

# Implementing Project-Based Learning With Communicative Approach To Enhance Communication Skills of 8th grade Students

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## ABSTRACT

*This classroom action research aimed to examine the implementation of project-based learning with a communicative approach and the improvement of communication skills among eighth-grade students at MTs Pancasila Tanjung Beringin. The study was motivated by students' low communication abilities, characterized by difficulties in expressing ideas systematically, lack of self-confidence, and the dominance of conventional teaching methods that provided limited opportunities for communication practice. The research was conducted in two cycles, with each cycle consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. The subjects were 35 eighth-grade students at MTs Pancasila Tanjung Beringin in the 2025-2026 academic year. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, pre-test and post-test assessments, and documentation. Data analysis employed quantitative and qualitative descriptive techniques with t-tests to measure the improvement in students' communication skills. The results demonstrated that implementing project-based learning with a communicative approach significantly enhanced students' communication abilities. The class average score increased from 62.43 in the pre-cycle to 72.57 in Cycle I and 81.29 in Cycle II, representing a total improvement of 18.86 points (30.21%). Classical mastery learning increased dramatically from 11.43% (4 students) in the pre-cycle to 34.29% (12 students) in Cycle I and 80.00% (28 students) in Cycle II. All aspects of communication skills showed significant improvement, with self-confidence experiencing the highest increase of 35.70%, followed by idea coherence (33.36%), audience interaction (32.78%), clarity of delivery (28.69%), and language use (28.52%). Active student participation increased from 20% to 97.1%, and students' responses to learning were highly positive with a score of 4.43 on a scale of 5. The study concluded that project-based learning with a communicative approach successfully created a collaborative, communicative, and meaningful learning environment. This model provided extensive opportunities for students to practice communication in authentic contexts, enhanced self-confidence, developed skills in organizing ideas, and facilitated dynamic interactions.*

*Keywords: Project-Based Learning, Communicative Approach, Communication Skills, Classroom Action Research.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian language learning at the Junior High School (SMP) level represents a fundamental aspect of character formation and language skill development of learners. However, current Indonesian language learning faces various challenges. Based on the results of the National Assessment (AN) conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) in 2022, students' reading literacy across Indonesia only reached an average of 51.23 on a scale of 100 (Kemendikbudristek, 2023). This data indicates the need to improve the quality of Indonesian language learning, especially in terms of literacy and communication.

Rianto (2021) stated that Indonesian language learning still tends to focus on cognitive and theoretical aspects, while practical aspects in the form of communication skills have not received adequate attention. Pratiwi and Sumarwati (2022) strengthened this argument by finding that 67% of Indonesian language learning at the junior high school level is still dominated by lecture and assignment methods that minimize communicative interaction among students. This condition is certainly not aligned with the spirit of the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), which emphasizes critical thinking, collaborative, and communicative abilities (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

Communication skills are an important aspect of language learning as a means of expressing thoughts, ideas, and feelings. According to Wahyuni (2020), good communication skills not only serve as indicators of effective language mastery but also represent essential skills for facing 21st-century challenges. Meanwhile, Agustina and Ratna (2023) affirmed that effective communication skills positively correlate with literacy, numeracy, and collaboration skills, which are the main focus of contemporary education (Agustina, R., & Ratna, 2023).

In the context of Indonesian language learning for eighth-grade junior high school students, the problem of communication skills becomes increasingly complex because, at this level, students are expected to be able to communicate effectively according to the context and purpose of communication. Preliminary observations at MTs Pancasila Tanjung Beringin showed that 65% of eighth-grade students still experienced difficulties in expressing ideas, both orally and in writing, with a systematic structure. This aligns with the findings of Zaini (2021), who stated that junior high school students generally still experience difficulties in organizing ideas, selecting appropriate diction, and delivering arguments logically and systematically (Zaini, 2021).

