; (3) able to end the reading; (4) knowing the message contained in the reading text (Restiani et al., 2022).

The capability to comprehend written texts is fundamentally interconnected with critical-thinking competence because the process of interpreting textual content requires learners not

only to understand explicit information but also to evaluate, analyze, and make logical judgments regarding the ideas presented. Therefore, effective reading comprehension naturally demands the application of higher-order thinking processes. Students can be said to be able to think critically if they have mastered the following five components; (1) able to report the results of observations; (2) able to formulate questions; (3) able to produce information; (4) being able to answer the question "why?"; (5) able to draw conclusions (Anggraeni et al., 2022).

Preliminary findings obtained through the initial observation stage revealed that students' abilities in reading comprehension as well as their critical-thinking competence had not yet reached the expected standard and therefore continued to require considerable improvement through appropriate instructional interventions, where students still have difficulties in understanding reading in depth, especially when participating in Indonesian language learning. If this condition continues to be left unchecked, it will cause students' motivation to learn to decrease, which can hinder students' learning success (Safitri & Wahyudin, 2024; Wahyu et al., 2022). Low critical thinking skills can also affect students' learning success, as their ability to analyze and evaluate their information is reduced (Andriani & Sari, 2024; Annisa et al., 2020). Therefore, a learning model is needed that is able to improve both skills so that learning can be more meaningful and encourage active student participation.

The innovative contribution of this research is reflected in the implementation of the *POTENSI* framework, which combines the principles of *Problem-Based Learning (PBL)*, *Think-Pair-Share (TPS)*, and the *Talking Stick* strategy into a unified instructional approach. This integrated model was specifically developed to maximize Indonesian language learning by engaging students in problem-solving activities, collaborative partner discussions, group interactions, classroom presentations, and enjoyable game-based learning experiences that encourage active participation. The implementation of the *POTENSI* framework follows a systematic sequence consisting of several interconnected phases, beginning with introducing learners to a problem situation, followed by individual reflection, collaborative discussion with a partner, mutual presentation of paired discussion outcomes, organization of learning activities, facilitation of investigative problem-solving, preparation and presentation of completed work, provision of feedback together with evaluation of the entire problem-solving process, and concluding with participation in the *Talking Stick* activity to reinforce learning engagement.

This investigation was conducted to evaluate the extent to which the *POTENSI* framework improves students' reading ability, reading comprehension, and critical-thinking competence in Indonesian language learning. Through instructional activities that actively involve learners throughout every stage of the learning process, this model is intended to

cultivate meaningful learning experiences while enabling students to achieve the instructional objectives that have been established more effectively.

## Method

This investigation adopted a qualitative methodology and was designed as *Classroom Action Research* (PTK). According to Sugiono (2019), “qualitative inquiry constitutes a research strategy intended to explore phenomena within their authentic settings, in which the researcher functions as the primary instrument responsible for gathering, interpreting, and analyzing information”. Furthermore, this methodological orientation places greater emphasis on understanding the significance and depth of findings rather than producing broad generalizations.

Consistent with this perspective, Suriansyah (2013) “asserted that the fundamental objective of *Classroom Action Research* (PTK) is to enhance the overall standard of instructional practices conducted within the classroom environment” (Pratiwi & Nursyidah, 2021). Likewise, Pahleviannur et al., (2022) described “PTK as a systematic form of inquiry implemented through a sequence of purposeful actions aimed at strengthening instructional effectiveness, improving educational quality, and fostering the continuous professional growth of teachers in fulfilling their teaching responsibilities”.

The present investigation employed a qualitative research design throughout its implementation. Information was gathered by utilizing several data collection techniques, including classroom observations, interview sessions, and documentation analysis. Observational activities were conducted to monitor the progression of learners' reading proficiency, reading comprehension, and critical thinking abilities while instructional activities were taking place. Meanwhile, interviews with the classroom teacher were undertaken to obtain comprehensive insights regarding instructional requirements, existing learning conditions, and various challenges encountered before the implementation of *Classroom Action Research* (PTK). Documentation is used as a complement to research data such as learning outcomes, assessment sheets, and documentation of learning activities.

The execution of PTK followed four interconnected phases, consisting of the planning stage, the action or implementation stage, the observation stage, and the reflection stage, with each phase serving as the foundation for continuous instructional improvement throughout the research process.

