International Journal of Sustainable Applied Sciences (IJSAS)
Vol. 4, No. 10, 2026: 1537-1546

Implementation of the Word Square Learning Model to Improve Indonesian Language Learning Motivation of Fifth-Grade Students

Nur Ilmi[1*], Harun[2], Nurul Muhklisa[3]
Department of Primary School Teacher Education, Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Makassar
Corresponding Author: Nur Ilmi nurilmi@unm.ac.id

A R T I C L E I N F O
Keywords: Word Square Learning Model, Learning Motivation, Indonesian Language Learning

Received : 15, August
Revised : 22, September
Accepted: 25, October

©2026 Ilmi, Harun, Muhklisa: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Atribusi 4.0 Internasional.

A B S T R A C T
This study aimed to describe the implementation of the Word Square learning model and to examine its effectiveness in improving fifth-grade students' motivation to learn Indonesian. Using a qualitative Classroom Action Research design based on the Kemmis and Mc Taggart model, three cycles were conducted with 14 fifth-grade students of UPTD SDN 12 Parepare, selected through total sampling. Data were collected through observation, a 20-item motivation questionnaire, and documentation. Teacher activity increased from 50% to 91%, student activity from 65% to 90%, and learning motivation from the sufficient to the very good category (90%) by Cycle III. Applied gradually and reflectively, Word Square effectively improves elementary students' motivation and offers teachers an interactive, game-based option.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.59890/ijsas.v4i10.95
ISSSN-E: 3025-9959
http://journalijefbs.my.id/index.php/ijefbs

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a strategic role in developing students' potential so that they possess the spiritual strength, character, intelligence, and skills required for life in society, as mandated by Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System. One learning content area that holds an important role from the elementary school level is Indonesian language, as this subject serves as the foundation for the entire learning process and equips students with reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills (Farhrohman, 2017). Meaningful Indonesian language learning requires students to be able to communicate both orally and in writing and to use language as a tool for thinking and reasoning (Putri, 2020; Oktaviani, 2021). The success of such learning is highly dependent on students' learning motivation, since low motivation makes students less driven to work hard, persist, and be creative in completing their learning tasks (Suharni, 2021).

Preliminary observations and interviews in Grade V of UPTD SDN 12 Parepare showed that Indonesian language learning was still monotonous and teacher-centered. Teachers tended to use the lecture method without utilizing interactive learning media, so classroom interaction was one-directional and students tended to be passive. Of the 14 students observed, eight rarely participated actively, nine easily became bored, ten lacked independent learning initiative, and nine lacked confidence in expressing their opinions. Pre-study questionnaire data reinforced these findings, with the percentage of students' learning motivation in the high category at only 20%, the sufficient category at 40%, and the low category at 40%, indicating that students' motivation to learn Indonesian still needed to be improved for the learning process to run more optimally.

Students' low learning motivation is closely related to the choice of learning model, as the learning model serves as the conceptual framework that guides the entire teaching and learning process in the classroom (Sundari, 2015). An interactive learning model gives students the opportunity to be directly involved in reading, discussing, writing, and presenting ideas, thereby fostering learning motivation optimally, whereas conventional, one-directional learning tends to make students passive (Hamidah & Barus, 2021; Mashartanto et al., 2022). One learning model considered appropriate for addressing this problem is the Word Square learning model (Burhan et al., 2022; Khairunnisa & Supriansyah, 2022).

Several previous studies have proven the effectiveness of the Word Square learning model in improving students' learning outcomes and motivation across various subjects, such as in science learning (Burhan et al., 2022), video-assisted learning (Khairunnisa & Supriansyah, 2022), and a conceptual study on the contribution of Word Square to student learning outcomes (Rinjani et al., 2021). Other relevant research also shows that implementing innovative learning models, such as Discovery Learning assisted by Wordwall media, can improve elementary students' motivation to learn Indonesian (Musfirah et al., 2025). Nevertheless, research specifically examining the implementation of the Word Square learning model to improve Indonesian language learning

motivation among fifth-grade elementary students, particularly on the material of response sentences and the meaning of the prefix ter-, remains very limited, as most previous studies have focused more on improving cognitive learning outcomes than on learning motivation as a prerequisite for successful learning.

