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A COOPERATIVE LEARNING STRATEGY USING SENTENCE PUZZLE MEDIA TO ENHANCE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN ARABIC READING INSTRUCTION

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Abstrak
Pembelajaran *Qira'ah* di madrasah masih sering didominasi oleh metode membaca-terjemah yang cenderung menempatkan siswa sebagai penerima informasi secara pasif. Kondisi tersebut berdampak pada rendahnya keterlibatan siswa dalam proses pembelajaran, baik secara emosional, kognitif, maupun sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan implementasi strategi *Cooperative Learning* berbasis media *Puzzle* Kalimat serta menganalisis keterlibatan siswa dalam pembelajaran *Qira'ah* pada materi agama-agama di Indonesia (*Al-Adyān fī Indūnīsiyā*) di Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Kota Batu. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap tujuh siswa kelas XI, observasi proses pembelajaran, dan analisis dokumen berupa Perencanaan Pembelajaran. Analisis data dilakukan melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan berdasarkan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi *Cooperative Learning* berbasis *Puzzle* Kalimat mampu memunculkan keterlibatan emosional siswa yang ditandai dengan munculnya rasa senang, antusias, dan motivasi belajar yang tinggi. Selain itu, pembelajaran juga mendorong keterlibatan kognitif melalui aktivitas analisis, evaluasi, dan rekonstruksi teks yang mengembangkan keterampilan berpikir tingkat tinggi. Dari aspek sosial, siswa menunjukkan interaksi kolaboratif yang intensif melalui diskusi, negosiasi makna, dan tanggung jawab kelompok. Temuan penelitian juga memperlihatkan bahwa siswa memiliki persepsi positif terhadap pembelajaran karena memberikan pengalaman belajar yang bermakna, menantang, dan menyenangkan. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa integrasi strategi *Cooperative Learning* dengan media *Puzzle* Kalimat dapat menjadi inovasi untuk meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran *Qira'ah* di madrasah.

Kata Kunci: cooperative learning; puzzle kalimat; maharah qira'ah; keterlibatan siswa; pembelajaran bahasa arab;

Abstract
Arabic reading skill (*Maharah Qira'ah*) instruction in Islamic schools is frequently dominated by the grammar-translation approach, which often positions students as passive recipients of information. This condition may lead to limited student engagement in learning activities, particularly in emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions. This study aims to describe the implementation of a Cooperative Learning strategy using Sentence Puzzle media and to analyze student are able to bring out in Arabic reading learning on the topic of *Religions in Indonesia (Al-Adyān fī Indūnīsiyā)* at MAN 2 Kota Batu. The study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with seven eleventh-grade students, classroom observations, and document analysis of lesson plans. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that Cooperative Learning through Sentence Puzzle media enhances students' emotional engagement, as reflected in increased enjoyment, enthusiasm, and learning motivation. Furthermore, the strategy promotes cognitive engagement through activities requiring text analysis, evaluation, and reconstruction, thereby fostering higher-order thinking skills. Socially, students demonstrated intensive collaborative interaction through discussion, meaning negotiation, and shared responsibility within groups. The study also found that students perceived the learning experience positively because it was meaningful, challenging, and enjoyable. These findings suggest that integrating Cooperative Learning with Sentence Puzzle media can serve as an innovative alternative for improving the quality of Arabic reading skill instruction in Islamic secondary education.

Keywords: cooperative learning; sentence puzzle; arabic reading skill; student engagement; arabic language learning;

INTRODUCTION

Most students are able to read texts but fail to develop an understanding of what they read (Koda, 2005; Snow, 2002). This observation represents one of the paradoxes in the field of education, particularly in language learning today. In practice, reading skills are often measured by the ability to recite a text or answer simple questions, while student engagement in the process of understanding, interpreting, and constructing meaning from the text remains relatively low (Alderson, 2000; Grabe, 2009). This situation is a serious concern because reading ability not only determines success in language learning but also influences overall academic achievement. A systematic review conducted by Anderson, Meline, & Harn, (2023) of 95 reading intervention studies showed that learning practices capable of increasing student engagement have a positive relationship with improved reading comprehension, although only a small fraction of the studies explicitly measured student engagement as a primary variable. These findings confirm that student engagement is a crucial factor that is often overlooked in reading instruction.

In the context of Arabic language learning, the issue of students' reading skills and engagement has become increasingly complex. Arabic reading skill requires not only the ability to recognize linguistic symbols and sounds but also the ability to comprehend meaning, connect information, and interpret the text's content as a whole (Grabe & Stoller, 2011; Tarigan, 2015). However, reading instruction practices in madrasahs are still often dominated by lecture-based methods, vocabulary translation, and taking turns reading texts. Such instruction tends to position students as passive recipients of information. Consequently, students have limited opportunities to interact with texts or with their peers in developing reading comprehension. This situation leads to low reading interest, limited participation during lessons, and restricted ability to deeply comprehend Arabic texts. This phenomenon is also evident in various studies on Arabic reading instruction, highlighting the need for innovative, more collaborative, and student-centered learning strategies in accordance with the learning characteristics of the current Independent curriculum (Firdaus & Mufidah, 2025).

