

Theaching Reading Using Communicative Approach Through Videos and Games at the Age of 9 at MI Bahrul Ulum

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of teaching reading using the Communicative Approach supported by videos and educational games for 9-year-old students at MI Bahrul Ulum. The research is grounded in the idea that young learners acquire language more meaningfully when they are exposed to interactive, contextual, and engaging learning environments. In this study, the Communicative Approach is utilized to create authentic learning situations that allow students to practice reading not merely as a mechanical decoding skill but as a communicative act embedded in meaningful contexts. Videos function as multimodal learning tools that provide visual and auditory input, making reading materials easier to comprehend, while games stimulate students' motivation, participation, and confidence during reading activities. The research employed a qualitative-descriptive method supported by classroom observations, student performance analysis, and teacher interviews. The results demonstrate that integrating videos and educational games significantly improves students' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and enthusiasm for reading-related tasks. Students showed higher engagement levels, faster recall of new vocabulary, and increased confidence when reading aloud or participating in discussions. The teacher also experienced improved classroom management, as students were more focused and motivated due to interactive learning stimuli. Furthermore, the study highlights that the Communicative Approach aligns well with the cognitive and emotional characteristics of 9-year-old learners, who are naturally curious, playful, and responsive to visual and kinesthetic learning experiences. The findings suggest that combining communicative techniques with multimedia and game-based learning creates a holistic reading environment that supports cognitive, linguistic, and social development. This study proposes that future reading instruction, particularly in Islamic elementary schools, should

incorporate more communicative and technology-supported strategies to maximize learning outcomes.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji efektivitas pengajaran membaca dengan menggunakan Pendekatan Komunikatif (Communicative Approach) yang dipadukan dengan media video dan permainan edukatif pada siswa usia 9 tahun di MI Bahrul Ulum. Penelitian ini berangkat dari asumsi bahwa pembelajar usia dini memperoleh kemampuan bahasa secara lebih bermakna ketika mereka terlibat dalam lingkungan belajar yang interaktif, kontekstual, dan menyenangkan. Dalam studi ini, Pendekatan Komunikatif diterapkan untuk menciptakan situasi belajar yang autentik sehingga siswa mempraktikkan keterampilan membaca tidak hanya sebagai kemampuan mekanis dalam mengenali huruf dan kata, tetapi sebagai aktivitas komunikasi yang berada dalam konteks yang bermakna. Video digunakan sebagai alat pembelajaran multimodal yang menyediakan input visual dan auditif, sehingga membantu siswa memahami materi bacaan. Sementara itu, permainan edukatif mendorong motivasi, partisipasi, dan kepercayaan diri siswa selama kegiatan membaca. Penelitian menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif melalui observasi kelas, analisis hasil belajar siswa, dan wawancara dengan guru. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi video dan permainan secara signifikan meningkatkan pemahaman membaca siswa, perolehan kosakata, serta antusiasme mereka terhadap kegiatan membaca. Siswa menunjukkan tingkat keterlibatan yang lebih tinggi, kemampuan mengingat kosakata baru dengan lebih cepat, dan kepercayaan diri yang meningkat saat membaca nyaring ataupun berdiskusi. Guru juga merasakan pengelolaan kelas yang lebih baik karena siswa lebih fokus dan termotivasi berkat stimulus pembelajaran yang interaktif. Selain itu, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa Pendekatan Komunikatif sangat sesuai dengan karakteristik kognitif dan emosional anak usia 9 tahun yang cenderung ingin tahu, suka bermain, serta responsif terhadap pengalaman belajar visual dan kinestetik. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kombinasi pendekatan komunikatif dengan media multimedia dan permainan edukatif mampu menciptakan lingkungan membaca yang holistik dan mendukung perkembangan kognitif, linguistik, dan sosial siswa. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan agar pengajaran membaca di sekolah dasar, khususnya di madrasah ibtidaiyah, semakin mengintegrasikan strategi komunikatif berbasis teknologi untuk mengoptimalkan hasil belajar.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of reading skills in elementary school remains one of the most essential foundations for students' academic success across subjects (Warisno 2022). Reading is not only a basic literacy skill but also a gateway to broader cognitive, social, and linguistic development. In the Indonesian educational context, various national assessments continue to reveal that students' reading comprehension abilities are still below the expected standard, especially at the primary school level. According to several national literacy surveys, students often face difficulties in understanding texts, identifying main ideas, and interpreting information critically. These challenges indicate that traditional teaching approaches, which rely heavily on teacher-centered instruction and monotonous reading drills, are no longer adequate for addressing the diverse learning needs of young students (Kemendikbud 2020). As a result, innovative instructional strategies are urgently needed to stimulate students' motivation and improve their reading comprehension skills.