The novelty of this study lies in the implementation of the Word Square learning model specifically focused on improving elementary students' motivation to learn Indonesian, referring to the six indicators of learning motivation proposed by Uno (2021) and grounded in classroom action research based on the Kemmis and Mc Taggart model (Arikunto et al., 2017). Based on the description above, this study aims to describe the implementation of the Word Square learning model in Indonesian language learning among fifth-grade students of UPTD SDN 12 Parepare and to prove its effectiveness in improving students' motivation to learn the subject.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning Motivation

Learning motivation in this study refers to the six indicators proposed by Uno (2021): the desire and drive to succeed, the drive and need in learning, hopes and future aspirations, appreciation in learning, engaging learning activities, and a conducive learning environment. Teachers and schools play an important role in fostering elementary students' motivation to learn (Suharni, 2021; Suparman & Junaidin, 2023).

Word Square Learning Model

The Word Square learning model combines the ability to answer questions with the accuracy of matching answers within a grid of disguised letters (Burhan et al., 2022; Khairunnisa & Supriansyah, 2022). This model brings an educational game atmosphere into learning so that students can learn while playing, are less easily bored, and more easily understand the material being taught.

Classroom Action Research

Classroom action research based on the Kemmis and Mc Taggart model emphasizes a continuous cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting as a systematic effort to improve the quality of learning (Arikunto et al., 2017). The next cycle is carried out when the success indicators of the previous cycle have not been achieved.

Based on these theories, the conceptual framework of this study is presented in Figure 1.

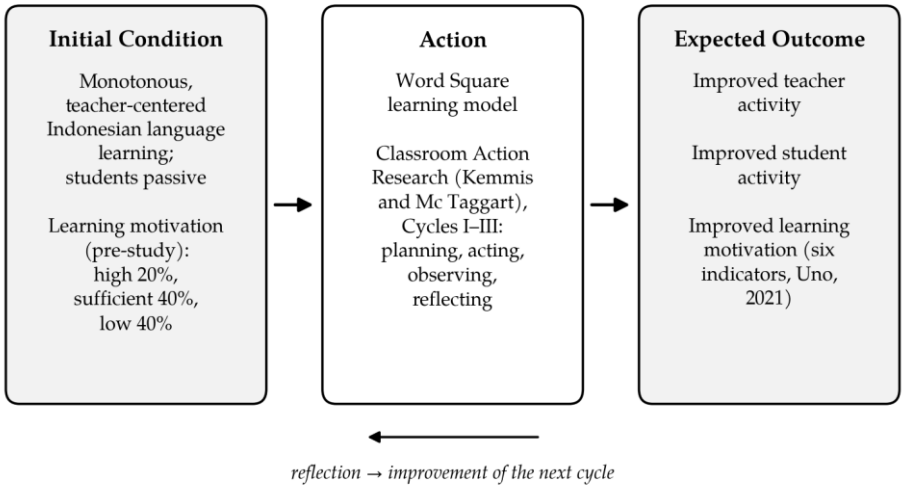


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative approach, which focuses on understanding the meaning, characteristics, and phenomena of learning presented in a narrative and objective manner in accordance with facts in the field (Sidiq & Choiri, 2019). This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to observe, analyze, and interpret in depth the various conditions that occurred during the implementation of the Word Square learning model in the classroom.

The type of research used was Classroom Action Research (CAR) based on the model developed by Kemmis and Mc Taggart (Arikunto et al., 2017), which consists of four stages in each cycle: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The research was conducted in three cycles, with the next cycle carried out if the success indicators of the previous cycle had not been achieved. Each cycle consisted of one learning session of 2 lesson hours (2 x 35 minutes) implementing the steps of the Word Square learning model, including preparation, media introduction, word-search implementation, discussion, and evaluation and reflection.

