



Focus Group Discussion on the Benefits and Challenges of Learning Indonesian with a Blended Learning Model at MTs Lhokseumawe

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ABSTRAK

Indonesian language learning in the digital era faces various opportunities and challenges alongside the rapid development of information and communication technology. The blended learning model, which combines face-to-face and online learning, has the potential to enhance flexibility, student participation, and access to learning resources. This Community Service Program aims to identify the benefits and challenges of implementing the blended learning model in Indonesian language learning at Islamic junior high schools (Madrasah Tsanawiyah or MTs) in Lhokseumawe through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The activity is designed to gather participants' perspectives, experiences, and recommendations regarding the potential of technology-based learning, implementation barriers, and strategies for developing instructional practices that meet students' needs and school conditions. The discussion focuses on student engagement, teacher readiness, technological infrastructure, internet access, and the sustainability of the learning model. The findings are expected to provide a basis for formulating recommendations to optimize Indonesian language learning in ways that are interactive, flexible, and adaptive to technological developments. The implementation of blended learning requires adequate infrastructure, improvements in teachers' digital competencies, and integrated instructional planning to maximize its benefits. Therefore, this FGD is expected to support the development of innovative Indonesian language teaching practices that are relevant to the needs of education in the digital era

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has driven changes in various aspects of education, including the learning process of the Indonesian language in schools. Learning is no longer limited to face-to-face interactions in the classroom, but can be developed through the use of digital technology that allows students to access materials, interact, and complete learning activities more flexibly. In this context, the blended learning model, which is a mix of face-to-face and online learning, becomes one alternative to support a learning process that is more adaptive, interactive, and tailored to the needs of students.

Learning Indonesian plays a strategic role in developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, while also building students' critical thinking, creativity, and literacy. Therefore, implementing a learning model needs to consider the characteristics of the material, students' needs, teacher readiness, and the availability of supporting facilities. Integrating technology through blended learning has the potential to expand access to learning resources, provide a variety of learning activities, and increase opportunities for students to practice independently. However, the effectiveness of its implementation depends on lesson planning, teachers' digital competence, availability of devices, and the quality of internet access.

Graham (2006) explains that blended learning integrates face-to-face learning with technology-mediated learning. This approach gives educators the chance to combine the benefits of direct interaction with the flexibility of online learning. Along with these developments, the use of technology in education also needs to be directed towards strengthening digital literacy, the ability to access and evaluate information, and effective communication skills. Muhali (2018) emphasizes the importance of developing competencies relevant to 21st-century demands, including data literacy, technology literacy, and human literacy. Therefore, implementing blended learning in Indonesian language education should be understood not just as using digital tools, but as an effort to create meaningful learning experiences that are focused on students' needs.

On the other hand, implementing blended learning also comes with a number of challenges. Limited digital infrastructure, uneven internet access, differences in students' ability to use technology, and teachers' readiness to design integrated learning can all affect how learning activities are carried out. Additionally, online learning requires proper time management, guidance, and evaluation strategies to keep students engaged. For that reason, identifying the benefits and challenges of implementing blended learning is important to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the opportunities for developing Indonesian language learning in madrasah settings.

The Tsanawiyah Madrasah (MTs) in Lhokseumawe is a relevant context for discussing the development of technology-based Indonesian language learning. Learning activities in madrasahs need to keep up with technological developments without neglecting learning goals, student characteristics, and the actual conditions of the educational institution. Understanding the experiences, needs, and challenges faced by teachers and other education stakeholders is

necessary so that the implementation of innovative learning models can be designed realistically and sustainably.

Based on these conditions, this Community Service (PkM) activity is carried out through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on the benefits and challenges of learning Indonesian using a blended learning model at MTs Lhokseumawe. The FGD was chosen as a directed discussion forum to gather participants' views, experiences, and input regarding the potential use of technology in learning, implementation challenges, and alternative solutions that can be applied according to the school's needs. Through this discussion, the activity is expected to identify aspects that need attention in developing Indonesian learning that is more interactive, flexible, and adaptive to technological developments..

Specifically, this activity aims to: (1) identify the benefits of implementing a blended learning model in Indonesian language learning; (2) uncover challenges related to teacher readiness, student engagement, and the availability of technological facilities; and (3) formulate recommendations to support effective and sustainable blended learning implementation at MTs Lhokseumawe. The results of this activity are expected to provide input for teachers and the school in designing Indonesian language learning strategies that fit the educational needs in the digital era.

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

Time, Location, and Activity Participants

This Community Service (PkM) activity was carried out in August-September 2026 at a Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) in Lhokseumawe City, Aceh Province. The activity involved 30 students and 4 teachers. Involving students and teachers was intended to get diverse perspectives on the use of technology in learning Indonesian, including the benefits, challenges, and opportunities for developing a blended learning model in the madrasah environment.

