

Improving Third-Grade Students' Indonesian Language Learning Outcomes through the Make-a-Match Strategy within a Cooperative Learning Model

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to improve the Indonesian language learning outcomes of grade III students of SD Swasta Harapan 3 Medan City through the application of the make a match learning strategy in a cooperative learning model. The research problem is formulated as follows: "Can the application of the make a match learning strategy in the cooperative learning model improve the Indonesian language learning outcomes of grade III students of SD Swasta Harapan 3 Medan City in the 2025-2026 academic year?" This research is motivated by the low learning outcomes of Indonesian language of grade III students caused by several factors, such as noisy students during learning, the use of methods that are not optimal, lack of enthusiasm and student activity, and students feeling embarrassed and confused with the subject matter. This study used the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method, which was carried out in two cycles. Each cycle consists of planning, implementation, observation and reflection. The subjects of the study were grade III students of SD Swasta Harapan 3 Medan City in the 2025-2026 academic year with a total of 22 students. Data were collected through observations, formative tests (pretest and posttest), and documentation. Data analysis was performed quantitatively and qualitatively. The results of the study showed an increase in student learning outcomes after the application of the match learning strategy in the cooperative learning model. In Cycle I, the percentage of students who completed the program was 45.45%, whereas in Cycle II, it increased to 77.27%. There was also an increase in student activity in learning. The conclusion of this study is that the application of the make a match learning strategy in the cooperative learning model is effective in improving the learning outcomes of Indonesian language students in grade III SD Swasta Harapan 3 Medan City in the 2025-2026 academic year. This strategy can increase student involvement, learning motivation, and understanding of the subject.

Keywords: Learning Strategy, Make A Match, Cooperative Learning, Learning Outcomes

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian is a crucial subject in the elementary-school curriculum. A good command of Indonesian will impact students' ability to understand and learn other subjects. However, in reality, the Indonesian language learning outcomes of third-grade students at Harapan 3 Private Elementary School in Medan City for the 2025-2026 academic year are still relatively low. This is indicated by the large number of students who have not yet achieved the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM) (Kurniawati, 2025).

Learning outcomes are changes that result in changes in attitudes and behavior. Learning outcomes are also the process of determining student learning scores through assessment or measurement activities aimed at determining the level of success achieved by students. To improve student learning outcomes, teachers must take action if student learning outcomes are low, even if they use supporting textbooks and learning models. Teachers must be clever and careful in selecting learning models, as the model used must be appropriate to the material being presented (Mariya & Kanwal, 2025).

The learning model is a crucial factor influencing student learning outcomes during the learning process. An engaging learning model that feels unfamiliar to students fosters interest in their learning. Therefore, teachers must use appropriate learning models to maximize student learning outcomes; inappropriate use of learning models can lead to suboptimal student learning outcomes, even leading to students feeling forced and uncomfortable during the learning process.

Based on a pre-survey conducted by researchers on third-grade students at Harapan 3 Private Elementary School in Medan City in the 2025-2026 academic year, researchers found that third-grade students' Indonesian language learning outcomes were still relatively low. This was indicated by the large number of students who

had not yet achieved the Minimum Competency (KKM) (Parwati et al., 2025). Low student learning outcomes were caused by various factors, including:

- a) Students were noisy during the learning process.
- b) The use of methods was not optimal, resulting in students being less enthusiastic about the learning process.
- c) Students were less active in the learning process and did not complete their homework.
- d) When the teacher asked questions, students remained silent.
- e) Students felt embarrassed to ask questions.
- f) Students considered themselves still confused by the material explained by the teacher.

This was evidenced by interviews with the third-grade homeroom teacher, who stated that the students were noisy during the learning process. During the learning process, the teacher used lectures and question-and-answer methods. He stated that students lacked enthusiasm during the learning process, leading some to disrupt their classmates by engaging in conversations during class. Students were less active in the learning process and often failed to complete homework assigned by the teacher despite repeated warnings. When the teacher asked questions, the students remained silent. They felt embarrassed asking questions. They considered themselves to be still confused by the material being explained. He also stated that third-grade students' learning outcomes in Indonesian were still low (Rahmawati et al., 2024).

According to interviews with several students, they considered Indonesian to be a boring subject. In practice, the teaching methods used by teachers were perceived as monotonous, thus failing to improve students' learning outcomes. To achieve optimal learning outcomes, teachers must create a learning environment that engages students and engages them enthusiastically. This can be achieved by implementing varied and enjoyable learning models supported by learning media to prevent miscommunication between the subject matter and what students are learning. One such approach is the use of the cooperative learning model, "make a match."