The research subjects were all fifth-grade students of UPTD SD Negeri 12 Parepare in the odd semester of the 2025 academic year, totaling 14 students consisting of 8 male and 6 female students. The research was conducted at UPTD SD Negeri 12 Parepare, Sumpang Minangae Village, West Bacukiki District, Parepare City, South Sulawesi Province. The school was selected based on preliminary observations showing that the fifth-grade teacher was still limited in the use of learning media and tended to rely on the lecture method.

The implementation of the action in each cycle began with the planning stage, namely preparing the teaching module, observation sheets for teacher and student activities, Word Square worksheets, and the learning motivation questionnaire. In the acting stage, the researcher acted as the teacher while the classroom teacher acted as observer, with the learning steps including material presentation, distribution of Word Square worksheets, individual and group work, and the giving of scores and rewards. The observing stage was conducted

to observe teacher and student activities during the learning process, while the reflecting stage was conducted to evaluate the success of the action and formulate improvements for the next cycle if the success indicators had not been achieved. Cycle I was conducted on May 18, 2026, Cycle II on May 20, 2026, and Cycle III on May 26, 2026.

Data were collected through three techniques: observation, questionnaires, and documentation. Observation was used to directly observe teacher and student activities during the implementation of the steps of the Word Square learning model. The learning motivation questionnaire was developed based on the six indicators of learning motivation according to Uno (2021) and consisted of 20 checklist statements with scores ranging from 1 to 4, distributed to students at the end of each cycle. Documentation was used as supporting data in the form of photographs and records of learning activities.

Data were analyzed through three stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Helaludin & Wijaya, 2019). The percentage of learning motivation was calculated by comparing the score obtained to the maximum score multiplied by 100%, then categorized based on the learning motivation criteria guidelines: very low (0%-20%), low (21%-40%), sufficient (41%-60%), high (61%-80%), and very high (81%-100%) (Nasrah & Mifidah, 2020). The research was considered successful if the learning process reached the good category (76%-100%) and at least 61% of students reached the high to very high motivation category.

RESEARCH RESULT

Initial condition

Before the implementation of the action, preliminary observations and interviews showed that the learning motivation of fifth-grade students of UPTD SDN 12 Parepare in Indonesian language was still low, with the percentage of the high category at 20%, the sufficient category at 40%, and the low category at 40%. This condition was caused by two main factors: the teacher factor, which still used a less innovative learning model, and the student factor, which showed low initiative, participation, and self-confidence in learning. Based on these findings, classroom action research was conducted in three cycles by implementing the Word Square learning model on the material of response sentences and the meaning of the prefix ter-.

Cycle I

In Cycle I, the observation results showed that the implementation of teacher activity using the Word Square learning model reached a percentage of 50% in the Sufficient category, while student activity reached 65% in the Sufficient category, and students' learning motivation was also in the Sufficient category. Weaknesses found in this cycle included learning objectives being conveyed only orally, initial motivation that was not yet maximal, material explanation that was not sufficiently in-depth, uneven group guidance, and time management and instructions for completing the Word Square worksheet

that were not yet optimal, so the success indicators had not been achieved and the research continued to Cycle II.

Cycle II

In Cycle II, after improvements were made to address the weaknesses of Cycle I, teacher activity increased to 66.66% in the Good category and student activity increased to 74% in the Sufficient category, while students' learning motivation increased to the Good category. Although improvement occurred, weaknesses were still found: the teacher had not fully encouraged all students to actively ask and give opinions, examples given when explaining the material were still not concrete enough, and the teacher had not ensured that all group members understood the material before working on the Word Square worksheet, so the research continued to Cycle III.

Cycle III

In Cycle III, after comprehensive improvements were made to address the weaknesses of the previous cycles, teacher activity reached 91% in the Good category and student activity reached 90% in the Good category. The learning motivation questionnaire results showed that of the 14 students, 3 students were in the Sufficient category, 5 students in the Good category, and 6 students in the Very Good category, with the number of students reaching the Good to Very Good category amounting to 90%. These results show that the success indicators for both the learning process and learning motivation had been achieved, so the research was stopped at Cycle III.