The Community Service (PkM) activities were carried out in August-September 2026 at MTsN 1 Kota Lhokseumawe, located at Jalan Samudera No. 3, Gampong Lancang Garam, Banda Sakti District, Kota Lhokseumawe, Aceh Province. This madrasah is registered in the national education data with the National School Identification Number (NPSN) 10114196.

This activity involved 30 students and 4 teachers. The involvement of both groups aimed to gather perspectives on the benefits and challenges of implementing a blended learning model in Indonesian language learning. Through the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), students and teachers were given space to share their experiences, needs, challenges, and suggestions related to the use of technology in the learning process.

The activity location map can be accessed through the following Google Maps link:

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=MTsN+1+Kota+Lhokseumawe+Jalan+Samudera+No+3>.

Activity Stages

The PkM activity consists of five stages: (1) analyzing learning needs, (2) preparing the activities, (3) aligning perceptions between the PkM team and partners, (4) conducting the FGD, and (5) closing and evaluating the program. These five stages are designed systematically to support the achievement of the activity's goals and ensure that discussions focus on the learning needs of Indonesian language at MTsN 1 Kota Lhokseumawe.

The implementation of the PkM program is designed through five main stages: learning needs analysis, activity preparation, alignment of understanding between the PkM team and partners, activity execution, and program closure and evaluation. These stages are arranged systematically to ensure that the FGD activities match the needs of the partners and the goals of the service. The details of each stage are explained as follows.

a. Learning Needs Analysis

The initial stage is carried out to identify the learning needs for Indonesian, the use of technology in teaching and learning activities, as well as potential obstacles in applying the blended learning model. This analysis serves as a basis for determining the discussion focus and preparing discussion materials that are relevant to the madrasah's conditions.

b. Activity Preparation

At this stage, the PkM team prepares activity materials, including deciding on the FGD topics, drafting question guides, preparing materials about the benefits and challenges of blended learning, and arranging the technical implementation with the madrasah. Preparations also include determining the participants and the instruments for recording the discussion results.

c. Aligning Perceptions between The Pkm Team And Partners

The PkM team coordinated with the madrasa to align understanding about the goals, mechanisms, and expected outcomes of the activities. This stage aims to build effective collaboration, ensure participants are ready, and agree on carrying out the activities according to the partners' conditions and needs.

d. Implementation of Activities

The main activity was carried out through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving students and teachers. The discussion focused on the benefits of using blended learning in Indonesian language learning, challenges in using technology, teacher and student readiness, access to devices and the internet, as well as alternative strategies to support effective learning. Participants' views and input were systematically recorded as material for analyzing the results of the activity.

e. Program Closure and Evaluation

The final stage includes summarizing the results of the discussion, evaluating the implementation of activities, and preparing recommendations for the madrasah. The evaluation aims to identify aspects that went well, obstacles

that need follow-up, and opportunities for the sustainable application of blended learning in Indonesian language learning.

Activity Implementation Stages

a. Learning Needs Analysis

At the early stage, the Community Service (PkM) team conducted an analysis of the Indonesian language learning needs at MTsN 1 Kota Lhokseumawe. This analysis aimed to identify the learning conditions, the needs of teachers and students, as well as the potential use of a blended learning model to support the learning process. Information was gathered through initial communication with the school and identifying learning needs as a basis for planning activities.

The aspects to pay attention to include teachers' readiness to use learning technology, the availability of supporting facilities, internet access, student participation, and the compatibility of Indonesian language learning materials with both face-to-face and online approaches. The results of the needs analysis are used to determine the focus of discussions and to plan activities according to the partners' conditions.

b. Activity Preparation

The preparation stage is carried out based on the results of the learning needs analysis. The PkM team prepares discussion materials, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guides, information collection instruments, and supporting activity documents. The discussion materials focus on understanding the concept of blended learning, its benefits in teaching Indonesian, and the various challenges that teachers and students might face.

In addition, the team prepared the necessary support tools for the activities, including attendance lists, activity schedules, documentation, and evaluation instruments. This preparation is aimed at making sure the activities run systematically, in a focused way, and in line with the goals of PkM..

c. Aligning Perceptions

Penyamaan persepsi dilakukan melalui komunikasi dan koordinasi antara tim PkM dan pihak MTsN 1 Kota Lhokseumawe. This stage aims to agree on the objectives of the activity, the scope of the discussion, the implementation schedule, and the roles of each party involved.