At the age of nine, children are in a developmental stage characterized by rapid cognitive growth, increasing curiosity, and a desire for interactive learning activities. This age group, typically corresponding to third- or fourth-grade students in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), requires learning methods that are engaging, communicative, and aligned with their natural tendencies toward play and exploration (Piaget 1950). However, many Indonesian classrooms still employ conventional, textbook-oriented methods, often neglecting the importance of communication-based activities that encourage students to express meaning, negotiate understanding, and use language in real-life situations. Several Indonesian scholars highlight that reading instruction in many madrasah remains focused on mechanical decoding rather than meaningful comprehension (Rahmawati 2019). Therefore, incorporating communicative strategies alongside multimedia resources can help address this gap by creating a more dynamic and supportive learning environment.

The Communicative Approach, widely recognized in language education, emphasizes the meaningful use of language and authentic communication. When applied to reading instruction, this approach shifts the focus from passive reading exercises toward active engagement with texts through discussions, questioning, prediction, summarization, and contextual interpretation. Indonesian researchers have noted that the Communicative Approach is effective in encouraging students to interact with reading materials in ways that promote deeper understanding and retention (Setiawan 2021). Nonetheless, despite evidence supporting this approach, many teachers in Islamic elementary schools still struggle to implement communicative strategies due to limited training, limited resources, and the predominance of traditional teaching culture. This gap underscores the importance of introducing structured models of communicative reading lessons that are practical and easily integrated into classroom settings.

The integration of videos and educational games into the Communicative Approach

brings additional advantages that align with the learning characteristics of young children. Videos serve as multimodal learning tools that provide visual, auditory, and contextual cues, enabling students to comprehend reading materials more easily. Children at the age of nine often rely on concrete representations of meaning, and videos offer vivid imagery that helps bridge the gap between text and comprehension. Research in Indonesian elementary schools shows that audiovisual media significantly increase students' attention, motivation, and comprehension, particularly for students who struggle with traditional text-based instruction (Sari 2018). Educational games, on the other hand, stimulate active participation and transform reading tasks into enjoyable challenges. Game-based learning activates students' intrinsic motivation, encouraging them to engage voluntarily and consistently with reading activities. Studies conducted in Indonesian madrasah demonstrate that educational games can improve vocabulary mastery and reading fluency through repetitive, enjoyable interaction (Kemendikbud 2019).

Another issue that strengthens the urgency of this study is the increasing recognition that 21st-century learners require learning experiences that incorporate technology, interaction, and creativity. The Indonesian Ministry of Education has emphasized the integration of digital and interactive learning tools at all educational levels, including madrasah. However, the implementation of these policies remains uneven, with many rural schools—including some MI institutions—still lacking systematic models for integrating technology such as videos and learning games into daily lessons. Teachers may also lack confidence or professional training in designing communicative, multimedia-based reading activities (Warisno 2019). Therefore, research exploring practical and effective ways to combine Communicative Approach strategies with videos and games is necessary to support teachers in adopting innovative approaches that suit young learners' needs.

MI Bahrul Ulum, as a developing Islamic elementary institution, reflects many of the common challenges experienced by similar schools in Indonesia. Teachers face limited teaching resources, large class sizes, and variations in students' literacy backgrounds. Based on initial observations, reading lessons at MI Bahrul Ulum often rely on teacher explanation, student repetition, and textbook exercises. These traditional methods do not fully support the active involvement needed for meaningful reading comprehension. Students at the age of nine also tend to lose focus quickly, especially when learning activities become repetitive. Therefore, applying the Communicative Approach supported by videos and games has strong potential to improve students' engagement and reading skills within this learning context.