Recapitulation of results

The recapitulation of the increase in teacher activity, student activity, and students' learning motivation in each cycle is presented in Table 1. The data show a consistent increase from Cycle I to Cycle III, both in terms of learning implementation and students' learning motivation.

Table 1. Recapitulation of Teacher Activity, Student Activity, and Students' Learning Motivation per Cycle

Cycle	Teacher Activity	Student Activity	Student Learning Motivation
Cycle I	50% (Sufficient)	65% (Sufficient)	65% (Sufficient)
Cycle II	66.66% (Good)	74% (Sufficient)	74% (Good)
Cycle III	91% (Good)	90% (Good)	90% (Very Good)

Supporting data show that the increase in students' learning motivation occurred gradually, and not all students reached the Very Good category in Cycle III; three students were still in the Sufficient category, indicating that some students required further guidance to consistently maintain and improve their learning motivation, even though the overall success indicators of the research had been achieved.

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to improve the learning process and Indonesian language learning motivation of fifth-grade students of UPTD SD Negeri 12 Parepare through the implementation of the Word Square learning model in the form of classroom action research. The increase in teacher activity percentage from 50% in Cycle I to 66.66% in Cycle II and 91% in Cycle III shows that the reflection process in each cycle effectively encouraged the teacher to improve the delivery of learning objectives, the provision of motivation, the clarity of instructions, and more focused group guidance. A corresponding increase also occurred in student activity, from 65% in Cycle I to 74% in Cycle II and 90% in Cycle III, indicating that students became increasingly active in participating, discussing, and collaborating as the teacher's implementation of the Word Square learning model steps matured.

The increase in students' learning motivation from the Sufficient category in Cycle I to the Good category in Cycle II, reaching the Very Good category with a percentage of 90% in Cycle III, shows that the Word Square learning model was able to foster students' desire to succeed, courage to express opinions, and enthusiasm for participating in learning. This finding answers the research objective, namely proving that the implementation of the Word Square learning model, carried out gradually and reflectively, is effective in improving fifth-grade students' motivation to learn Indonesian.

This finding is consistent with the study by Burhan et al. (2022), which showed that the Word Square learning model influences the improvement of elementary students' learning activity, and the study by Khairunnisa and Supriansyah (2022), which proved that Word Square assisted by learning media can improve students' cognitive learning outcomes. The conceptual study by Rinjani et al. (2021) also confirms that the implementation of the Word Square model has a positive impact on the learning process because it can increase student participation, reduce boredom, and foster learning motivation through activities that are interactive and resemble educational games.

The increase in learning motivation in this study is also consistent with the findings of Mashartanto et al. (2022) and Pambudi (2022), which showed that intrinsic motivation and the implementation of varied learning models contribute to students' achievement and learning motivation. Referring to the indicators of learning motivation according to Uno (2021), the increase found in this study is clearly seen in the aspect of the desire to succeed, the presence of engaging learning activities through the word-search activity in the Word Square grid, and the creation of a conducive and enjoyable learning environment, as also found by Suharni (2021) and Suparman and Junaidin (2023), who emphasized the importance of the role of teachers and schools in fostering elementary students' learning motivation.

These findings contribute to strengthening the study of the implementation of game-based learning models in Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level, particularly in integrating learning motivation indicators into a cyclical and reflective classroom action research design. This study broadens the understanding that the Word Square learning

model is not only effective in improving cognitive learning outcomes, as found in many previous studies, but is also effective in improving learning motivation as a prerequisite for successful learning.

Practically, the results of this study can serve as a reference for teachers in designing more interactive and enjoyable Indonesian language learning through the Word Square learning model, particularly for conceptual material such as response sentences and the meaning of affixes. For schools, these findings emphasize the importance of supporting teachers in selecting and implementing innovative learning models to continuously improve the quality of learning.