Asmal and Hasanah (2025) revealed that communication problems among junior high school students are not only related to mastery of language aspects but are also influenced by low self-confidence and minimal experience in communicating in meaningful contexts (Sazatul Asmal & Hasanah, 2025). This situation is exacerbated by the still dominant teacher-centered learning that provides little space for students to express themselves and practice their communication skills.

To address these problems, a learning approach is needed that can accommodate students' needs in developing communication skills. Project-Based Learning with a communicative approach offers a comprehensive solution. According to Hidayat (2020), project-based learning provides opportunities for students to construct knowledge through real experiences involving intensive collaboration and communication among students. This approach emphasizes an authentic and meaningful learning process in which students are actively involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating projects.

Recent research by Lianto et al. (2025) showed that implementing project-based learning in Indonesian language subjects can increase students' communication skills by 34.7% compared to conventional learning. Consistent with these findings, project-based learning is capable of creating a collaborative and communicative learning environment, where students not only learn about language but also learn to use language in meaningful contexts (Lianto et al., 2025).

The integration of a communicative approach into project-based learning further strengthens the relevance of this learning model in the context of developing communication skills. The communicative approach, as explained by Sari and Purnomo (2021), emphasizes the use of language to communicate in real situations by considering communication components, namely, linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic. Through this approach, students are trained to use language according to context, purpose, and audience (Canoy & Baloran, 2025).

## **II. METHODS**

### *A. Research Design*

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR), which is a form of reflective research conducted by educators on curriculum, school development, improvement of learning achievement, and development of teaching expertise (Kemmis et al., 2022). CAR is implemented to improve and enhance the quality of classroom learning through certain actions in a cycle. According to Korreia et al. (2025), Classroom Action Research is research conducted by teachers in their own classrooms through self-reflection to improve their performance as teachers so that student learning outcomes increase. CAR is contextual, meaning that the problems raised are those faced by teachers in daily learning activities (Korreia et al., 2025).

In this study, the CAR was implemented through several cycles consisting of four main stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The cycle model used in this research refers to the CAR model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart, which includes planning, action, observation, and reflection activities in an interconnected spiral.

#### Rationale for Method Selection

The selection of CAR as the research method was based on several considerations:

##### a. Starting from Practical Problems

CAR is relevant for addressing the problem of low communication skills in eighth grade at MTs Pancasila Tanjung Beringin. According to Violy (2025), CAR is effective in solving learning problems that are practical and contextual in nature (Violy, 2025).

##### b. Focusing on Improving Learning Practices

CAR provides opportunities for researchers to systematically improve their learning practices. Through CAR, teachers can critically reflect on their teaching practices and make gradual improvements.

#### c. Collaborative and Participatory Nature

CAR is implemented collaboratively between researchers and subject teachers, enabling knowledge and experience exchanges. Setyowati (2026) stated that collaboration in CAR can improve research quality and its implementation in learning (Setyowati, 2026).

#### d. Based on Empirical Data

CAR enables researchers to collect empirical data on the effectiveness of the project-based learning model with a communicative approach in improving students' communication skills (Wulandari & Purwanto, 2022).

#### e. Cyclical Nature

The cyclical characteristic of CAR allows researchers to make gradual and continuous improvements until optimal results are achieved. This is consistent with the process of developing communication skills, which requires repeated practice and habituation.

### B. *Research Setting*

This study was conducted at MTs Pancasila Tanjung Beringin, located at Jalan Pendidikan No. 12, Tanjung Beringin Village, Tanjung Beringin District, Serdang Bedagai Regency, North Sumatra Province. The selection of this school was based on preliminary observations showing that students' communication skills still needed improvement. Additionally, this school has facilities that support the implementation of project-based learning with a communicative approach, such as a library, computer laboratory, and multimedia room. This study was conducted during the even semester of the 2025-2026 academic year, specifically from January to April 2026.