Contemporary educational literature indicates that effective reading instruction depends not only on the quality of the material but also on students' active engagement in the learning process. According to David W. Johnson & Roger T. Johnson (2019), instruction that involves student collaboration fosters meaningful interactions that can enhance conceptual understanding, communication skills, and academic responsibility. In line with this, Robert E. Slavin (2020) explains that the success of cooperative learning lies in the aspect of positive interdependence among group members so that each student is encouraged to actively participate in achieving common goals. Various international studies also indicate that cooperative learning models can improve reading skills and student engagement in language learning. For instance, research by Nasir et. al. (2025) found that the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) approach has a positive impact on reading comprehension because students are actively involved in reading, discussing, and constructing shared understanding. In addition, the integration of games in learning is also necessary (Firdaus et al., 2025).

In the field of Arabic language education, various studies also show a similar trend. A study by Azhari et al. (2024) found that the Make-a-Match model, based on cooperative learning, was able to significantly improve Arabic reading skills because students were directly involved in activities such as matching information pairs and group discussions. Meanwhile, Syafei et al. (2024) reported that the CIRC model successfully improved students' vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension in Arabic reading material. Other studies indicate that a collaborative approach to reading helps students build a better understanding compared to individual learning because the discussion process allows for the clarification of meaning and the exchange of ideas among students.

Although various studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of cooperative learning in improving reading skills, most research still focuses on learning outcomes and test score improvements. Studies that specifically examine how cooperative learning strategies foster student engagement in Arabic reading instruction remain relatively limited. In fact, student engagement is a crucial prerequisite for creating a meaningful learning process. However, in reality, student engagement in Arabic reading learning remains relatively low. This is due to a lack of learning activities that provide opportunities for collaboration, interaction, and active participation. Therefore, the use of the Sentence Puzzle medium within Cooperative Learning strategies is expected to enhance student engagement in the processes of reading, discussing, organizing information, and making decisions collectively. Based on this background, this study aims to describe how the Sentence Puzzle media within the Cooperative Learning strategy fosters student engagement in Arabic reading instruction. This study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of student-centered Arabic language instruction and serve as a practical alternative for teachers in designing more active, collaborative, and meaningful Arabic reading instruction.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive methods to gain a deep understanding of and describe student engagement (Creswell & Poth, 2018) in Arabic reading instruction using a cooperative learning strategy based on sentence puzzle media. This study involved one class of eleventh-grade students at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Kota Batu. The selection of Grade XI students was conducted purposively based on pedagogical and curricular considerations. First, Grade XI students had already completed foundational Arabic language learning in Grade X and therefore possessed sufficient vocabulary knowledge and reading experience to engage in collaborative sentence reconstruction activities. Second, the instructional topic used in this study, namely Religions in Indonesia (*Al-Adyān fī Indūnīsiyā*), is part of the Arabic curriculum taught at the eleventh-grade level, making it contextually relevant to the students' learning objectives. Third, the selected class had previously experienced cooperative learning activities, enabling students to participate actively in group-based reading tasks.

Seven students were selected as interview informants using purposive sampling with maximum variation criteria. The participants were chosen to represent diverse learning characteristics observed during the implementation of the lesson, including differences in participation levels, reading proficiency, interaction patterns, and willingness to express opinions during classroom activities. The selection included students who demonstrated high engagement, moderate engagement, and relatively limited participation in group discussions. This approach was intended to capture a broader range of experiences and perceptions regarding the use of Sentence Puzzle-based Cooperative Learning in Arabic reading instruction. The number of informants was determined based on data adequacy and thematic saturation. Interviews were continued until no substantially new themes emerged from the participants' responses. The seven selected informants provided sufficiently rich and varied information to support an in-depth understanding of students' emotional, cognitive, and social engagement during the learning process.

The data sources for this study included primary data obtained through in-depth interviews with students and secondary data obtained from lesson plans, learning materials, and classroom observation records. Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to obtain an overview of student activities during the learning process, particularly the forms of cognitive, social, and emotional engagement that emerged during group work. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students to explore their experiences, perceptions, and responses to the use of cooperative learning strategies based on sentence puzzle media in Arabic Reading instruction. Meanwhile, documentation of lesson plans and instructional materials was conducted to understand the planning of the sentence puzzle-based cooperative learning strategy implemented by the teacher.

Data analysis utilized the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña (2014), which comprises three stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis technique used was content analysis to identify the main themes from the interview, observation, and documentation data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interpretation process was conducted through the stages of restatement, which involves restating the data obtained; description, which involves describing the patterns of findings that emerge; and interpretation, which involves assigning meaning to the research findings based on cooperative learning theory and the concept of student engagement (Patton, 2015; Saldaña, 2021). To ensure data validity, the study applied source triangulation by comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of media-based cooperative learning strategies using sentence puzzles in reading instruction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Emotional Engagement in Sentence Puzzle-Based Cooperative Learning in Arabic Reading Instruction

The research findings indicate that the cooperative learning strategy based on the Sentence Puzzle medium successfully fosters students' emotional engagement in Arabic reading instruction. This emotional engagement is demonstrated through the emergence of feelings of joy, enthusiasm, interest, motivation, and satisfaction during the learning process. Based on the interview results, all informants stated that the use of Sentence Puzzles created a learning atmosphere different from the Arabic reading instruction they usually experience. The activity of assembling sentence pieces in groups provided a more engaging learning experience because students were not merely passively reading texts but were directly involved in the process of discovering meaning and constructing the text's structure.