The "make-a-match" model is a learning model that encourages students to find answers to questions or pairs of concepts through a matching card game. The rationale for using this learning model is that it can be applied to elementary school-aged children. Learning with this model will increase students' interest in learning, as they search for card pairs and answers while learning about a concept or topic in a fun learning environment. This activity allows students to be active, develop their skills, attitudes, and knowledge independently, and collaborate in groups (Nufitasari et al., 2024).

Therefore, to address the problem of low Indonesian language learning outcomes for third-grade students at Harapan 3 Private Elementary School, Medan City, in the 2025-2026 academic year, the researcher will conduct a research entitled "Efforts to Improve Students' Indonesian Language Learning Outcomes Through the Make A Match Learning Strategy in the Cooperative Learning Model for Grade III Students of Harapan 3 Private Elementary School, Medan City, 2025-2026 Academic Year." This research is expected to provide an effective solution for improving students' interest and learning outcomes through the application of a more interactive and enjoyable learning model.

II. METHODS

A. Research Design

The study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design based on Kurt Lewin's model, which comprises iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The CAR was chosen because it allows the teacher-researcher to systematically introduce pedagogical changes in a real classroom, monitor their impact, and refine the intervention across cycles. In this study, two full action cycles were implemented. Each cycle consisted of two instructional meetings (2×35 minutes per meeting), focusing on Indonesian language learning with the theme of professions (Creswell, 2021).

B. Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at SD Swasta Harapan 3, a private primary school in Medan, Indonesia during the 2025–2026 academic year. The participants were all 22 students in a third-grade class, comprising 11 boys and 11 girls. The class was selected based on preliminary evidence of low Indonesian language learning outcomes and limited engagement. Students exhibited diverse ability levels, with some able to follow instructions relatively well, while others struggled with basic reading comprehension and classroom participation.

The regular classroom teacher collaborated with the researcher to implement the intervention. This collaboration ensured that the actions taken were feasible within the school's routine and that the observations captured authentic teaching and learning processes.

Variables and Operational Definitions

Two main variables were defined.

Independent variable (intervention):

The make-a-match learning strategy within a cooperative learning model. Operationally, this refers to a sequence of classroom activities where students, working in two facing groups (Group A and Group B), receive question and answer cards related to the Indonesian language material (stories about professions). Students must find the matching card held by a peer in the opposite group within a specified time and then present and discuss the matched content under teacher facilitation (Sugiyono, 2019).

Dependent variable (outcome):

Students' Indonesian-language learning outcomes. Operationally, this is defined as students' performance on written tests (pre-test and post-tests) measuring comprehension of story texts about professions—such as identifying information, characters, character traits, main ideas, and moral messages—as well as indicators of learning activity observed during lessons. Learning outcomes were expressed as both individual scores and the proportion of students achieving or exceeding the KKM score of 64 (Arikunto, 2016).

C. Procedure

Each action cycle followed four stages.

Planning

In the planning stage for Cycle I, the teacher–researcher:

Identified the specific content: Reading and comprehending stories about professions in a pleasant atmosphere.

Developed lesson plans (RPP) integrating cooperative learning principles and the make-a-match strategy.

Instructional media were designed and produced, primarily sets of question and answer cards containing key information from the stories (e.g., definitions of needs, types of jobs, job characteristics, and examples of professions).

Observation checklists were prepared for teacher and student activities (e.g., listening to explanations, asking questions, participating in make-a-match, group discussion, and presentation).

Constructed pre-test and post-test items (short essay questions) aligned with the learning objectives and content.

The success criteria were determined as at least 70% of students reaching the KKM (score ≥ 64) and observable increases in student participation and on-task behavior.

For Cycle II, planning was informed by reflection on Cycle I. Adjustments included clearer instructions for the make-a-match game, more explicit motivation and scaffolding for shy students, and the provision of rewards for students who were active and had achieved mastery.

Action (Implementation)

In each cycle, the intervention was implemented in two meetings.