### C. *Research Subjects*

The subjects in this study were eighth-grade students at MTs Pancasila Tanjung Beringin during the 2025-2026 academic year. Grade VIII consisted of 35 students, including 14 male and 18 female students. The selection of grade VIII as research subjects was based on preliminary observations and discussions with subject teachers showing that students' communication skills in that class were still relatively low, as indicated by:

- a. Low student participation in classroom discussions
- b. Students' difficulties in expressing opinions orally
- c. Students' lack of ability to convey ideas in a structured manner
- d. Low level of student confidence when speaking in front of the class

### D. *Research Procedures*

This research was implemented in the form of cycles based on Kemmis and McTaggart's CAR model. Each cycle consists of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research was planned in two cycles, with each cycle consisting of three meetings. If the expected results were not achieved in the second cycle, the process would continue with the next cycle until success indicators were met.

#### 1. Planning Stage

At the planning stage, researchers conducted the following activities:

- a. Problem Identification
- b. Action Plan Development
- c. Research Instrument Development
- d. Instrument Validation
- e. Technical Preparation

Planning is the key to CAR success, as it determines the direction of actions taken and facilitates the measurement of action success.

#### 2. Action Stage

The action stage involves the implementation of the plans prepared in the planning stage. Action implementation refers to lesson plans (RPP) developed by integrating a project-based learning model and a communicative approach. Implementing a project-based learning model requires attention to clear and structured stages to optimally develop students' communication skills. The importance of providing extensive opportunities for students to practice communication in various contexts during project implementation.

#### 3. Observation Stage

The observation stage was conducted simultaneously with the action stage. At this stage, researchers and collaborators observed and recorded all the activities occurring during the learning process. The focus of observation was on the implementation of a project-based learning model with a communicative approach and

the development of students' communication skills. The importance of comprehensive data collection through various techniques and sources to obtain a complete picture of the process and results of the actions.

#### 4. Reflection Stage

The reflection stage was conducted after action and observation were completed:

- a. Teachers reflected on the learning that had been implemented
- b. Teachers determined what had been achieved and what needed improvement
- c. Teachers improved their teaching performance in class
- d. Teachers obtained satisfaction in teaching and students obtained satisfaction in learning
- e. Researchers examined, observed, and considered the results or impacts of actions
- f. Researchers and observers discussed action results at the end of each action implementation
- g. Researchers revised previous activities, whether activities performed hit the target or not

#### E. *Data Collection Techniques and Instruments*

##### 1. Observation (Observation Sheet)

Observation is a data collection technique that involves directly observing research subjects or objects. This technique allows researchers to observe behavior and events as they actually are (Sugiyono, 2021). The observation instrument used was an observation sheet, which is a document containing a list of types of activities or behaviors that might arise and be observed.

##### 2. Interview (Interview Guide)

Interviews are a data collection technique through oral questions and answers conducted in one direction, where questions come from the interviewer and answers are given by the interviewee (Hardani et al., 2020). The interview instrument used was a semi-structured interview guide that allowed for deeper exploration while maintaining the general guidelines.

##### 3. Tests (Pre-test and Post-test)

Tests are a series of questions or exercises used to measure the skills, knowledge, intelligence, abilities, or talents of individuals or groups (Arikunto, 2017). Based on the implementation time:

Pre-test: Test conducted before treatment

Post-test: Test conducted after treatment

##### 4. Documentation

Documentation is a data collection technique that gathers and analyzes documents, whether written documents, images, or electronic documents (Sugiyono, 2019).

#### F. *Data Analysis Techniques*

After data from all respondents were collected, data analysis was conducted. The data analysis techniques used in this study are as follows:

The t-test is a partial test that examines the influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable. This t-test can be performed by comparing t-calculated with t-table or by looking at the significance column of each t-calculated

### **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### A. *Pre-Cycle Initial Conditions*

Before implementing this classroom action research, the researchers conducted preliminary observations and diagnostic tests to identify the communication skills of eighth-grade students at MTs Pancasila Tanjung Beringin.