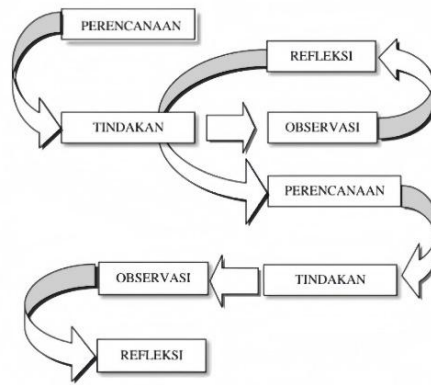


Figure 1. Classroom Action Research Flow (PTK)

This PTK research forms a cycle of one round of activities that start from the planning stage to the reflection stage. Reflection is a teacher's evaluation material to improve the next learning process.

## Results and Discussion

The outcomes of this investigation demonstrated that integrating the POTENSI model into Indonesian language instruction successfully enhanced the overall quality of the learning process. Such positive developments were largely attributed to teachers' ability to implement appropriate instructional strategies that effectively supported students' learning experiences and classroom participation. These findings correspond with the study conducted by Handayani (2023) who reported that "instructional activities designed in an engaging and meaningful manner are capable of motivating learners to participate more actively in analyzing information, identifying important concepts, and developing concise yet accurate patterns of thinking".

. In addition, the findings are also supported by Apriliyani & Darmiyati (2024) "who state that teachers who are able to use effective learning methods during learning can also help in optimizing students' POTENSI, encouraging active participation, and helping students build a deeper understanding of the subject matter".

The implementation of this research was carried out by following the syntax of the learning model applied at each meeting. The learning syntax is implemented systematically and is designed to provide opportunities for students to facilitate students in developing reading-comprehension skills, critical thinking, and active participation during the learning process.

Table 1. Sintak Model *POTENSI* in Indonesian Language Learning

| Stages | Learning Activities                                                      |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1      | The teacher orients students to problems                                 |
| 2      | The teacher directs students to think independently about problems       |
| 3      | The teacher guides the students to have a discussion in pairs            |
| 4      | The teacher directs the students to convey the results of the discussion |
| 5      | Teachers organize learning activities.                                   |
| 6      | Teacher guides individual or group research                              |
| 7      | The teacher guides students to develop and present their work.           |
| 8      | Teachers provide feedback and evaluate the problem-solving process       |
| 9      | Teacher driving the game Talking Stick                                   |

Based on Table 1, the syntax model is taken from a combination of several learning models according to Agusta & Suriansyah, (2020) and Ayuni & Muthi, (2024) which describe “the syntax of *Problem-Based Learning* (PBL), *Share Think Pairs* (TPS), and *Talking Stick* models, then combined into *the syntax of the POTENSI* model”. The steps of the POTENSI model begin with the teacher orienting the problem through presenting a video question to the students, then the students are asked to think independently to identify important information related to the video and formulate questions related to the video.

The learning is then continued by the teacher by guiding students to exchange opinions with their peers to formulate temporary answers to the questions they formulate, so that at the next stage students can ask questions as a form of conveying the results of the discussion, at this stage the teacher can also provide reinforcement to each student's answer. Then, learning continues by dividing into groups heterogeneously to solve the problems that have been available, and convey them to the class with the group. Finally, teachers also invite students to play *the Talking Stick game* to strengthen students' understanding and create fun learning.

During instructional activities utilizing the POTENSI model, the observational results concerning students' reading comprehension performance across the first through the fourth meetings are summarized and displayed in the table presented below:

Table 2. Recapitulation of Reading Skills Students' Comprehension of Each Meeting

| Meetings  | Frequency of Highly Skilled Students | Percentage | Criteria                             |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------|
| Meeting 1 | 2                                    | 18%        | Very few students are highly skilled |
| Meeting 2 | 6                                    | 54%        | Most Students Are Highly Skilled     |
| Meeting 3 | 7                                    | 64%        | Most Students Are Highly Skilled     |
| Meeting 4 | 11                                   | 100%       | All Students Are Highly Skilled      |

Based on table 2, students' reading comprehension ability increased at each meeting, from 18% at the first meeting to 54% at the second meeting, then increased again to 64% at the third meeting and increased significantly to 100% at the fourth meeting. This improvement can be seen from the ability of students who are able to participate in answering teachers' questions related to the reading text and are actively involved in the discussion process when solving problems contained in the reading text, as well as being able to master the components of reading comprehension skills, namely describing the main idea, knowing the explanatory ideas, being able to end the reading, and being able to know the message contained in the reading text (Restiani et al., 2022).

