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Progressivism In Language Learning: Application of The Educational Philosophy In Language Competence Development

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of progressive educational philosophy in language education in Indonesia represents not only a pedagogical shift but also a transformative approach to modernizing the national education system. Rooted in John Dewey's principles of experiential learning, contextual relevance, and social collaboration, progressive education aligns with the demands of 21st-century language learning. This study delves deeper into its application, revealing significant advancements in students' linguistic competence, with writing and speaking skills increasing by up to 24% and 20%, respectively. Furthermore, progressive methods such as project-based learning, simulations, and the integration of technology have fostered critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration, with 95% of students reporting higher engagement in gamified learning environments. Beyond its immediate impacts, progressive education in language learning equips students with the tools to navigate global challenges and become active contributors to their communities. Despite its promise, barriers such as infrastructural limitations, insufficient teacher readiness, and systemic resistance highlight the need for targeted interventions. This study concludes that progressive education offers a pathway to holistic transformation in Indonesia's language education, advocating for policy reforms, investment in technology, and comprehensive teacher training to institutionalize its benefits on a national scale.

INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia faces major challenges in adapting the curriculum to the needs of the times, especially in Language Teaching. Language Teaching is not just about learning grammar and vocabulary, but it also the development of critical thinking skills, communication, and cross-cultural understanding. The educational philosophy of progressivism popularized by John Dewey offers a relevant approach to address this challenge. In the context of progressivism, learning is student-centered and prioritizes real experiences as the core of the educational process (Dewey, 1938).

Education plays an important role in shaping individuals capable of facing ever-evolving social, economic, and cultural challenges. In Indonesia, language teaching is one of the important aspects in the national education system, considering that language is the main means of communication, critical thinking, and understanding the world. However, the language learning approach used in many schools



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in Indonesia is often still oriented towards traditional methods. This approach tends to prioritize grammar memorization, mechanical vocabulary acquisition, and teacher-centered standards-based testing (Hakim, 2020). This Model is not fully capable of developing students' ability to communicate effectively and think critically.

The educational philosophy of progressivism, pioneered by John Dewey, offers a new perspective on designing more relevant and meaningful learning. Progressivism places the student at the center of the educational process, where real experience becomes the main medium in learning (Dewey, 1938). In the context of language learning, this principle can be translated into activities that encourage students to use language in real-life situations, work collaboratively, and solve problems relevant to their lives. This approach not only enhances linguistic skills but also prepares students to become reflective, adaptive, and creative individuals in the face of global challenges.

Progressivism opposes traditional methods that focus on memorization, passive teaching, and standards-based tests. Rather, this approach encourages teaching: student-centered: the learning process is tailored to the needs, interests and abilities of the student. Real experience-based: knowledge gained through direct involvement in activities relevant to the student's real world. Encourage collaboration: social interaction and group work are key tools in building understanding. Develop critical and creative: students are encouraged to solve problems, analyze situations, and create innovative solutions (Dewey, 1938).

In the context of language learning, progressivism opens opportunities for students to learn languages through Project-Based Learning, group discussions, and reflective activities that facilitate in-depth understanding and communication skills. In Indonesia, language learning, particularly English and Bahasa Indonesia, faces various challenges, such as educational quality gaps between urban and rural areas, lack of teacher training, and resistance to new learning methods (Rokhman & Susanti, 2018). Thus, the adoption of the progressivism approach requires special attention to contextual adaptation to local needs.

This article aims to answer two main questions: (1) how can the philosophy of progressivism be effectively applied in language learning in Indonesia? and (2) What is the potential impact of this approach on the development of students' language competence? To answer these questions, this research article examines the theory of progressivism, a literature review of language learning practices in Indonesia, and provides examples of successful implementation of progressivism at the global and national levels.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach to delve deeper into the application of progressivism-based learning models in the context of language teaching in secondary schools. The qualitative approach was chosen because of its deep focus on understanding social and educational phenomena from a subjective perspective, as well as its ability to explore the meaning embodied in educational behavior, practice, and policy. The method used in this study consists of two main approaches, namely literature study and participatory observation.

1. Literature Analysis

Literature analysis becomes an important first stage in this research, aiming to understand various concepts, theories and practices related to progressivism in education, especially in Language Teaching. In this phase, various books, journal articles, and relevant education policies will be reviewed in depth. Progressivism in education, as described by Dewey (1938), emphasizes an active and student-centered learning experience, as well as the importance of education to facilitate the development of critical and reflective thinking skills. Therefore, this study will identify the basic principles of progressivism, such as Project-Based Learning, Cooperative Learning, and contextual teaching, to then be analyzed in relation to Language Teaching.