Overall, the results and discussion of this study confirm that the implementation of the Word Square learning model, carried out gradually through the cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, is able to improve both the learning process and the Indonesian language learning motivation of fifth-grade students of UPTD SD Negeri 12 Parepare.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This classroom action research proves that the implementation of the Word Square learning model can improve the Indonesian language learning process of fifth-grade students of UPTD SD Negeri 12 Parepare, as shown by the increase in teacher activity from 50% in Cycle I to 91% in Cycle III, and student activity from 65% to 90% over the same range of cycles.

The implementation of the Word Square learning model was also proven to improve the Indonesian language learning motivation of fifth-grade students of UPTD SD Negeri 12 Parepare, as shown by the increase in the learning motivation category from Sufficient in Cycle I to Good in Cycle II, and reaching the Very Good category with a percentage of 90% in Cycle III. Thus, the action hypothesis of this study, namely that the appropriate and gradual implementation of the Word Square learning model can improve students' learning motivation, has been proven and achieved.

These findings provide a theoretical contribution to the development of studies on game-based learning models in elementary Indonesian language learning, as well as a practical contribution in the form of guidance for teachers in designing learning that is active, enjoyable, and able to optimally encourage student engagement.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that teachers pay attention to time management and classroom atmosphere when implementing the Word Square learning model, that schools provide ongoing support for the use of innovative learning models, and that future researchers develop variations of Word Square media and apply them to other subjects or educational levels to test the consistency of their effectiveness on students' learning motivation.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study has limitations in the scope of the subjects, which involved only 14 fifth-grade students at one elementary school and one learning material, so generalization of the findings to other classroom, school, or subject contexts should be made with caution. In addition, the measurement of learning

motivation in this study still relied on observation sheets and questionnaires, so it has not yet captured the aspect of learning motivation longitudinally over a longer period of time.

Future research is recommended to expand the research subjects to other grade levels or schools, develop more interactive variations of Word Square media, and combine quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the effect of the Word Square learning model on students' learning motivation over the long term.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to thank UPTD SD Negeri 12 Parepare, including the fifth-grade classroom teacher and the students, for their participation and support throughout this research.

REFERENCES

Arianita, E., & Aini, F. D. (2022). Analisis penggunaan Bahasa Indonesia bagi kalangan muda di media sosial "Instagram". *Cendekia: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Bahasa dan Pendidikan*, *2*(4), 29–39. https://doi.org/10.55606/cendikia.v2i4.446

Arikunto, S., Supardi, & Suhardjono. (2017). *Penelitian tindakan kelas: Edisi revisi*. Bumi Aksara.

Burhan, N., Munir, M. M., & Widiyono, A. (2022). Pengaruh model Word Square terhadap aktivitas belajar IPA siswa kelas IV di sekolah dasar. *Journal on Teacher Education*, *3*(3), 374–380.

Farhrohman, O. (2017). Implementasi pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia di SD/MI. *Jurnal Primary*, *9*(1), 21–30.

Fernando, Y., Andriani, P., & Syam, H. (2024). Pentingnya motivasi belajar dalam meningkatkan hasil belajar siswa. *Alfihris: Jurnal Inspirasi Pendidikan*, *2*(3), 61–68. https://doi.org/10.59246/alfihris.v2i3.843

Hamidah, N., & Barus, M. I. (2021). Analisis faktor yang mempengaruhi motivasi belajar siswa Sekolah Dasar Negeri 093 Mandailing Natal. *Literasiologi*, *7*(3). https://jurnal.literasikitaindonesia.com/index.php/literasiologi/article/view/316/362

Helaludin, & Wijaya, H. (2019). *Analisis data kualitatif: Sebuah tinjauan teori dan praktik*. Sekolah Tinggi Theologia Jaffray.

Ilmi, N. (2021). Analisis pragmatik imperatif dalam novel Pulang karya Tere Liye. *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Kependidikan*, *5*(1), 154–160.