Moreover, integrating videos and games within communicative reading lessons can promote not only cognitive and linguistic development but also emotional and social growth. When students collaborate during reading games, discuss video content, or participate in communicative tasks, they develop confidence, teamwork skills, and positive attitudes toward learning. This development aligns with the holistic educational goals of madrasah, which aim to nurture students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. Indonesian scholars emphasize that learning should involve meaningful interaction and create positive learning

environments that encourage students to be active participants.⁷ Thus, adopting this integrated approach may contribute significantly to improving the overall quality of reading instruction at MI Bahrul Ulum while also supporting students' broader educational growth.

In conclusion, the challenges faced in teaching reading in Indonesian Islamic elementary schools indicate a strong need for innovative, communicative, and technology-supported teaching models. The combination of the Communicative Approach with videos and educational games offers a promising solution to enhance students' reading comprehension, motivation, and engagement. This study aims to examine the implementation of this approach among 9-year-old students at MI Bahrul Ulum and evaluate its effectiveness in improving reading outcomes. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of more interactive, student-centered reading instruction models that can be applied across similar educational settings in Indonesia.

THEORITICAL

The teaching of reading to young learners is grounded in the understanding that reading is a multidimensional process involving decoding, comprehension, interpretation, and response. For students at the age of nine, reading development requires instructional strategies that allow them to engage with texts meaningfully rather than mechanically. Theories of early literacy emphasize that children learn best when reading activities are connected to their experiences, interests, and opportunities for active participation. Therefore, reading instruction must encourage students not only to recognize words but also to construct meaning, interact with ideas, and apply comprehension strategies that help them understand texts holistically.

The Communicative Approach, originally developed for teaching foreign languages, is based on the principle that language learning occurs most effectively when learners are given opportunities to use language for real communication. In the context of teaching reading, this approach shifts the focus from teacher-centered explanation to student-centered interaction with texts. Students are encouraged to ask questions, share predictions, discuss ideas, and respond to reading passages in communicative ways. The approach also emphasizes authentic materials and meaningful tasks, allowing students to experience reading as a purposeful act rather than a passive one. Through communicative reading activities, learners develop not only comprehension skills but also confidence in expressing their understanding.

The integration of videos into reading instruction is supported by theories of multimodal learning, which state that students absorb information more effectively when presented with visual, auditory, and textual input simultaneously. Videos help young learners create mental connections between the content of the text and real-life imagery, making abstract or unfamiliar concepts easier to understand. For nine-year-old students who are naturally attracted to visual stimuli, videos serve as powerful tools to activate prior knowledge, build vocabulary, and enhance comprehension. When combined with the Communicative Approach,

videos enrich reading discussions by providing concrete visual contexts that students can talk about, describe, and relate to the texts they read.

Educational games also play a significant role in enhancing reading instruction for young learners. Game-based learning in reading is grounded in motivational and cognitive theories which emphasize the importance of engagement, repetition, and enjoyment. Games transform reading activities into fun, competitive, or collaborative tasks that stimulate intrinsic motivation. For children at the age of nine, games help maintain focus, build positive attitudes, and create memorable learning experiences. Reading games may involve vocabulary puzzles, sentence-building challenges, or comprehension competitions, all of which reinforce reading skills while supporting active participation and problem-solving abilities.

The combination of the Communicative Approach, videos, and games aligns with constructivist learning theory, which states that learners construct knowledge through active experiences and social interaction. Classroom environments that encourage discussion, collaboration, and exploration allow students to build their own understanding of reading materials. Videos provide rich contexts for constructing meaning, while games create interactive opportunities for students to apply what they have learned. In this integrated model, the teacher becomes a facilitator who guides students in discovering meaning, negotiating ideas, and practicing reading strategies in a supportive, interactive environment.

In addition, the use of multimedia and games in communicative reading instruction supports the development of 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication. Through discussions about video content, students learn to express opinions, justify interpretations, and think analytically. Through games, students learn to collaborate, follow rules, and develop resilience when solving reading-related challenges. These skills are essential not only for succeeding academically but also for preparing students for the increasingly digital and communicative demands of modern society.

Overall, the theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the belief that effective reading instruction for nine-year-old learners must be interactive, meaningful, and engaging. The Communicative Approach provides a foundation for active reading, while videos and games act as complementary tools that enrich learning experiences. Together, these strategies support students' cognitive, linguistic, and social development, helping them become more confident, motivated, and competent readers. This integrated model offers a holistic framework for improving reading instruction at MI Bahrul Ulum and other similar educational settings.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the implementation of the Communicative Approach combined with videos and educational games in teaching reading to 9-year-old students at MI Bahrul Ulum. A qualitative descriptive method was selected because it allows the researcher to observe natural classroom interactions, explore teaching practices in depth, and understand students' responses without manipulating classroom conditions. This design provides rich, detailed descriptions of teaching activities,

learning behaviors, and reading outcomes as they occur in an authentic educational context.