##### Pre-Cycle Data Collection Methods

Initial condition data were collected through:

- a. Learning observation: Observation of classroom learning processes over 4 meetings
- b. Pre-test: Oral communication skills test (individual presentation)
- c. Questionnaire: Questionnaire about self-confidence and communication activeness
- d. Interview: With subject teachers and several students
- e. Documentation: Photos and videos of learning activities

##### Preliminary Observation Results of Learning

Based on observations conducted, the following learning conditions were found:

##### a. Learning Methods

Teachers still used conventional lecture and question-answer methods

Learning was teacher-centered

Student-to-student interaction was very limited

No method variations stimulating active communication

Students mostly listened and took notes

#### b. Student Communication Activities

Only 5-7 students (14-20%) actively answered teacher questions

Students who dared to ask questions were only 2-3 people per meeting

Group discussions were rarely conducted

Presentations or speaking in front of class had never been done

Students tended to remain silent when asked for opinions

#### c. Student Communication Characteristics

Most students showed hesitation when asked to speak

Voice volume was weak and not clearly audible

Eye contact with conversation partners was very minimal

Body language showed lack of self-confidence (looking down, restless)

Use of Indonesian language was still mixed with regional language

Sentence structure was not well organized

### Pre-test Results

A pre-test was conducted to measure students' communication skills before implementing the project-based learning model. The test was conducted through individual presentations lasting 3-5 minutes with the theme "Self-Introduction and Aspirations..."

**Table 1. Recapitulation of Pre-test Results**

Aspect	Number of Students	Percentage
Passed ( $\geq 75$ )	4 students	11.43%
Not Passed ( $< 75$ )	31 students	88.57%
Total	35 students	100%

**Table 3. Score Statistics**

Statistics	Value
Highest Score	78
Lowest Score	43
Class Average	62.43
Median	61
Mode	61

**Table 4. Pre-test Score Distribution by Category**

Category	Score Range	Number of Students	Percentage
Very Good	86-100	0	0%
Good	75-85	4	11.43%
Adequate	60-74	20	57.14%
Poor	40-59	11	31.43%
Very Poor	<40	0	0%
Total		35	100%

Table 5. Average Score per Communication Skill Aspect in Pre-Cycle

No	Assessed Aspect	Average Score	Percentage	Category
1	Clarity of delivery (articulation, volume, tempo)	13.14	65.7%	Adequate
2	Idea coherence (message organization, coherence)	12.23	61.2%	Poor
3	Language use (diction, sentence structure, EYD)	13.43	67.2%	Adequate
4	Self-confidence (body posture, eye contact, gestures)	11.43	57.2%	Poor
5	Audience interaction (response, enthusiasm)	12.57	62.9%	Adequate
	Overall Average	12.56	62.8%	Adequate

Table 6. Cycle I Test Results Recapitulation

Aspect	Number of Students	Percentage
Passed ( $\geq 75$ )	12 students	34.29%
Not Passed ( $< 75$ )	23 students	65.71%
Total	35 students	100%

Table 7. Comparison of Pre-Cycle with Cycle I

Aspect	Pre-Cycle	Cycle I	Improvement	Percentage
Clarity of delivery	13.14	14.63	1.49	11.34%
Idea coherence	12.23	14.00	1.77	14.47%
Language use	13.43	15.00	1.57	11.69%
Self-confidence	11.43	13.46	2.03	17.76%
Audience interaction	12.57	14.51	1.94	15.43%
Total Average	62.43	72.57	10.14	16.24%
Mastery	11.43%	34.29%	22.86%	200%

### Cycle II Implementation

The implementation of Cycle II showed significant improvements based on reflections from Cycle I. Teachers provided more intensive scaffolding, clearer individual assessments, and more practice opportunities.