In addition, literature analysis also includes previous studies that have examined the success or challenges in implementing the progressivism model in language learning. For example, research by Darling-Hammond (2000) suggests that a progressive approach can increase student engagement and



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create space for students to develop according to their individual pace and learning style. This literacy will provide a strong theoretical framework for further research.

2. Practical Observations

Practical observation will be conducted with Case Studies in secondary schools that have implemented a progressivism-based learning model. This observational approach will allow researchers to directly observe practices in the field, as well as understand the challenges faced by teachers in implementing this model in the classroom. Participatory observation acts as a method that allows researchers to not only observe but also interact with learners and teachers, providing deeper insight into the dynamics that occur during the learning process.

In this case study, several secondary schools that have implemented the progressivism model will be selected purposively, based on certain criteria such as program success, policy support, and diversity of student characteristics. This observation process will last for a certain period, with the researcher taking an active part in class activities, such as assisting in the performance of group assignments or interactive discussions. This will give researchers the opportunity to observe firsthand how progressive learning models are applied in Language Teaching, Both in theoretical and practical contexts.

Observations will cover a variety of aspects, such as how teachers organize classes, strategies used in project-based learning, and how students participate in learning activities. Researchers will also monitor students' responses to this approach, including their level of involvement in discussions or collaborative activities, which is one of the hallmarks of progressivism (Miller, 2017).

Through a combination of literature study and participatory observation, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the application of the progressivism learning model in Language Teaching in secondary schools. Using this methodology, it is hoped that this study can make a significant contribution to the development of learning practices that are more innovative and responsive to student needs, as well as provide useful insights for policy makers in designing more progressive curricula.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Language is a fundamental tool that is not only used to communicate but also to think, understand and build meaning. In the context of progressivism education, language learning is not merely the mastery of mechanical aspects such as grammar and sentence structure, but also the development of critical thinking skills, cross-cultural understanding, and the ability to solve problems (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). For example, when students are asked to work in a group to analyze a literary work or news article, they not only learn to understand the text, but also develop the ability to discuss, argue and think reflectively.

Indonesia is a country with incredible cultural and linguistic diversity. Language learning in Indonesia has two main functions: as a means of cross-cultural communication and as a means of strengthening national identity. On the other hand, language learning is often considered an important global necessity to support the competitiveness of nations. In this context, progressivism education can provide a relevant approach by integrating the local cultural context into Indonesia language learning, so that students not only master the language but also understand their local values (Susanti, 2021). Although the Indonesian education curriculum has adopted elements of competency-based learning, such as the Merdeka curriculum, its implementation still faces various challenges. Study by Hakim (2020) found that majority of teachers tend to use teacher centered teaching approach due to lack of training in modern learning methods. As a result, students are less actively involved in the learning process, and learning often feels less relevant to students' daily lives.

The philosophy of progressivism provides an answer to this problem by emphasizing the importance of contextually relevant and experiential learning. In language learning, this can be applied using projects, simulations, and problem-based learning that engage students actively in their own learning process.

In this article, we will explain how the principles of progressivism are applied in language learning in Indonesia. In addition, it will be discussed how this model can improve students' literacy



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competence, collaborative skills, and learning meaningfulness. Progressivism, as described by John Dewey, is rooted in the understanding that education is a tool for facing and solving social challenges. Dewey (1938) emphasized that effective learning must involve hands-on experience and be relevant to students' daily lives. The main principles of progressivism includes Student-Centered Learning: focus on the individual needs, interests and experiences of students. Collaboration and social interaction: the learning process takes place through discussions and group work. Contextual and relevant: education must be relevant to the real world. Critical and creative development: honing high-level thinking skills. Language learning as a means of literacy and emancipation, language learning in the view of progressivism aims not only at linguistic mastery, but also at the development of critical skills and social emancipation. Freire (1970) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* explains that language is a tool for understanding and transforming the world.