> *"I was so excited when the teacher first announced that we would be using puzzles as a learning tool for Arabic. The use of varied teaching materials made me eager to attend class. Visually, the appearance and shape of these*

sentence puzzle pieces make the Arabic text much more interesting than usual. I was also curious to find out the meaning of each word piece I held." (FH, Interview, April 29, 2026)

FH's statement indicates that positive emotional responses emerged from the very beginning of the lesson, even before the Sentence Puzzle activity began. This enthusiasm was sparked by the use of teaching materials that differed from the routine learning experiences students had previously encountered. From the perspective of Student Engagement Theory, emotional engagement is characterized by the emergence of students' interest, enjoyment, enthusiasm, and engagement with learning activities (Fredricks et al., 2004). Thus, the experience described by FH demonstrates that the Sentence Puzzle medium is capable of creating an initial learning environment conducive to fostering students' affective engagement.

Similar findings were also reported by ZA, who felt that learning became more enjoyable and less boring when using Puzzle Kalimat.

"I agree that using these puzzle pieces creates a fun atmosphere and makes me excited to attend Arabic class. These sentence puzzle pieces really do make the Arabic text look more interesting. I find myself more interested in observing the sentence order on these physical puzzles than just looking at the text in a printed book." (ZA, Interview, April 29, 2026)

This quote indicates that the Sentence Puzzle medium contributes to increased student attention and interest in reading texts. In Arabic reading instruction, one of the challenges that frequently arises is low student interest when faced with long Arabic texts that are perceived as difficult. The findings of this study suggest that changing the format of material presentation through Sentence Puzzles can reduce this barrier. According to Mayer (2021), learning is more effective when information is presented in a way that captures students' attention and encourages active engagement in the learning process. Therefore, the Sentence Puzzle medium serves not only as a learning aid but also as a means to foster students' emotional interest in the material being studied.

High emotional engagement is also evident in the statement by AFV, who noted that the Sentence Puzzle activity fosters curiosity about the text's content.

"I wholeheartedly agree and am thrilled to hear that the teacher will be using puzzles in Arabic class. Every word fragment I hold sparks my curiosity about its meaning. I want to know how those fragments can come together to form a complete paragraph." (AFV, Interview, April 29, 2026)

The curiosity that emerged in AFV indicates the development of intrinsic motivation during the learning process. Ryan & Deci (2020) explain that intrinsic motivation arises when individuals engage in an activity because of the interest and satisfaction derived from that activity. In this study, curiosity about the relationships between sentence fragments encouraged students to remain engaged in the learning process without having to rely on external prompts from the teacher. This finding indicates that Sentence Puzzles are capable of creating learning conditions that facilitate the emergence of learning motivation originating from within the students themselves.

In addition to fostering interest and curiosity, students' emotional engagement is also reflected in reduced boredom during learning. This is evident in the statements of several informants who admitted to not feeling bored while participating in the Sentence Puzzle activity.

"Learning Maharah Qira'ah using this method doesn't bore me easily. In fact, I'm very focused on following every step the teacher gives and enjoy the process of constructing sentences with my group." (FH, Interview, April 29, 2026)

This finding indicates that collaborative activities that also involve active student participation are effective in sustaining their attention throughout the learning process. These results align with Gillies (2019) research, which found that cooperative learning can enhance student motivation and engagement because students have the opportunity to participate directly in the learning process. Unlike conventional reading instruction, which tends to be individual-based and teacher-centered, the Sentence Puzzle activity presents challenges that must be solved collaboratively, thereby keeping students emotionally engaged until the end of the lesson.

Observation data collected during the learning process reinforced these interview findings. The researcher observed that when the Sentence Puzzle pieces were distributed, students immediately responded positively by examining the text fragments, reading the available words, and discussing potential paragraph arrangements with their group members. Almost no students displayed passive or reluctant behavior toward the activity. Conversely, most students appeared enthusiastic about participating in group discussions and showed expressions of joy when they successfully identified relationships between sentences. This indicates that students' emotional engagement was not merely expressed verbally during interviews but was also clearly evident through their observed behavior throughout the learning process.

Documentation data in the form of Lesson Plans also showed that students' emotional engagement had been designed from the outset through a learning design oriented toward cooperative activities. In the core activity, students were placed in small groups and challenged to arrange sentence fragments into complete paragraphs. This activity was designed to create a learning experience that is both challenging and enjoyable. Thus, the emotional engagement observed in students is not a coincidental phenomenon but the result of instructional planning that consciously integrates the principles of Cooperative Learning into the Arabic reading curriculum.