Meeting 1 (Cycle I) began with a pre-test to assess initial understanding. The teacher then introduced the topic, explained the objectives, and provided an ice-breaking activity to build enthusiasm. The story about professions was briefly delivered, followed by the first implementation of make-a-match. Students were divided into Group A (question cards) and Group B (answer cards) and positioned face-to-face. On the teacher's signal, students opened their cards, read them, and moved around to find their matching partners. Successful pairs reported to the teacher and later presented their question–answer pairs to the class.

Meeting 2 (Cycle I) reinforced the same theme with additional examples of community jobs. The make-a-match activity was repeated with improved familiarity. The students again matched the cards and presented their results. Finally, a post-test was administered to measure learning after Cycle I.

Cycle II meetings followed a similar pattern but included refinements based on the lessons learned from Cycle I. The teacher intensified motivational strategies, such as verbal encouragement and small rewards for active participation and correct responses. The time limits for finding matches were adjusted, and the teacher provided more targeted assistance to students who struggled. Make-a-match was again the core activity, followed by group presentations and post-testing at the end of Cycle II.

Observation

Structured observations were conducted during all action phases. The observer (who could be the teacher or a collaborator) used predetermined observation sheets to record the following:

Teacher behaviors included how the lesson was opened, how motivation and explanations were provided, how media were used, how the make-a-match steps were implemented, how time was managed, and how evaluation and closure were conducted.

Student behaviors, including attentiveness to the teacher, frequency of asking and answering questions, adherence to the make-a-match procedure, engagement in group discussions, and performance in presenting group work.

Observation data were recorded in the form of frequency counts and rating scales and were later converted to percentages to facilitate comparison between cycles.

Reflection

After each cycle, the teacher–researcher analyzed the test results and observation data to identify strengths and weaknesses. In Cycle I, reflection revealed that although some improvement occurred, many students remained passive and hesitant to ask questions or speak in front of the class. Consequently, Cycle II emphasized motivational strategies, clearer instructions, and the consistent use of rewards to reinforce desired behaviors. Reflection after Cycle II indicated that both learning outcomes and student activity had improved sufficiently to meet the predetermined success criteria; therefore, additional cycles were deemed unnecessary.

D. Data Collection Techniques

Three main techniques were employed:

Tests (pre-test and post-tests)

Essay-type tests were administered to measure cognitive learning outcomes related to reading and understanding stories about different professions. The pre-test was given before the intervention in Cycle I, while post-tests were administered at the end of Cycle I and II. The test items covered identifying information, naming characters, describing character traits, summarizing story content, and identifying moral messages. Scores were compared to the KKM of 64 and summarized in terms of mean scores and the proportion of students reaching mastery.

Observation

Observation sheets captured the fidelity of the teachers' implementation and the students' learning activities. Each item on the observation sheet was rated on a 1–4 scale (from “poor” to “very good”) and converted to percentages. These data allowed us to track changes in classroom dynamics across cycles, such as increased attention, participation, and cooperation.

Documentation

Supporting documents were collected, including school profiles, class lists, photographs of classroom activities, and copies of the instructional materials. These documents provide contextual information and evidence of implementation.

E. Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the tests were descriptively analysed. For each cycle, the number and percentage of students who achieved scores ≥ 64 were calculated, as well as the number and percentage of those who did not. Improvement was gauged by the differences in mastery percentages between cycles. The observation scores were averaged and converted into percentages to compare student activity and teacher performance across cycles.

Qualitative data from observations and reflections were analyzed to interpret why certain changes occurred and how the intervention influenced the students' behavior and classroom climate. These qualitative insights were used to refine the intervention and triangulate with quantitative findings.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Overview of Learning Outcomes

The key quantitative results relate to the proportion of students who achieved the KKM of 64 in Indonesian language tests following the intervention. The data for the two main post-tests (Cycles I and II) are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Mastery of Indonesian Language Learning Outcomes by Cycle (N = 22).

Category	Criterion (Score)	Cycle I: n (%)	Cycle II: n (%)	Change in mastery (%)
Mastery (Tuntas)	≥ 64	10 (45.45%)	17 (77.27%)	+31.82
Not yet mastered	< 64	12 (54.55%)	5 (22.73%)	–31.82
Total		22 (100%)	22 (100%)	

The table shows a clear improvement in the mastery. After Cycle I, less than half of the students (45.45%) reached the KKM, while more than half (54.55%) remained below the threshold. By the end of Cycle II,

77.27% of the students had achieved mastery, with only 22.73% not yet meeting the criterion. The gain in mastery percentage was 31.82 points, which is substantial for a short intervention that cover two cycles.