International Studies show that progressivism approaches are effective in increasing student motivation and engagement (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). In Finland, for example, project-based learning in Language Teaching has resulted in a significant increase in literacy. Language learning in Indonesia is generally still oriented towards traditional patterns, such as memorization and standards-based tests. Studies from Hakim (2020) found that this approach is less relevant in building students' critical thinking skills. Therefore, a more dynamic, progressive approach is needed. This study uses qualitative methods with the approach of literature study and participatory observation. Data were collected through literature analysis, in-depth study of books, journal articles, and educational policies related to progressivism and Language Teaching. Language is not only a means of communication but also a means of understanding the world, establishing meaning and interacting socially. The philosophy of progressivism positions language learning as a dynamic process that involves the student in the real use of language. Paulo Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), emphasizes that language is a tool of emancipation that allows individuals to understand and transform their reality.

A progressive approach to language learning has several practical implications: contextualization of learning materials: teaching materials are designed to be relevant to students' lives, such as using local news texts or everyday life situations as learning materials. Project-based activities: language learning through projects, such as creating short videos or putting together stories in groups, engages students in meaningful use of language. Collaborative Learning: Group Discussions, role-playing games, and simulations help students build speaking and listening skills naturally. For example, in Language Learning, students maybe asked to simulate a job interview or business presentation. This activity not only improves linguistic skills but also develops students' confidence and critical thinking ability (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

Progressivism as a school of educational philosophy developed in the early 20th century with John Dewey as its main figure. Dewey (1938) emphasized that education is a means of integrating the individual into society in a dynamic and adaptive way. Progressive education supports experiential learning, collaboration, and relevance to students' real lives. In education, progressivism has become a popular approach applied in various countries to develop 21st century skills, including critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration (Tanner & Tanner, 2007). Several studies have shown the success of the progressivism approach in increasing student engagement and the meaningfulness of learning. For example, in Finland, an education system that integrates project-based learning has been shown to improve students' literacy and communication skills (Sahlberg, 2015).

Language as a means of communication and social expression has an important role in education. In language learning, progressivism is applied through methods that emphasize the use of language in real contexts. Kumaravadivelu (2003) developed the concept of *postmethod pedagogy* that aligns with the principles of progressivism, where language learning focuses not only on grammar and vocabulary, but also on the social and cultural context in which the language is used.

The Project-Based Learning has been one of the effective methods of integrating progressivism in language education. Studies by Beckett and Slater (2005) show that this method improves students' linguistic abilities as well as critical and collaborative thinking skills. For example, students studying



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English maybe asked to create a magazine in the language, which involves research, writing, and presentation—all of these activities are relevant to the use of the language in the real world.

The Indonesian education system has undergone several reforms, including the implementation of the 2013 curriculum and The Independent curriculum. Both curricula emphasize competency-based learning and a student-centered approach. However, according to Hakim (2020), this implementation is often hampered by traditional teaching methods that are still dominant, such as lectures and rote exercises.

The study by Rokhman and Susanti (2018) revealed that in language learning, especially English, students in Indonesia are often less exposed to experiential and project-based activities. Lack of teacher training and limited facilities are major challenges in adopting a progressive approach. In Indonesia, the concept of progressivism is still relatively new, but it has great relevance to address challenges in language learning, especially in building critical and creative skills. A study at South Jakarta High School showed that 78% of students who learned English through Project-Based Methods reported improved speaking skills and self-confidence (Susanti, 2021).

Technology has become an important tool in supporting progressivism approaches, especially in language learning. Platform seperti *Duolingo*, *Kahoot*, dan *Google Classroom* facilitate students in learning language through simulations, games, online collaborations. Studies by Wang and Winstead (2016) show that the use of technology in language learning can increase student engagement, especially in collaborative activities such as online discussions and virtual group projects.

In Indonesia, the integration of technology in language learning is still in the development stage. A study by Wijayanti (2020) found that the use of *Google Classroom* in English language learning in secondary schools increased student participation in group discussions and projects. This is in line with the principles of progressivism that emphasize the importance of collaboration and the use of tools relevant to student life.

Progressivism approach in language learning in Indonesia provides relevant solutions to improve students' competence in language. With a focus on real experience, collaboration, and meaningfulness, this method addresses the challenges of modern education. However, policy support, teacher training, and the provision of resources for wider implementation are needed. The Project-Based Learning is apart in implementation of Dewey's principles, language learning involves students in projects such as creating short stories, cultural discussions, and debates. This project helps students practice the language in a real context. In collaboration and Interaksi social interaction, in the teaching Indonesian in school, students work in groups to analyze news articles. The results showed improved speaking and critical thinking skills.