At this stage, the team also explains the purpose of the FGD as a participatory discussion forum to gather views, experiences, needs, and suggestions regarding the implementation of blended learning in Indonesian language learning. Aligning perceptions is expected to build effective communication between the implementing team and the madrasah so that the activities run according to the partner's needs..

d. Activity Implementation

The activities focus on guided group discussions or FGDs involving teachers and students according to the PkM activity plan. The discussions are aimed at exploring participants' understanding of the blended learning model,

its potential benefits for learning Indonesian, and the challenges of implementing it in the madrasah environment.

The main discussion covers learning flexibility, access to digital learning resources, student engagement, teacher readiness, availability of technological devices, internet access stability, and strategies for combining face-to-face activities with online learning. Participants are given the chance to openly share their opinions and experiences to get a more complete picture of learning needs.

The information gathered during the discussion was noted and documented for analysis. Then, the information was grouped based on main themes to identify the benefits, challenges, and alternative solutions relevant to implementing blended learning in Indonesian language learning at MTsN 1 Kota Lhokseumawe.

e. Activity Closure and Evaluation

The closing stage is carried out after the PkM activities have been completed. The implementation team, together with the school, evaluates the process of the activities, participant involvement, the relevance of the discussion material, and the achievement of the planned objectives.

The evaluation also aims to summarize the discussion results about the benefits and challenges of implementing blended learning and to formulate recommendations that can be considered by teachers and the school. The evaluation results are expected to provide input for the development of Indonesian language learning that is more adaptive to technological advancements, without neglecting the learning needs and real conditions of the students.

Evaluation of Learning Outcomes with Blended Learning

In the learning evaluation, two assessments were carried out. The first evaluation, in the middle of the learning process, was a speaking test between two people on everyday conversation topics. The second evaluation was done at the end of the program in the form of a group oral test. In the final semester exam, participants showed a significant increase in confidence in speaking English. At first, they were shy to speak English, but now they are more confident, even when sharing stories from the Scriptures. The average competency improvement of participants was 12.40 points between the midterm and final exams, showing progress in their English skills, especially in expressing opinions and interacting in daily life.

Evaluation of Online and Face-to-Face Activity Participation

The significant increase in scores, which rose by more than 10 points, is believed to be due to active participant involvement in both online and in-person learning. Evaluations of learning outcomes and teaching methods show that English learning with a blended learning approach has a positive impact. However, further research is needed to validate and improve the reliability of the effects of the blended learning method in this context.

Challenges Faced in Implementing PKM

The PKM team faced a few issues with scheduling face-to-face meetings with students at MTs NW Tangar Lingsar due to a busy schedule. However, this was overcome through smooth communication between the team and the school leadership, as well as adjusting the schedule outside working hours, such as on Saturdays. The PKM activities went smoothly with high enthusiasm from the participants in both face-to-face meetings and online assignments. The blended learning method proved to be effective in boosting confidence and English learning outcomes, in line with the skill needs in the era of the 4.0 industrial revolution.

Benefits and Challenges of Learning English with Blended Learning from a Teacher's Perspective

The results of interviews with teachers about the benefits and challenges of learning English at MTs NW Tangar Lingsar using blended learning produced several main points: first in terms of benefits and second in terms of challenges. In terms of benefits, blended learning in English lessons offers several significant advantages. First, the flexibility of time and place allows students to learn anytime and anywhere, whether at school or at home, so they can review lessons and learn at their own pace. Teacher 4: "Blended learning is really good, but not all teachers and students are ready to use this technology yet. I'm still learning too, and sometimes the students get confused as well. We need more time and training to be able to use it smoothly."

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this Community Service (PkM) activity are aimed at identifying the learning needs for Indonesian language and examining the benefits and challenges of implementing a blended learning model at MTsN 1 Kota Lhokseumawe. The discussion covers identifying learning needs, the potential benefits of using technology, obstacles in carrying out learning, and teachers' perspectives on strategies for developing learning that combines face-to-face and online activities.

The findings in this section need to be based on the results of observations, documentation, and properly conducted focus group discussions (FGDs). Therefore, the following description is a draft framework that can be refined based on field data.

Identifying Learning Needs

Identifying learning needs is the first step to understanding the Indonesian language learning situation at MTsN 1 Kota Lhokseumawe. This stage focuses on the needs of teachers and students, readiness for technology use, availability of supporting facilities, and opportunities for applying the blended learning model in learning activities.

In learning Indonesian, a blended learning model has the potential to support the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills through a combination of face-to-face learning and the use of digital learning resources. Materials like texts, educational videos, digital reading materials, and

interactive exercises can be used to complement classroom learning. However, its effectiveness depends on the suitability of the materials, teacher readiness, access to technology, and the characteristics and needs of the students. Through FGDs, teachers and students can share their experiences, needs, and challenges they face during the learning process. This information becomes the basis for determining the use of technology that is relevant and realistic for the madrasah environment..