Table 8. Cycle II Results Recapitulation

Aspect	Number of Students	Percentage
Passed ( $\geq 75$ )	28 students	80.00%
Not Passed ( $< 75$ )	7 students	20.00%
Total	35 students	100%

Table 9. Comparison of Cycle I with Cycle II

Aspect	Cycle I	Cycle II	Improvement	Percentage
Clarity of delivery	14.63	16.17	1.54	10.53%
Idea coherence	14.00	15.63	1.63	11.64%
Language use	15.00	16.60	1.60	10.67%
Self-confidence	13.46	15.51	2.05	15.23%
Audience interaction	14.51	16.17	1.66	11.44%
Total Average	72.57	81.29	8.72	12.01%
Mastery	34.29%	80.00%	45.71%	133.33%

Table 10. Student Activity Observation Results in Cycle II

No	Observed Aspect	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3	Average
1	Student attendance	35 (100%)	35 (100%)	35 (100%)	100%
2	Activeness in group discussions	33 (94.3%)	34 (97.1%)	35 (100%)	97.1%
3	Participation in project work	34 (97.1%)	35 (100%)	35 (100%)	99.0%
4	Courage to ask questions	25 (71.4%)	28 (80.0%)	32 (91.4%)	80.9%
5	Giving responses/opinions	22 (62.9%)	28 (80.0%)	32 (91.4%)	78.1%
6	Completing tasks on time	34 (97.1%)	35 (100%)	35 (100%)	99.0%
7	Self-confidence during presentation	30 (85.7%)	33 (94.3%)	35 (100%)	93.3%

Table 11. Student Response Questionnaire Results for Cycle II Learning

No	Statement	Average Score	Category
1	Learning model is interesting and enjoyable	4.6	Strongly Agree
2	Project helps me understand material better	4.5	Strongly Agree
3	I am braver speaking in front of class	4.3	Strongly Agree
4	Group cooperation runs well	4.5	Strongly Agree
5	I am more confident in communicating	4.2	Strongly Agree
	Overall Average	4.43	Strongly Agree

### B. Discussion

Overall, students' communication skills showed a substantial improvement from the initial pre-cycle condition to the final post-test, with the class average rising from 62.43 to 81.29 (an increase of 18.86 points or 30.21%) and classical mastery leaping from 11.43% (four students) to 80.00% (28 students), surpassing the predetermined research targets. The improvement pattern indicates that the largest gain in average scores occurred between the pre-cycle and Cycle I (10.14 points or 16.24%), followed by a slightly smaller yet still meaningful gain from Cycle I to Cycle II (8.72 points or 12.01%), a trend that can be interpreted as a novelty effect in Cycle I and a consolidation effect in Cycle II.

In contrast, mastery gains were greatest between Cycles I and II (22.86% vs. 45.71%), suggesting that the refinements implemented in Cycle II were particularly effective in helping borderline students reach the mastery threshold. At the aspect level, self-confidence experienced the most dramatic transformation, increasing by 4.08 points (35.70%) from 11.43 to 15.51; this aligns with Bandura's view that accumulated mastery experiences strengthen self-efficacy and with Krashen's notion that reduced anxiety and greater confidence lower the affective filter, thereby facilitating more effective language learning, which was visibly reflected in a more relaxed posture, steady eye contact, clearer voice, natural gestures, better control of nervousness, and greater willingness to take communicative risks. Idea coherence improved by 3.40 points (27.80%), indicating that students refined their ability to organize content logically through repeated project planning and presentation structuring, while audience interaction rose by 3.60 points (28.63%) as interactive question-and-answer sessions shifted classroom communication from monologic to dialogic.

Clarity of delivery increased by 3.03 points (23.06%) due to systematic practice and feedback on articulation, volume, and tempo, and language use improved by 3.17 points (23.61%) as students expanded their vocabulary, used more standard sentence patterns, and reduced their reliance on regional language, signaling a move from informal toward more formal Indonesian.

These empirical improvements validate constructivist views that knowledge is actively built through authentic, socially embedded tasks, are consistent with key criteria for effective project-based learning, —such as driving questions, sustained inquiry, authenticity, student voice and choice, reflection, critique and revision, and public products, —and confirm core principles of the communicative approach, including a focus on meaning, authentic communication purposes (e.g., health campaigns), balanced development of fluency and accuracy, and ongoing negotiation of meaning in group work and plenary discussions.