The findings of this study are further evident in the level of learning satisfaction felt by students after completing the group task. All informants expressed that they felt satisfied when they successfully composed paragraphs correctly with their group members.

> *"When the group managed to put it together correctly, there was an incredible sense of satisfaction."* (FH, Interview, April 29, 2026)
>
> *"I felt very satisfied when the arrangement of the paragraphs on Religions in Indonesia was successfully completed correctly."* (AFV, Interview, April 29, 2026)

This experience of success can be explained through the Self-Efficacy theory proposed by Bandura (1997). According to Bandura (1997), experiences of success are the primary source of an individual's belief in their own abilities. When students successfully complete tasks they perceive as challenging, they develop greater self-confidence in their academic abilities. In the context of this study, the success in constructing Sentence Puzzles provided a successful experience that reinforced students' belief that they are capable of understanding Arabic texts well.

Overall, the integration of interview data, observations, and documentation indicates that the Sentence Puzzle-based Cooperative Learning strategy creates an active and collaborative learning experience. This engagement is reflected through the emergence of joy, enthusiasm, interest, curiosity, intrinsic motivation, reduced learning fatigue, and satisfaction after successfully completing group tasks. These findings also reinforce the view of Fredricks et al. (2004) that emotional engagement is a crucial foundation in the learning process as it serves as a gateway for the development of students' cognitive and behavioral engagement. Thus, the use of Sentence Puzzles within the Cooperative Learning framework can be viewed as an effective strategy for creating a more engaging, meaningful, and student-centered Arabic reading instruction experience.

Students' Cognitive Engagement in Puzzle-Based Cooperative Learning for Arabic Reading Skills Instruction

Research findings indicate that the use of Puzzle-Based media in Cooperative Learning strategies not only increases student enthusiasm but also fosters deeper cognitive engagement during Arabic reading skills instruction. This cognitive engagement is evident in students' ability to analyze relationships between sentences, understand text meaning based on context, pay attention to linguistic aspects such as vowel marks and sentence structure, and evaluate the paragraphs they have constructed. Interview results indicate that students do not merely read the text but engage in complex thinking processes to identify logical and meaningful paragraph structures.

One of the most dominant forms of cognitive engagement found in this study is students' attention to the linguistic aspects of Arabic texts, particularly harakat and word meanings. This is evident in FH's statement explaining that the Sentence Puzzle composition process requires high precision in reading every available word.

> *"I pay very close attention to the vowel marks in every part of the sentence. If I misread the vowel marks, I might misunderstand the meaning of the sentence. So I have to be really careful before deciding where to place that sentence."* (FH, Interview, April 29, 2026)

This statement indicates that students engage in linguistic analysis during the activity. In Arabic reading instruction, understanding harakat is a crucial aspect because changes in harakat can alter both the grammatical function and the meaning of a word. The precision demonstrated by FH suggests that the Sentence Puzzle activity encourages students to employ more in-depth reading strategies rather than merely recognizing vocabulary. According to Grabe & Stoller (2020), effective readers actively process linguistic information to build a comprehensive understanding of the text they are reading. Thus, students' attention to harakat indicates strong cognitive engagement in the process of comprehending the text.

Similar findings were also reported by ZA, who explained that assembling Sentence Puzzles required her to reread the text repeatedly before deciding on the paragraph structure.

> *"I have to read a few times before deciding on the position of a sentence. Sometimes I feel that this sentence is appropriate at the beginning, but after reading the rest of the section, it turns out that it should be moved. So I have to double-check constantly."* (ZA, Interview, April 29, 2026)

ZA's statement indicates the presence of metacognitive monitoring, which is a student's ability to monitor and evaluate their own understanding during the learning process. Students do not immediately accept their initial

decisions but instead double-check for more accurate arrangements. According to Schraw & Dennison (1994), the activity of re-examining one's understanding is one of the primary indicators of metacognitive skills because it demonstrates students' awareness of their own thinking processes. In the context of this study, the Sentence Puzzle encourages students to continuously revise and evaluate their understanding until they arrive at a paragraph arrangement deemed most logical.

Higher cognitive engagement is evident in EM's statement, which explains that the Sentence Puzzle activity made her think about the logical relationships between sentences, rather than simply translating word for word.

> *"I don't just see the meaning word for word. I have to think about the relationships between sentences to make the paragraphs make sense. Sometimes there are sentences that have a clear meaning, but the position is not necessarily correct when viewed from the relationship with other sentences."* (EM, Interview, April 29, 2026)

This quote indicates that students have engaged in discourse-level comprehension. Text comprehension no longer focuses on the meaning of individual words, but rather on the connections between ideas that form the paragraph as a whole. According to Kintsch & Rawson (2013), readers who comprehend a text deeply will strive to establish coherence among ideas so that the information obtained can be understood as a unified whole. Thus, the thinking process demonstrated by EM indicates that the Sentence Puzzle successfully guides students toward more complex and meaningful comprehension activities.

Interview findings also indicate that students often undergo a process of negotiating meaning when encountering ambiguous sentence fragments. AFV noted that some sentence fragments can be placed in more than one position, thus requiring more careful analysis.