This pattern indicates that the make-a-match strategy embedded in cooperative learning contributed meaningfully to improving students' Indonesian-language-learning outcomes. While other contextual factors might have played a role (such as increasing familiarity with the test format or general maturation), the timeline and concentrated nature of the intervention suggest a strong association between the strategy and the observed gains.

B. Student Learning Activities

Beyond the test scores, the observational data revealed notable changes in student activity across the two cycles. Table 2 presents the average percentages for the six key aspects of student behavior observed over the cycles.

Table 2. Average Student Activity Scores by Aspect and Cycle (Percentages)

No.	Observed Aspect	Cycle I (%)	Cycle II (%)	Improvement (%)
1	Listening attentively to the teacher's explanations	59.08	76.70	+17.62
2	Actively asking questions and giving responses	52.83	70.45	+17.62
3	Following the make-a-match procedure as instructed	68.17	76.70	+8.53
4	Participating in the implementation of the make-a-match model	64.76	81.81	+17.05
5	Actively engaging in group discussion	59.08	77.83	+18.75
6	Presenting group discussion results to the class	57.38	76.13	+18.75
	Overall average student activity	59.71	76.60	+16.89

The overall average student activity increased from 59.71% in Cycle I to 76.60% in Cycle II, an improvement of approximately 17 percentage points. Improvements were especially marked in active questioning/responding, group discussion, and presentation skills, which are critical components of cooperative learning and communication competence in language learning.

These observation data suggest that the make-a-match strategy not only enhanced cognitive outcomes but also reshaped classroom participation patterns. Students became more willing to speak, collaborate, and appear in front of the class.

Cycle I: Initial Implementation and Constraints

In Cycle I, the introduction of make-a-match produced immediate changes in the classroom dynamics. Students were intrigued by the use of cards and the game-like format of the activity. Many responded enthusiastically when instructed to find their matching partners, moving around the classroom and interacting with their peers. However, the observation notes indicated several constraints.

Some students were still hesitant to engage fully, especially when asked to ask questions or present in front of the class. Their reluctance was associated with fear of making mistakes and low self-confidence.

A subset of students struggled to focus on the content of the cards and were more attracted to the movement and social aspects of the activity. This led to occasional off-task behaviors and noise.

Time management posed a challenge; some students took longer to find their partners, and the transitions between the stages of the activity were not always smooth.

Despite these issues, Cycle I already showed an improvement in learning outcomes compared to the baseline conditions (as implied by pre-test versus post-test comparisons within the cycle). The 45.45% mastery rate indicates that nearly half of the students were able to achieve the KKM after just one cycle of intervention. However, because the predetermined success criterion required at least 70% mastery, the process needed to be refined and continued in Cycle II.

The reflection on Cycle I led to several key insights: First, motivation and emotional support are crucial when asking young learners to participate in new and more demanding tasks, such as presenting in front of classmates. Second, clear and repeated instructions are essential for structurally complex activities, such as

make-a-match. Third, teachers must actively guide and monitor students during the activity to prevent it from degenerating into unproductive play.

Cycle II: Refinement and Consolidation

In Cycle II, the teacher implemented several refinements informed by these reflections:

The teacher provided explicit motivational messages emphasizing that making mistakes is part of learning, and that students should not fear answering incorrectly.

Small rewards (such as praise, tokens, or simple prizes) were introduced for active students who achieved mastery, thereby reinforcing desired behaviors.

The instructions for the make-a-match procedure were repeated and simplified, and the teacher modeled the process before asking students to perform it.

The teacher offered more targeted assistance to students who had shown difficulties in Cycle I, ensuring that they understood their cards and encouraging them to seek partners in Cycle II.

These adjustments had a visible effect. Student attentiveness during explanations improved, as indicated by the increase in the “listening” aspect of the attentiveness dimension. More students began to ask questions and respond to the teacher’s prompts, and discussions within the groups became livelier and more substantive. Importantly, shy students who had previously remained silent gradually began to participate, either by answering simple questions, reading their cards aloud, or joining group explanations.

The smoother implementation of make-a-match in Cycle II is reflected in the higher percentages for aspects related to following the procedure and participation in the model. Students were now more familiar with the structure of the game, which reduced confusion and allowed them to focus more on the content of the game. The time limits for finding matches were better calibrated, and fewer students were left without partners when the time expired.