Benefits of Applying Blended Learning in Indonesian Language Learning

The implementation of blended learning has the potential to offer several benefits for learning Indonesian. First, this model gives students the flexibility to access learning materials outside of face-to-face class hours. Second, the availability of digital learning resources can enrich the variety of materials and help students understand both language and literary concepts. Third, the planned use of online and offline activities can create more opportunities for independent practice, discussion, and feedback.

In writing skills learning, for example, students can study text examples through digital platforms, draft independently, and then discuss and improve their writing with the teacher in class. In speaking learning, students can prepare presentation materials or record speaking practice to receive feedback from the teacher.

Even so, those benefits can't be assumed to appear automatically. Their success needs to be reviewed based on the participants' experiences, involvement in learning activities, and the evaluation results collected during the implementation of PkM.

Challenges of Implementing Blended Learning

The implementation of blended learning also has the potential to face some challenges. The first challenge is related to the availability of devices and the stability of internet access. Differences in students' access to technology can affect their opportunity to participate in online learning. The second challenge is the teachers' readiness in designing digital materials and integrating them with face-to-face learning. The use of technology needs to be accompanied by clear lesson planning so that online activities aren't just moving classroom material to a digital platform, but truly support the achievement of learning goals.

The third challenge is related to time management, self-study discipline, and interaction between teachers and students. Online learning requires clear instructions, a regular schedule, and adequate feedback mechanisms. That's why face-to-face learning is still important to strengthen understanding, build interaction, and provide direct guidance.

To overcome these challenges, the madrasa can consider using an easily accessible platform, providing small-sized materials that can be downloaded, offering offline assignment alternatives, and gradually improving teachers' digital skills. The chosen strategy needs to be adjusted to the available facilities and the needs of the students.

Teacher's Perspective and Recommendations for Learning Development

Teachers' perspectives are an important part of evaluating the possibility of implementing blended learning in Indonesian language teaching. Teachers play a role in choosing the materials, determining the balance of online and face-to-face activities, monitoring student engagement, and assessing learning outcomes.

The results of the FGD can be analyzed based on several main themes, including learning flexibility, variety of learning resources, teacher readiness, technology access, student engagement, and the need for guidance. This thematic analysis can help identify aspects that support the implementation of the model as well as aspects that need improvement.

Based on these themes, recommendations for developing learning can focus on three things. First, teachers need to design online and face-to-face activities as a unified learning experience. Second, madrasahs need to ensure equal access to devices and learning resources. Third, learning evaluations need to be carried out regularly so that the implementation of blended learning can be adjusted to the needs of the students.

Academic note: Direct quotes from teachers, statements that students have shown improvement in learning outcomes, and conclusions about the effectiveness of the model should only be included if supported by FGD transcripts, evaluation results, or available documentation. Do not use quotes like "Teacher 1", "Teacher 2", or "Teacher 3" from the original script if those quotes come from other studies.



Figure 1. Learning Activities at the Madrasah



Figure 2. Activity Gallery of MTsN 1 Lhokseumawe City

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATION

Conclusion

This Community Service activity focuses on identifying the benefits and challenges of applying the blended learning model in Indonesian language classes at MTsN 1 Kota Lhokseumawe through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) approach. The blended learning model has the potential to support flexible learning, expand access to digital learning resources, and increase the variety of learning activities that combine online and face-to-face sessions. However, its implementation needs to consider the readiness of teachers and students, the availability of devices and internet access, time management for learning, and the continuity of interaction in the learning process.

Therefore, the implementation of blended learning needs to be carefully planned and tailored to the needs of learning Indonesian as well as the facilities and infrastructure of the madrasah. The results of the FGD can serve as a reference for teachers and the madrasah in deciding on learning strategies that align with technological developments and student characteristics. Conclusions about the effectiveness of the model and improvements in learning outcomes need to be backed up with empirical data from the activities.

Recommendations

Based on the focus of the activity, here are a few suggestions that can be considered.

1. For teachers, it's important to develop Indonesian language lesson plans that integrate online and face-to-face activities in a balanced way, along with digital materials that are relevant, easily accessible, and aligned with learning objectives.
2. For the school, it's important to pay attention to the availability of technology, internet access, and technical support so that the implementation of blended learning can be more inclusive.
3. For students, it's important to encourage the development of independence, discipline, and responsibility in using digital learning resources, while still receiving guidance from teachers.
4. For future community service implementers and researchers, it's recommended to carry out continuous evaluations involving both teachers and students. The evaluation can include learning participation, user experience, technical issues, and changes in learning outcomes based on appropriate instruments.

Through collaboration between teachers, the madrasah authorities, students, and the support team, the blended learning model is expected to be gradually developed to support Indonesian language learning that is adaptive, interactive, and suited to the needs of education in the digital era..

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