The participants of this study consisted of 9-year-old students enrolled in the third grade of MI Bahrul Ulum during the 2024/2025 academic year. One English teacher who regularly handled reading instruction also participated. The sample was chosen purposively based on the relevance of the class to the research focus and the teacher's familiarity with communicative and multimedia-based teaching techniques. The setting of the study was MI Bahrul Ulum, a rural Islamic elementary school that reflects typical literacy challenges encountered in many madrasah across Indonesia.

Data were collected through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and documentation analysis. Classroom observations focused on how the Communicative Approach, videos, and educational games were integrated into reading lessons, including students' engagement, participation, and reading comprehension behaviors. The researcher used an observation sheet to record classroom interactions systematically. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the English teacher to obtain insights regarding instructional planning, challenges, and perceptions of the effectiveness of the integrated approach. Documentation, such as students' reading worksheets, teacher lesson plans, and video materials, was analyzed to support observational findings and provide additional evidence of learning progress.

The procedures of implementing the intervention were carried out in several stages. First, the teacher prepared reading materials aligned with the Communicative Approach and selected appropriate videos related to the reading topics. Second, reading activities were conducted using communicative techniques such as prediction, questioning, discussion, and summarizing. Third, educational games were introduced as reinforcement activities to strengthen vocabulary recognition, comprehension, and reading fluency. Throughout the lessons, students interacted actively with the materials, expressed ideas, and worked collaboratively during game-based tasks. These procedures were observed continuously over several classroom sessions to ensure consistency and reliability of the findings.

The data collected from observations, interviews, and documentation were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The analysis followed several steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, the researcher identified key themes related to students' reading engagement, comprehension development, and responses to videos and games. The data were then organized into meaningful categories and displayed descriptively. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the patterns that appeared across different data sources. Triangulation was applied to strengthen the validity of the findings by comparing observations, teacher interviews, and documentation results.

Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the research process. Permission was obtained from the school administration and the participating teacher. Students' identities were kept anonymous, and all data were used solely for academic purposes. The study ensured that learning activities continued as usual without disrupting the students' normal instructional routines.

Through this methodological approach, the research aimed to provide a comprehensive

understanding of how communicative, video-based, and game-based instructional strategies influence reading skills development among young learners at MI Bahrul Ulum. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the improvement of reading instruction, especially in Islamic elementary schools that face similar learning challenges.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Communicative Approach through videos and educational games significantly enhanced the reading ability of 9-year-old students at MI Bahrul Ulum. Before the implementation, most students demonstrated limited vocabulary mastery, low reading fluency, and minimal motivation to engage with English texts. During the initial diagnostic activity, it was observed that students often hesitated when encountering unfamiliar words, and their comprehension was limited to recognizing isolated words rather than understanding full sentences. However, after several weeks of applying videos and games designed to support communicative interaction, students displayed noticeable improvements in both accuracy and confidence when reading.

The use of videos proved to be an effective medium for building contextual understanding. Students were able to associate new vocabulary with visual representations, which made reading activities more meaningful. Videos featuring animated characters, short stories, and simple conversations allowed the learners to predict text content, follow narratives, and relate spoken language to written forms. This multimodal learning experience helped reduce anxiety and encouraged participation. Additionally, the repeated exposure to language patterns through video content improved students' pronunciation and decoding skills, which consequently strengthened their overall reading fluency.

Games also played a crucial role in increasing student engagement. Learning games such as word-matching, sentence-building, and vocabulary-scavenger hunts created an interactive environment where students could practice reading in a relaxed and enjoyable setting. The competitive yet collaborative nature of the games encouraged students to read more actively and interact with their peers. The results showed that students were more enthusiastic during game-based learning sessions compared to conventional reading drills. This heightened motivation contributed to better retention of vocabulary and improved comprehension when reading short texts.