The observed enhancement in learners' reading comprehension abilities can be attributed to the implementation of the POTENSI model, which consistently created meaningful opportunities for every student to participate actively in resolving problems associated with reading materials. During the *Problem Based Learning (PBL)* phase, learners were presented with thought-provoking questions that encouraged them to examine and interpret the content of reading passages more comprehensively. Subsequently, within the *Think Pair Share (TPS)* stage, students were provided with opportunities to discuss, exchange perspectives, and compare ideas with their peers regarding information derived from the texts, thereby strengthening their comprehension. Finally, in the *Talking Stick* stage, learners were encouraged to recall, reinforce, and connect previously acquired knowledge with the concepts addressed during the current learning activities, resulting in a more meaningful understanding of the instructional material.

In addition to strengthening learners' capacity to comprehend written materials, the development of critical thinking abilities likewise progressed throughout the instructional sessions conducted with the POTENSI framework from the first through the fourth meeting, as illustrated in the table presented below:

Table 3. Recapitulation of Reading Skills Students' Comprehension of Each Meeting

| Meetings  | Frequency of Highly Skilled Students | Percentage | Criteria                                  |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Meeting 1 | 2                                    | 18%        | Very few students are highly skilled      |
| Meeting 2 | 5                                    | 45%        | A Minority of Students Are Highly Skilled |
| Meeting 3 | 8                                    | 73%        | Most Students Are Highly Skilled          |
| Meeting 4 | 10                                   | 91%        | Almost all students are highly skilled    |

Based on table 3, students' thinking skills increased at each meeting, from 18% at the first meeting to 45% at the second meeting, then increased again to 73% at the third meeting and increased to 91% at the fourth meeting. This upward progression is reflected in the growing engagement of learners during classroom activities, where they became increasingly confident in contributing viewpoints formulated from their own reasoning, whether in response to the

video-based questions or the written problem scenarios provided. In addition, students have also been able to master the components of critical thinking skills, namely being able to report the results of observations, formulate questions, generalize information, answer "why" questions, and be able to draw conclusions (Anggraeni et al., 2022)

This increase in critical thinking skills occurs because the POTENSI model has provided opportunities for each student to be actively involved in the problem-solving process during orientation, namely listening to video shows and solving problems related to reading texts. In the PBL model stage, students have been given questions that can encourage their ability to think about video questions and read texts, then in the TPS stage which also allows students to think independently to make questions and exchange information so that they can compare their opinions related to information, as well as *Talking Sticks* a stage that has given students the opportunity to remember learning topics they have studied before so that they can practice their critical thinking skills.

The findings of this investigation revealed that learners' competencies in reading, interpreting written information, and applying critical reasoning throughout Indonesian language instruction implemented through the POTENSI framework consistently advanced between the initial and the final meeting. Such progress emerged because the instructional strategies employed were demonstrated to enhance the overall effectiveness and quality of classroom learning. The pattern illustrating the continuous advancement of literacy comprehension together with higher-order reasoning abilities is presented in the figure below:

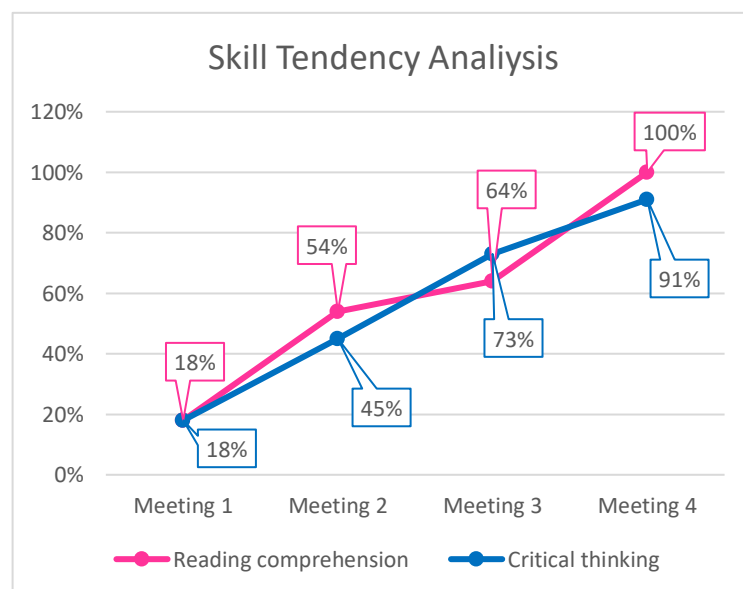


Figure 2. Skill Tendency Analysis

Referring to Figure 2, learners demonstrated continuous progress in both reading comprehension and critical reasoning across every instructional session. Reading comprehension achievement rose from 18% during the first meeting to 54% in the second

session, subsequently increased to 64% in the third meeting, and ultimately attained 100% by the fourth meeting. These results indicate that learners became increasingly capable of identifying the central idea, recognizing supporting explanations, drawing appropriate conclusions from passages, and interpreting the underlying messages conveyed within the texts.