Khairunnisa, D. P., & Supriansyah. (2022). Pengaruh model pembelajaran Word Square berbantu video pembelajaran terhadap hasil belajar kognitif pada siswa sekolah dasar. *Jurnal Basicedu*, *6*(4), 7417–7426.

Mashartanto, A. A., Purnama, C., & Mulyana, F. (2022). Pengaruh motivasi intrinsik terhadap prestasi belajar teknologi informatika Taruna/i Angkatan V Politeknik Pelayaran Sumatera Barat. *Jurnal Saintara*, *22*(2).

Musfirah, Usman, & Taufiq, A. (2025). Penerapan model pembelajaran Discovery Learning berbantuan media Wordwall untuk meningkatkan

motivasi belajar siswa muatan Bahasa Indonesia kelas V UPTD SD Negeri 125 Datte Bola Kabupaten Enrekang. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, *5*(2).

Nasrah, & Mifidah. (2020). Analisis motivasi belajar dan hasil belajar daring mahasiswa pada masa pandemi Covid-19. *Jurnal Riset Pendidikan Dasar*, *3*(2).

Oktaviani, R. E. (2021). Prinsip-prinsip pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia SD/MI. *Pentas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*, *7*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.52166/pentas.v7i1.1528

Pambudi, M. R. (2022). Penerapan model pembelajaran Group Investigation (GI) untuk meningkatkan motivasi belajar siswa kelas XI IPS 3 SMA Negeri 1 Kademangan. *Aksiologi: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Ilmu Sosial*, *3*(1), 15–23. https://doi.org/10.47134/aksiologi.v3i1.119

Putri, F. N. (2020). Pendidikan karakter siswa melalui pelajaran Bahasa Indonesia. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Indonesia*, *8*(1), 16–24. https://doi.org/10.30659/j.8.1.16-24

Rinjani, C., Wahdini, F. I., Mulia, E., Zakir, S., & Amelia, S. (2021). Kajian konseptual model pembelajaran Word Square untuk meningkatkan hasil belajar siswa. *Jurnal Inovasi, Evaluasi, dan Pengembangan Pembelajaran (JIEPP)*, *1*(2), 52–59.

Rizki Octavia, J., & Widoretno, S. (2023). Hubungan motivasi belajar dengan kemampuan berpikir kritis siswa SMP kelas VII pada materi interaksi makhluk hidup dengan lingkungannya. *Jurnal Pendidikan IPA*, *12*(1), 35–42. https://doi.org/10.20961/inkuiri.v12i1.66771

Salim, D. F. R., Restian, A., & Supradana, A. (2023). Peningkatan hasil belajar Pendidikan Pancasila melalui model Problem Based Learning kelas I SDN Tanjungsari 2 Kota Blitar dalam Merdeka Belajar. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, *8*(1), 2163–2170.

Sidiq, U., & Choiri, M. (2019). *Metode penelitian kualitatif di bidang pendidikan*. CV. Nata Karya.

Suharni. (2021). Upaya guru dalam meningkatkan motivasi belajar siswa. *G-Couns: Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling*, *6*(1), 172–184. https://doi.org/10.31316/g.couns.v6i1.2198

Sundari, H. (2015). Model-model pembelajaran dan pemerolehan bahasa kedua/asing. *Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, *1*(2), 106–113.

Suparman, S., & Junaidin, J. (2023). Upaya sekolah dalam meningkatkan motivasi belajar siswa di sekolah dasar. *Jurnal Basicedu*, *7*(6), 3950–3958. https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v7i6.6469

Uno, H. B. (2021). *Teori motivasi dan pengukurannya: Analisis di bidang pendidikan*. Bumi Aksara.

Wahyuni, A. P., Purba, A. R. A., & Rangkuti, H. F. (2023). Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia sebagai upaya mengoptimalkan keterampilan berbicara anak di MI Al-Hasanah Medan. *Jispendiora: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Pendidikan, dan Humaniora*, *2*(2), 70–79. https://doi.org/10.56910/jispendiora.v2i2.645