> *"Sometimes there are sentences that I think are suitable to be placed in the middle, but my friend thinks otherwise. Finally we reread the entire paragraph to make sure which one was the best."* (AFV, Interview, April 29, 2026)

This statement indicates that students' thinking does not occur in isolation but develops through a process of dialogue and argumentation with group members. From the perspective of Vygotsky (1978) social constructivism theory, knowledge is constructed through social interaction that allows students to test, revise, and reinforce their understanding. When students discuss various possible paragraph structures, they are actually collaboratively constructing meaning.

Observation data supports these interview findings. During the learning process, the researcher observed that nearly all groups reread sentence fragments multiple times before agreeing on an answer. Students were seen comparing one sentence to another, looking for clues in the form of connecting words, paying attention to the coherence of meaning, and discussing paragraph structure intensively. In some groups, there were even lengthy discussions when determining the position of a sentence considered to have more than one possible placement. This phenomenon indicates that students were engaged in analytical activities that went beyond surface-level reading.

In addition, observations also showed that students spontaneously used various cognitive strategies to complete the task. Some students grouped sentences based on their themes, while others looked for clues from pronouns (*dhamīr*), conjunctions (*ḥurūf al-'athf*), or the logical sequence of information in the text. These strategies indicate that students are not merely experimenting with sentence construction but are employing systematic reasoning to build an understanding of the text's content.

These observational findings align with the documentation data found in the lesson plans, where teachers designed activities that enabled students to identify text content, analyze relationships between sentences, discuss in groups, and present the results of their paragraph construction. The structure of these activities indicates that the learning objectives focus not only on literal reading skills but also on critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Thus, the cognitive engagement observed in students is the result of a learning design specifically crafted to foster higher-order thinking activities.

When analyzed using the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy by Anderson & Krathwohl (2001), the activities carried out by students reflect several cognitive levels simultaneously. At the understanding level, students grasp the meaning of each sentence provided. At the analyzing level, students identify logical relationships between sentences and determine the connections between ideas within a paragraph. At the evaluating level, students compare various possible arrangements that emerge during group discussions. Furthermore, at the creating level, students reconstruct a complete paragraph based on the results of their analysis. Thus, learning using the Sentence Puzzle medium not only trains reading skills but also develops higher-order thinking skills (HOTS).

These findings can also be explained through the theory of Meaningful Learning proposed by Ausubel (2000). According to Ausubel (2000), learning becomes meaningful when students are able to connect new information with the knowledge structures they already possess. In this study, students not only read information about religions in Indonesia but also connected it to their existing knowledge about places of worship, religious practices, and the social life of Indonesian society. This process of knowledge integration helped students understand the reading material more deeply and contextually.

Furthermore, the results of this study also support the Generative Learning theory developed by Mayer (2021). This theory explains that effective learning occurs when students actively select relevant information, organize that information, and integrate it with their prior knowledge. In the context of this study, students selected key clues from each sentence fragment, organized them into a logical paragraph structure, and then connected them to their prior understanding. These activities demonstrate that students act as knowledge constructors, not merely as recipients of information.

The findings of this study align with the results of Grabe & Stoller (2020), which indicate that effective reading comprehension requires active processes of inference, analysis, and integration of information. These findings also support Gillies (2019) conclusion that cooperative learning enhances students' thinking skills because it encourages them to explain reasons, defend arguments, and evaluate various alternative solutions during group discussions. However, this study makes a more specific contribution by demonstrating that the development of such cognitive engagement can be achieved in Arabic reading instruction using a simple medium, as the Sentence Puzzle without relying on complex digital technology.

Overall, the integration of data from interviews, observations, and documentation indicates that the Puzzle Kalimat media-based Cooperative Learning strategy is capable of significantly enhancing students' cognitive engagement. This engagement is reflected in students' ability to pay attention to the linguistic aspects of the text, analyze relationships between sentences, evaluate various possible paragraph structures, construct coherent understanding, and develop higher-order thinking skills. These findings suggest that Arabic reading instruction will be more meaningful if students are given the opportunity to construct their own understanding through challenging, problem-solving-oriented collaborative activities.

Student Interaction Engagement in Sentence Puzzle-Based Cooperative Learning in Arabic Reading Instruction

Research findings show that the implementation of Cooperative Learning strategies through Sentence Puzzle media successfully fosters intensive and meaningful social interaction among students during Maharah Qira'ah instruction. Social engagement is evident in the high frequency of communication, discussion, exchange of opinions, provision of assistance, negotiation of meaning, and joint decision-making in constructing complete paragraphs. Based on the interview results, all informants stated that success in completing the Sentence Puzzle could not be achieved individually, but rather through active cooperation among group members. This finding indicates that the process of understanding Arabic texts occurs not only through students' interaction with the reading material, but also through the social interactions that take place during the learning process.

One of the most prominent forms of interactive engagement was evident in the students' active participation in discussions to identify logical relationships between sentences. FH explained that she made an effort to be actively involved during the Sentence Puzzle assembly process and did not want to merely be an observer within the group.