The most consequential impact of these changes was seen in the mastery data: 17 out of 22 students (77.27%) achieved scores ≥ 64 in the Cycle II post-test. This result surpassed the 70% success threshold and constitutes strong practical evidence of the effectiveness of the intervention.

C. Interpretation in Light of Cooperative Learning Theory

The observed improvements align well with the theoretical claims about cooperative learning and the make-a-match strategy. The cooperative learning literature emphasizes that positive interdependence and individual accountability promote deeper engagement with the material. In this study, positive interdependence emerged naturally because each student’s card had to be matched with exactly one partner’s card; no student could complete the task alone. Individual accountability was maintained as students were required to understand and explain the content of their cards during presentations and tests.

Make-a-match, as implemented here, also leveraged face-to-face promotive interaction: students had to talk, negotiate, and collaborate with each other to find their match and prepare presentations. These interactions provided repeated opportunities to process and rehearse the key elements of the stories (such as definitions, types of jobs, and moral messages). This is consistent with cognitive theories that highlight the benefits of elaborative rehearsal and retrieval practice for long-term retention.

The game-like nature of make-a-match contributes to increasing intrinsic motivation and reducing anxiety. Instead of perceiving the lesson as a monotonous sequence of lectures and questions, students experienced it as a playful challenge in which they could move, search, and “win” by correctly matching and presenting cards. This emotional re-framing likely lowered affective barriers to participation, particularly for students who previously felt bored or afraid of failure.

Simultaneously, the need for careful planning and classroom management, as highlighted in the literature, was evident in this study. When preparation or guidance was less than optimal, such as in the early parts of Cycle I, noise and off-task behavior increased. Only when the teacher refined instructions, monitored groups more closely, and introduced rewards did participation translate into meaningful learning. This underscores that the success of cooperative strategies depends not only on the technique itself but also on the teacher’s pedagogical skills.

D. Discussion

The research results obtained after the implementation of the learning process showed that student learning outcomes improved from Cycle I to Cycle II. The following is a summary of the research results and discussion describing the use of the Make-A-Match Cooperative Learning model in Indonesian language learning, using the topic of reading stories about professions for third-grade students at Harapan 3 Private Elementary School, Medan City.

Observations of teachers' teaching activities while implementing the Make a Match model indicate that teachers have implemented all aspects observed (Arofah et al., 2025).

The comparison of teacher teaching activities in Indonesian language learning using the Make-A-Match model with third-grade students at Harapan 3 Private Elementary School showed improvement in every cycle. The average score for teacher teaching activities in Cycle I was 53.12%, which is considered to be good. In Cycle II, the average score increased to 69.76%, representing a 16.64% increase, and remained in the good category. This improvement occurred because the teacher made improvements during the learning process after reflecting on the Cycle I results. The teacher paid more attention to students' conditions in the classroom, increased supervision while students worked in groups, and was more active in guiding them through the assignments. The teacher's role in learning significantly influences student learning outcomes. Teachers not only transfer knowledge but also manage the learning process, including assessment. Students receive learning outcomes in the form of numbers at the end of each lesson, which are used to measure their understanding of the material. The activity of paying attention to teacher explanations increased from Cycle I to II. It was observed that in this cycle, students still struggled to pay attention to the teacher's explanations, tending to chat with their deskmates. However, in subsequent sessions, students began to pay attention to the teacher's explanations at the front because the teacher reprimanded and supervised students who were less active, chattered, daydreamed, and played around during the learning process (Daumiller et al., 2025).

This was evident in Cycle I, which achieved an average of 59.08%, and Cycle II, which achieved an average of 76.7%, with each cycle experiencing an increase of 5.58% from Cycle I to II.

In Cycle I, the active questioning and responding activities were relatively low. It was observed that students were still shy about asking questions during the interview. They tended to remain silent and simply listen, even though they did not understand what was being taught. They were still hesitant to express their answers or opinions regarding the teacher's questions. They still felt a strong sense of shame and fear of making mistakes, which made them reluctant to answer the teacher's questions. To overcome this shyness and fear, the teacher motivated students by motivating them to ask questions, answer questions, and provide feedback.

In the following meeting, the students began to actively ask questions and provide feedback, showing an increase. Students who were still shy about asking questions began to ask the teacher about things they did not understand in subsequent meetings. Students began to lose their fear of making mistakes because they became comfortable with the teaching and learning process. This was evidenced by the average score in Cycle I of 52.83%, which increased by 13.64%, and an average score of 70.45% in Cycle II.