The success of the intervention can be attributed to several interrelated factors, namely careful planning informed by prior reflection, the selection of culturally and personally relevant project themes, intensive scaffolding and formative feedback for all students especially those initially weaker creation of a supportive and collaborative learning climate that reduced communication anxiety, and the use of clear assessment rubrics and continuous feedback that helped students internalize expectations and monitor their progress.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

This research successfully demonstrated that implementing project-based learning model with a communicative approach is very effective in improving eighth-grade students' communication skills at MTs Pancasila Tanjung Beringin. The model created a collaborative, communicative, and meaningful learning environment that provided extensive opportunities for students to practice communication in authentic contexts. Students not only learned about language but also learned to use language effectively in various real communication situations. Students' communication skills experienced very significant improvement from initial conditions to the end of research. Class average score increased from 62.43 in the pre-cycle to 81.29 in Cycle II, or increased by 18.86 points (30.21%). This improvement occurred gradually in each cycle: pre-cycle to Cycle I (10.14 points or 16.24%), Cycle I to Cycle II (8.72 points or 12.01%). Achievement of average score 81.29 exceeded the established Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) of 75. Classical learning mastery experienced very dramatic improvement from 11.43% (4 students) in the pre-cycle to 80.00% (28 students) in Cycle II, increasing by 68.57%. This achievement far exceeded the minimum established classical mastery target of 75%. Mastery improvement occurred progressively: pre-cycle to Cycle I (22.86%), Cycle I to Cycle II (45.71%). The largest improvement occurred from Cycle I to Cycle II, showing the effectiveness of improvements made based on Cycle I reflection. All aspects of communication skills showed significant and balanced improvement. Self-confidence experienced the highest improvement of 4.08 points (35.70%), followed by idea coherence 3.40 points (27.80%), audience interaction 3.60 points (28.63%), clarity of delivery 3.03 points (23.06%), and language use 3.17 points (23.61%). All aspects reached Good category ( $\geq 75\%$ ) in Cycle II, showing holistic and comprehensive development of students' communication competence. Student active participation in learning increased very significantly, from around 20% in the pre-cycle to 97.1% in Cycle II. Courage to ask questions increased from 42.9% (Meeting 1 Cycle I) to 91.4% (Meeting 3 Cycle II). Activeness in group discussions reached 100% in Meeting 3 Cycle II. Participation in project work reached 99.0% average in Cycle II. This high participation showed that students felt engaged, motivated, and comfortable with the learning model applied. Positive and measurable changes occurred in students' communication behavior: Verbal Aspects: From unorganized sentence structure, many pauses, weak volume, and limited diction to being able to convey ideas with clear structure, fluently, good volume, and varied vocabulary, Non-verbal Aspects: From very minimal eye contact to consistent, stiff body gestures to natural and supporting communication, and more expressive facial expressions, Psychological Aspects: From very nervous, afraid of being wrong, and lacking confidence to calmer, daring to take risks, and confident in their

own abilities, Students' response and attitude toward project-based learning model with communicative approach were very positive. Questionnaire results showed an average score of 4.43 (on a scale of 5) in Cycle II, categorized as Strongly Agree. Students stated that learning was interesting and enjoyable, helped them understand material better, increased speaking courage, facilitated good group cooperation, and increased communication confidence.

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"No external funding was received for this study."

### **Ethical Compliance**

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

### **Data Access Statement**

A Data Access Statement is a section in a scientific publication or research report that explains how the data used or generated in the study can be accessed by readers or other researchers. This statement aims to promote transparency, support research reproducibility, and comply with open-access policies, where applicable.

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### **Conflict of Interest Declaration**

The authors declare that they have no affiliations or involvement with any organization or entity with any financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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