> *"I don't want to just sit idly by and see my friends at work. I helped compile sentence pieces and discussed with friends to find the most suitable sentence connections. If something is not right, we discuss it together until we find the right answer."* (FH, Interview, April 29, 2026)

This statement indicates students' awareness of the importance of active participation within a group. FH does not view learning as an individual activity, but rather as a shared responsibility that requires contributions from every member. From the perspective of Cooperative Learning strategies, this situation reflects the principle of positive interdependence, a situation in which the group's success depends on the contributions of all group members (David W. Johnson & Roger T. Johnson, 2019). In other words, students realize that learning objectives can only be achieved through cooperation and positive interdependence.

Similar findings were also reported by ZA, who explained that group discussions serve as a crucial means for understanding the relationships between sentences in the text being studied.

> *"If I have trouble determining the position of a sentence, I usually ask my friends. Sometimes my opinions differ from those of other friends, and then we discuss until we find the most reasonable arrangement."* (ZA, Interview, April 29, 2026)

This quote indicates that social interaction serves as a means of negotiating meaning in the learning process. Through discussion, students have the opportunity to test their understanding, compare arguments, and correct any errors that may arise. According to Vygotsky (1978), an individual's cognitive development is greatly influenced by social interaction because knowledge is constructed through communication and collaboration with others. Therefore, the discussions conducted by students serve not only as social activities but also as mechanisms for forming an understanding of the reading material.

Strong engagement in interaction is also evident in the experience of OAH, who felt that group discussions helped her understand the text more quickly.

> *"If I study on my own, it may take me longer to understand the text. When discussing with friends, I can immediately ask questions and get an explanation. So it is faster to understand the content of the reading."* (OAH, Interview, April 29, 2026)

OAH's statement indicates that social interaction serves as a source of learning support. Through group work, students have the opportunity to help one another understand information that they have not yet grasped individually. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) proposed by Vygotsky (1978), which refers to the gap between what a student can achieve independently and what they can achieve with the assistance of peers or more competent individuals. In this study, group discussions enabled students to receive support that helped them comprehend the text content more effectively.

Interestingly, the interview results showed that the interactions that occurred did not always take the form of agreement among group members. On several occasions, students actually experienced differences of opinion that led to more in-depth discussions. AFV explained that her group often had differing views regarding the placement of a sentence within a paragraph.

> *"Sometimes I feel like a sentence should be placed at the beginning, but my friend says it should be in the middle. Finally we reread the entire paragraph and explained each other's reasons before making a choice."* (AFV, Interview, April 29, 2026)

This situation indicates that the social interactions taking place are not merely ordinary communication, but rather a process of academic argumentation that encourages students to think more critically. According to Mercer & Dörnyei (2020), discussions involving the exchange of reasons and arguments can improve the quality of students' understanding because they are encouraged to explain and defend their thoughts logically. Thus, the differences of opinion that arise during learning actually serve as a means to enrich students' learning process.

Interview results also indicate that most students refuse to be passive group members. This is evident from EM's statement, which emphasizes the importance of every member's involvement in completing group tasks.

> *"I feel that all members must participate in the work. If only one person compiles while the others are silent, the results will not be optimal. Therefore, I try to actively give my opinion during the discussion."* (EM, Interview, April 29, 2026)

This statement indicates an awareness of the principle of individual accountability in cooperative learning. According to Slavin (2015), one of the key characteristics of effective cooperative learning is the presence of individual accountability that is, a situation in which each group member feels a sense of obligation to contribute to the group's success. The findings of this study indicate that the majority of students are not only socially engaged but also feel responsible for achieving the group's goals.

Observational data support these interview findings. During the learning process, the researcher observed that nearly all groups exhibited active two-way communication. Students were seen asking each other questions, offering suggestions, correcting their peers' mistakes, explaining the rationale behind the placement of a sentence, and presenting arguments when disagreements arose. No group was found to be completely dominated by a single student; rather, there was a relatively even distribution of roles among group members. This phenomenon indicates that the Sentence Puzzle medium successfully created an interactive space that enabled all students to participate in the learning process.

In addition, observations showed that when the group had difficulty determining the position of a sentence, students tended to seek solutions through discussion rather than directly asking the teacher for the answer. They reread parts of the sentence, compared opinions, and tried several alternative arrangements before reaching a consensus. This behavior indicates the development of a collaborative culture in problem-solving-oriented learning.

These observational findings are further supported by documentation data found in the lesson planning documents. Based on the lesson plans, the teacher designed activities requiring students to work in small groups

to collaboratively construct paragraphs. Each group was given the responsibility to discuss the relationships between sentences, compose coherent paragraphs, and present their group work to the class. The structure of these activities indicates that social interaction is not merely an additional activity but is central to the learning process designed by the teacher.

From the perspective of Social Constructivism theory, the findings of this study indicate that understanding of a text is not constructed individually, but rather through a process of social interaction that allows students to share knowledge and experiences with one another (Vygotsky, 1978). When students discuss the placement of a sentence, they are actually constructing meaning together. The knowledge produced does not originate solely from the teacher but emerges through a process of negotiation and collaboration among group members.