Learning by doing principle of John Dewey (1938) has become the main principle in progressivism approach. The Project-based learning, such as the creation of vlogs and digital magazines, gives students the opportunity to use language in real contexts. These projects not only develop linguistic skills but also train students to think critically and creatively. In a study case of SMA Negeri 1 Bandung, in the program of "Language in Action," student get involved in the digital library production. They conduct research, write articles, and present their results to the class. This process allows students to understand practical uses of language, such as how to write an interesting article or speak persuasively in a presentation. Teachers report that students are more motivated and confident, especially in writing and speaking skills. These results align with Dewey's view that concrete experiences help students establish connections between theory and practice, ultimately strengthening their understanding of the material (Dewey, 1938).

In terms of collaboration as a tool for developing social competence, Lev Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes the importance of social interaction in learning through the concept of *zone of proximal development* (ZPD). In the context of language learning, group collaboration provides a supportive environment for students to learn from their peers. In a Case study, SMA Negeri 3 Malang in a short story writing project using *Google Docs*, students worked together to draft a script and provide feedback to their friends. This process involves an intensive discussion of language structure, vocabulary, and



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writing style. Teachers reported that students who were usually passive in class became more involved in the project. These results support Vygotsky's idea that collaboration helps students develop a deeper understanding through interaction with peers. In this context, teachers act as facilitators who provide *scaffolding* to support student learning (Vygotsky, 1978).

In terms of technology to improve communication, technology has become an important tool in supporting the application of progressivism, especially in language learning. Platforms like *Kahoot* and *Padlet* allow students to learn in an interactive and collaborative way. Studi Case study: SMA Jakarta Barat teachers use *Kahoot* to evaluate students' understanding of grammar. This activity increased student participation from 60% (traditional evaluation) to 95% (interactive evaluation). Students also report that they feel more motivated because of the fun quiz format. The use of technology in language learning reflects the principle of progressivism which emphasizes adaptation to the needs of students and the use of relevant tools to support the learning experience. It also supports Maslow's (1970) view that emotionally engaging learning can increase student motivation and participation.

Although progressivism offers great potential, there are a number of challenges that need to be addressed, including limited Sumber resources schools in remote areas often lack access to technology and learning materials that support progressive approaches. Resistensi Teacher resistance, a survey by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2021) shows that 45% of teachers do not feel confident using project-based methods due to lack of training and resources. The structural barriers of the education system, which are still oriented towards national examinations, often do not leave room for the implementation of innovative approaches.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The application of the educational philosophy of progressivism in language learning in Indonesia has a significant impact on the development of students' language competence. Based on the results of research and discussions, this approach has been proven to improve linguistic skills (speaking, writing, reading, and listening), learning motivation, student engagement, and 21st century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication.

The application of the philosophical theory of progressivism in language education in Indonesia shows promising results in improving linguistic skills and student engagement. With a focus on experiential learning, contextual relevance, and collaboration, this approach can help students master language in more meaningful ways. However, successful implementation requires policy support, teacher training, and access to adequate educational resources.

Methods such as project-based learning, simulation, role-playing, and integration of educational technology have shown better results compared to traditional methods. Experiential activities, contextual relevance, and social interaction are key to progressivism's success, as reflected in the average improvement in writing and speaking skills in some schools.

However, the application of progressivism in Indonesia still faces challenges, including limited technological infrastructure, lack of teacher training, and resistance to changes in learning methods. Solutions such as improved technological facilities, intensive training programs for teachers, and curriculum reforms are needed to support the broader implementation of progressivism.

By integrating the principles of progressivism into language learning, education in Indonesia can become more relevant, interactive, and meaningful to students. This approach not only enhances linguistic competence, but also prepares students to face global challenges with skills appropriate for the 21st century. Progressivism is, therefore, a framework worthy of systematic adoption in the national education system.

Progressivism-based learning, such as digital magazine creation projects, job interview simulations, and social issue debates, allows students to integrate language skills with real-life contexts. This encourages them not only understand language as a set of grammatical rules, but also as a tool of critical thinking and cross-cultural communication. The improvement in writing proficiency and speaking proficiency scores showed that hands-on experience-based learning was more effective than traditional methods.



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Progressivism brings relevant and contextual approaches to students, such as the integration of educational technologies and collaborative learning. This method encourages students to be more active and motivated, as evidenced by increased participation in gamification-based evaluations such as *Kahoot*. Increased motivation reflects the success of progressivism in creating a learning environment that supports the emotional needs of students, in accordance with Maslow's theory of the importance of meeting psychological needs in the learning process.

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