Another important finding relates to students' increased participation during classroom discussions. The Communicative Approach emphasizes meaningful communication rather than mere memorization; therefore, students were encouraged to ask questions, respond to prompts, and express ideas based on the reading material. As a result, students showed greater confidence in using English orally, which supported their ability to decode written language. Class observations revealed that students who were previously passive became more involved, demonstrating that communicative activities fostered a more supportive learning environment.

Teachers also reported that the integration of videos and games made classroom management easier. Students were more focused, less disruptive, and more willing to follow

instructions. Since the materials were aligned with their interests and cognitive development, students perceived reading as an enjoyable activity rather than a burden. This shift in perception is essential for young learners, as positive experiences in early reading can shape long-term attitudes toward language learning. Additionally, teachers noted that the approach allowed for differentiation, enabling students with varying skill levels to participate effectively according to their abilities.

Data from students' reading assessments further supported the qualitative observations. Post-test scores showed significant improvement in reading fluency, word recognition, and comprehension compared to pre-test results. The majority of students moved from the "beginner" category to "developing" or "proficient," particularly in recognizing familiar words, understanding simple sentences, and identifying main ideas from short texts. These quantitative results confirm that the Communicative Approach, when supported by videos and games, provides an effective framework for enhancing reading skills among young learners.

The findings also revealed a noticeable improvement in collaborative learning among the students. During activities involving videos and interactive games, the students worked together to understand vocabulary meanings, predict storylines, and interpret written information. This collaborative engagement encouraged them to negotiate meaning and build comprehension collectively, a key principle of the Communicative Approach. Students who were previously quiet gradually became more active in group work, contributing ideas and asking questions. The teacher observed that the classroom atmosphere became more supportive, with students helping each other and displaying increased confidence. This suggests that the integration of communicative tasks with engaging media can reduce learning anxiety and create an inclusive environment where all learners feel comfortable participating in reading activities.

In addition, the incorporation of videos and games contributed to the development of students' higher-order thinking skills. Rather than merely reading words, students analyzed characters in video stories, made predictions about plot developments, and drew inferences from visual and textual cues. These activities required them to process information more deeply, enhancing comprehension beyond the surface level. For example, after watching animated stories, students were able to identify narrative elements and connect them with written scripts provided in class. Similarly, reading games required students to match texts to images, determine main ideas, and arrange events logically. These tasks demonstrated that combining the Communicative Approach with multimedia resources not only strengthens basic reading skills but also supports cognitive growth, making the learning process more meaningful and holistic.

Overall, the discussion highlights that the combination of Communicative Approach principles with interactive media creates a dynamic learning environment that supports cognitive, emotional, and linguistic development. The approach promotes natural language acquisition by exposing students to meaningful contexts and encouraging active participation.

At the same time, videos and games cater to the learning characteristics of children, making reading activities more engaging and effective. The results suggest that this method can serve as an alternative strategy for teachers seeking to improve reading skills in elementary-level English classes.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of the Communicative Approach through videos and games is highly effective in enhancing the reading skills of 9-year-old learners at MI Bahrul Ulum. Throughout the learning process, students showed significant improvement in vocabulary recognition, reading fluency, sentence comprehension, and overall confidence when interacting with English texts. These improvements were evident not only in the quantitative results of reading assessments but also in the qualitative observations of students' participation, motivation, and enthusiasm during classroom activities. The Communicative Approach provided a meaningful learning environment in which reading was not limited to decoding words but was integrated into purposeful communication, interaction, and real-life contexts.

Moreover, the use of videos played a crucial role in strengthening students' comprehension by providing visual and auditory input that reinforced the meaning of new vocabulary and sentence structures. This multimodal exposure helped learners connect written language with real-life situations, making reading activities more engaging and meaningful. In addition, interactive games contributed to creating a positive and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. Through games, students became more active, competitive in a healthy way, and willing to practice reading repeatedly. Their increased engagement showed that young learners benefit greatly from activities that are playful, social, and communicative.

Overall, the study concludes that combining the Communicative Approach with videos and educational games can significantly support young learners' reading development. This integrated approach not only improves linguistic skills but also enhances motivation, confidence, and student participation – factors that are essential for long-term success in language learning. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to adopt similar interactive strategies in their classrooms, particularly when teaching reading to elementary-level students. The results also suggest that future research can explore broader applications of communicative media for other language skills such as speaking, listening, and writing, as well as investigate the sustainability of learning outcomes over a longer period.

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