The increase occurred because the application

of the *POTENSI* model, which is an integration of PBL, TPS, and the *Talking Stick Model*, has been shown to be effective in improving students' reading skills. These outcomes are consistent with earlier investigations reporting that implementing the *Problem-Based Learning (PBL)* approach motivates learners to participate more actively in exploring appropriate solutions to the issues introduced during instruction. The process requires students to understand the content of the text in depth so that their reading skills can develop optimally (Fadia & Mahmuddin, 2025; Mahmuddin, 2025; Suhaimi & Norhalisa, 2024).

Furthermore, integrating the *Think-Pair-Share (TPS)* strategy within the *POTENSI* framework was likewise demonstrated to strengthen learners' reading proficiency because they were encouraged to conduct individual analyses, collaborate with peers to enrich their understanding, and verbally communicate the conclusions of their reasoning, thereby creating a learning environment that was more participatory, interactive, and meaningful (Ilham et al., 2023; Noorhapizah et al., 2019; Mahmuddin & Mahmuddin, 2025). In line with this, Fadia & Mahmuddin, 2025 states that the selection of the speaking stick *Model* combined with other approaches in the learning process has been shown to improve reading comprehension skills.

According to the trend analysis graph, learners' critical thinking performance also exhibited a steady upward trajectory, beginning at 18% in the first meeting, increasing to 45% during the second session, climbing further to 73% in the third meeting, and eventually reaching 91% by the fourth instructional meeting. This improvement shows that students have been able to report the results of observations, formulate questions, generalize information, answer "why" questions, and be able to draw conclusions (Anggraeni et al., 2022).

This increase also occurred due to the role of teachers who implemented the *integration of PBL*, TPS, and *Model Talking Stick POTENSI*. The consistent enhancement of critical thinking observed throughout each instructional session supports previous empirical evidence indicating that the *Problem-Based Learning (PBL)* approach effectively strengthens learners' analytical capabilities, thereby contributing positively to the advancement of their critical reasoning competence. The improvement in these competencies can be attributed to the instructional practices adopted by teachers, who introduced authentic problems closely connected to learners' everyday experiences, offered systematic guidance throughout the activities, and continuously encouraged learners to engage in deeper reasoning while

independently constructing appropriate solutions. (Arsyad & Agusta, 2025; Bukhari & Novitawati, 2024; Hadi & Metroyadi, 2023; Nisvia & Pratiwi, 2024; Winanda & Rafianti, 2024).

Likewise, employing the *Think-Pair-Share (TPS)* strategy within this investigation was found to effectively foster learners' critical thinking competence, which subsequently contributed to a measurable enhancement in their overall academic achievement and learning performance (Azizah & Agusta, 2025; Nisa et al., 2025; Tri & Jannah, 2021). In addition, the use of *Talking Sticks* in the learning process also supports the development of students' critical thinking skills. This is because this method encourages the creation of more meaningful learning by providing opportunities for each student to actively participate in learning activities (Andriani & Sari, 2024; Bukhari & Novitawati, 2024; Elisa & Rini, 2024; Nurliyanti & Sari, 2024). Accordingly, the implementation of the POTENSI model has demonstrated considerable success in strengthening learners' reading comprehension proficiency while simultaneously fostering higher levels of critical thinking ability.

## Conclusion

The incorporation of the POTENSI model into Indonesian language instruction has yielded substantial positive outcomes in advancing learners' reading comprehension competence together with their critical thinking capacity. The improvement is evident from the reading comprehension achievement rate, which rose progressively from 18% during the initial session to 100% by the fourth session, while critical thinking performance also experienced remarkable growth, increasing from 18% to 91%. These encouraging results were achieved because the POTENSI model combines *Problem-Based Learning (PBL)*, *Think Pair Share (TPS)*, and *Talking Sticks* into a unified instructional framework that encourages learners to participate actively in recognizing issues, exchanging ideas collaboratively, and articulating well-reasoned arguments throughout problem-solving activities. By emphasizing an engaging, learner-oriented instructional environment, the POTENSI model effectively enhances students' reading comprehension proficiency while also cultivating stronger critical thinking skills in Indonesian language learning

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