These findings can also be explained through the Cooperative Learning theory developed by David W. Johnson & Roger T. Johnson (2019). According to this theory, effective cooperative learning is characterized by five main elements, namely positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction, interpersonal skills, and group processing. All five elements were clearly found in this study. Students depend on one another to complete tasks, take responsibility for their contributions, interact directly, use interpersonal communication skills, and evaluate the group's work through discussion and re-reading of the paragraphs they have drafted.

The results of this study align with the findings of Gillies & Rafter (2020), which indicate that cooperative learning can enhance the quality of social interaction and student learning outcomes by providing opportunities for discussion, exchanging ideas, and building understanding collaboratively. However, this study offers a more specific contribution by demonstrating that such social interaction plays a crucial role in Arabic reading skills instruction an area previously often associated with individual reading activities. The findings indicate that comprehension of Arabic texts can actually be enhanced through intensive social interaction among students.

Overall, the integration of interview data, observations, and documentation indicates that the Sentence Puzzle-based Cooperative Learning strategy successfully fosters strong student engagement in Arabic reading instruction. This engagement is reflected through active discussion, negotiation of meaning, mutual assistance, exchange of arguments, individual responsibility, and collaboration in completing group tasks. These findings indicate that Arabic reading instruction will be more effective if designed as a social activity that allows students to build understanding through communication and collaboration with their peers.

Students' Perceptions of Sentence Puzzle-Based Cooperative Learning in Arabic Reading Instruction

The findings of this study show that students have a very positive perception of the application of the Sentence Puzzle-based Cooperative Learning strategy in Arabic reading instruction. This positive perception is reflected in the emergence of a sense of satisfaction, self-confidence, a feeling of success, and students' willingness to actively engage in further learning activities after the activity is completed. Based on the interview results, all informants stated that the experience of assembling Sentence Puzzles provided a different learning experience compared to the reading instruction they usually received. Not only did they understand the content of the text, but students also felt emotional satisfaction when they successfully completed the assigned task with their group. This finding indicates that learning success is not only measured by academic aspects but also by students' interpretation of the learning experiences they undergo during the learning process.

This positive perception is evident in FH's statement who expressed her satisfaction after her group succeeded in correctly compiling a paragraph on the theme of Religions in Indonesia (*Al-Adyān fī Indūnīsiyā*).

> *"When our group managed to put the paragraphs together correctly, I felt very satisfied. At first we were confused about deciding on the order of a few sentences, but after discussing and finally succeeding, we were very happy because our efforts were not in vain."* (FH, Interview, April 29, 2026)

This quote suggests that learning satisfaction arises as a result of successfully completing a problem-solving process. The sense of satisfaction FH experienced stemmed not only from the final result a properly structured paragraph but also from the collaborative process she went through with her group members. From the perspective of Self-Efficacy theory, mastery experiences serve as the primary source for the development of an individual's self-confidence in their abilities (Bandura, 1997). When students successfully complete tasks they perceive as challenging, they develop a positive perception of their academic abilities. Therefore, successfully assembling the Sentence Puzzle became a learning experience that strengthened students' self-confidence in understanding Arabic texts.

A similar finding was also reported by ZA, who linked group success to increased confidence in reading comprehension.

"After the puzzle was put together and it turned out to be correct, I felt more confident that I could understand the Arabic text. Usually, when I just read texts, I often have doubts, but when I put together puzzles with my friends, I became more confident." (ZA, Interview, April 29, 2026)

ZA's statement indicates that Sentence Puzzle-based learning not only fosters conceptual understanding but also builds a positive perception of one's own abilities. In the context of language learning, self-confidence plays a crucial role because it influences students' willingness to engage in subsequent learning activities (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). This finding suggests that successfully completing group tasks can reduce the doubts that often arise in Arabic language learning and replace them with the belief that the material can be understood through collaborative.

Students' positive perceptions are also evident in the experience of AFV, who noted that the group's success provided a learning experience that was both enjoyable and challenging.

"I feel happy when our paragraph arrangement turns out to be correct. There is a sense of pride that we managed to complete a task that I found quite challenging. So it's not just learning, but it's also like completing challenges with friends." (AFV, Interview, April 29, 2026)

This quote indicates that students view learning activities as an engaging challenge, not as an academic burden. According to the Flow theory developed by Csikszentmihalyi (2014), optimal learning experiences occur when the level of challenge matches the individual's abilities. In this study, the Sentence Puzzle presented a level of difficulty sufficient to challenge students, yet it could still be solved through group collaboration. These conditions foster feelings of satisfaction, pride, and joy after the task is successfully completed.

In addition to a sense of satisfaction, the interview results also indicate a positive perception regarding the continuity of learning. Most students expressed a willingness to participate in follow-up activities or complete independent assignments after the lesson ended. This is evident in the following statement by EM.