In Cycle I, students still did not understand the steps when the teacher explained them. They tended to be noisy and chat with their friends. The teacher then emphasized that students should listen to the teacher's explanation to avoid confusion during the learning process. In Cycle II, the students were no longer noisy and appreciated the time and effort the teacher spent explaining the steps in the make-a-match learning model. This learning activity improved with each cycle. The average result in Cycle I was 68.17%, while in Cycle II, the average was 76.7%, an increase of 3.4% (Arviana, 2025).

In Cycle I, some students still appeared confused by the model explained by the teacher according to the steps. In Cycle II, the teacher used the "Make a Match" model again. She observed changes in students. In Cycle II, the students appeared more organized and less confused. Students felt more engaged when they found partners. Student learning activities improved in Cycle II, with the average score in Cycle I reaching 64.76% and the average score in Cycle II reaching 81.81%, a 6.82% increase in the average score.

In Cycle I, some students remained passive during discussions. These students did not find a partner when matching cards and answers were used. The teacher consistently emphasized the need to double-check their answers to ensure that they found a partner for the next meeting. In Cycle II, the students became more active in their discussions, shifting from passive to active as they avoided repeating the same mistakes. This was evidenced by the average score in Cycle I of 59.08% and the average score in Cycle II of 77.83%, a 10.23% increase in the average score.

Students' learning activities in presenting group discussion results in Cycle I were still relatively low due to lack of enthusiasm in partner discussions and errors during group presentations. However, in subsequent meetings, students who were still confused or passive in matching answers began to understand the question cards and answers they had received and began actively discussing them with other students. This was evidenced by an average score of 57.38% in Cycle I, which increased by 4.54% and an average score of 76.13% in Cycle II.

Thus, the students' learning activities improved in each cycle. This was evidenced by an average score of 59.71% in Cycle I and 76.60% in Cycle II, a 7.36% increase in the average score.

A comparison of student learning outcomes between Cycles I and II showed improvement. In Cycle I, students who scored above the minimum completion Minimum (KKM) of 64 were declared to have completed the

learning process, with a learning outcome of 45.45%, and in Cycle II, it was 77.27%. This represents a 31.82% increase in the completion of learning.

The research results and explanation above indicate that student learning outcomes in Social Studies using the Make-a-Match cooperative learning model improved. This improvement occurred because, in Cycle I, the teachers reflected on the learning process and made improvements to ensure that the students understood the explanations. Furthermore, teachers actively guided students, especially when they encountered difficulties in understanding the material. Furthermore, students were able to collaborate in groups to learn and understand the assignments given by the teacher.

Thus, based on the established success indicators, marked by the achievement of the minimum completeness criteria (KKM) of 70% with a score of ≥ 64 , referring to the Cycle II posttest, where the number of students who obtained a minimum score of 64 was 77.27%, with an increase in learning completeness of 31.82%. Therefore, this research is considered complete in cycle II and does not need to be continued in the next cycle.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This classroom action research demonstrated that the make-a-match learning strategy, when systematically implemented within a cooperative learning model, can substantially improve Indonesian language learning outcomes and student engagement among third-grade students at SD Swasta Harapan 3, Medan. Across the two action cycles, the proportion of students achieving the KKM of 64 increased from 45.45% to 77.27%, meeting the predetermined success criterion. Simultaneously, key indicators of student activity, —such as listening attentively, asking and answering questions, following cooperative procedures, engaging in group discussions, and presenting results, —showed marked improvements. The findings suggest that make-a-match helps transform a previously teacher-centered, low-participation classroom into a more interactive and student-centered environment. The game-like nature of the strategy, combined with cooperative structures, appears to reduce anxiety, increase motivation, and encourage previously passive students to participate. However, the study also highlights that success depends on careful planning, clear instructions, consistent monitoring, and the use of motivational strategies, such as rewards and positive feedback. For practitioners, the results indicate that make-a-match is a feasible and effective option for primary Indonesian language classes, particularly for teaching reading comprehension of narrative texts. For school leaders and policymakers, this study underscores the importance of supporting teachers in adopting cooperative and game-based learning strategies through targeted professional development. Future research could extend this work by examining long-term retention, applying to other language skills (such as writing), and adapting the strategy for different grade levels and subject areas..

Funding Statement

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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 and 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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