"If after this activity is given an assignment related to the same material, I am willing to do it. I think the learning is fun so I'm interested in learning more." (EM, Interview, April 29, 2026)

This statement indicates that positive learning experiences can foster sustained motivation. According to Ryan & Deci (2020), intrinsic motivation that arises during the learning process will also increase students' tendency to continue engaging in subsequent learning activities. Thus, students' willingness to participate in follow-up activities serves as an indicator that learning does not end with the achievement of short-term goals but also fosters sustained interest in learning in the future.

Interview data also show that even students who expressed some doubts about certain aspects of the Puzzle Kalimat media still gave positive evaluations of the learning experiences they had. AAA, for example, revealed that although he was not always active in group discussions, he still felt a sense of satisfaction when the group successfully completed the task correctly.

"Even though I didn't have as much discussion as the other friends, I still felt satisfied when our group managed to put the paragraphs together. There is a sense of joy because we were able to complete the task to completion." (AAA, Interview, April 29, 2026)

These findings suggest that positive perceptions of learning are not limited to highly active students but are also shared by students with lower levels of participation. This indicates that Cooperative Learning strategies can create an inclusive learning experience whose benefits are felt by students with diverse characteristics.

The observation results reinforce the findings from the interviews. At the end of the lesson, the researcher observed that most students displayed expressions of joy when the teacher announced that the paragraph structures they had created were correct. Some students were seen smiling, offering appreciation to their group members, and showing their work to other groups. This phenomenon suggests that the learning experience left a strong positive impression on the students.

The observations also showed that students did not immediately leave the learning activity once the task was completed. Most groups chose to reread their paragraph compositions to ensure their accuracy. This behavior indicates a sense of ownership regarding the group's work. In Student Engagement theory, a sense of ownership toward learning activities is a key indicator of students' engagement with the learning process (Fredricks et al., 2004). Thus, the satisfaction that arises is not only related to the final outcome but also to student engagement throughout the learning process.

These findings from interviews and observations are supported by documentary evidence in the form of lesson plans, which show that teachers do indeed design lessons with a focus on meaningful learning experiences. In the lesson plans, learning activities are not only focused on achieving cognitive indicators but are also designed to foster cooperation, self-confidence, responsibility, and students' reflective skills after completing group tasks. Thus,

students' positive perceptions of learning can be understood as a logical consequence of a learning design centered on students' activities and learning experiences.

From the perspective of Experiential Learning theory, learning experiences that involve direct participation result in deeper understanding while providing personal meaning for students (Kolb, 2015). Through the Sentence Puzzle activity, students not only receive information about religions in Indonesia but also directly experience the process of understanding, discussing, and reconstructing the text's content. Therefore, the positive perceptions that emerge are not merely a response to the instructional media but also to the overall learning experience they undergo.

The findings of this study also support Self-Determination Theory, which explains that learning satisfaction increases when students' basic psychological needs namely competence, autonomy, and relatedness are met (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In this study, students experienced competence when they successfully composed paragraphs correctly, autonomy when given the freedom to choose task-completion strategies, and social relatedness through intensive interaction with group peers. The fulfillment of these three needs explains why nearly all students reported positive perceptions of the learning activities they participated in.

These findings align with Bandura's (1997) research, which emphasizes that experiences of success are a primary factor in building students' self-confidence. They also support Ryan & Deci (2020) study, which demonstrates that a learning environment that supports students' psychological needs enhances learning satisfaction and motivation. However, this study makes a more specific contribution to the context of Arabic reading skill learning, namely by demonstrating that a simple medium in the form of Sentence Puzzles, integrated with Cooperative Learning strategies, is capable of creating meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences that foster students' positive perceptions of the reading learning process.



Overall, the integration of data from interviews, observations, and documentation indicates that students view the Sentence Puzzle-based Cooperative Learning strategy as an effective, enjoyable, challenging, and meaningful learning approach. These positive perceptions are reflected in increased learning satisfaction, heightened self-confidence, growing motivation to learn further, and the formation of successful experiences that reinforce students' belief in their ability to understand Arabic texts. These findings confirm that the success of Arabic reading instruction is not solely determined by improvements in reading ability but also by how students interpret and experience the learning process as it unfolds.

CONCLUSION

It turns out that the success of Arabic reading instruction is not solely determined by students' ability to read and translate Arabic texts, but is also significantly influenced by learning strategies that can simultaneously foster students' emotional, cognitive, and social engagement. The results of this study indicate that the implementation of Cooperative Learning strategies using the Sentence Puzzle medium is capable of creating a more active, collaborative, and meaningful learning experience compared to conventional reading instruction. Through group activities involving the assembly of sentence fragments, students not only read texts but also engage in sentence structure analysis, meaning negotiation, academic discussion, and collaborative verification of understanding. These findings reveal that simple manipulative-based media such as Sentence Puzzles can spur more active reading activities for students. Thus, the Cooperative Learning strategy applied in this study has proven capable of achieving the research objectives, namely increasing student engagement and interest in learning during Arabic reading instruction on the topic of religions in Indonesia (*Al-Adyān fī Indūnīsiyā*).

However, this study has some fundamental limitations. The research was only conducted within a single learning session in one class at MAN 2 Kota Batu with a limited number of informants, meaning the results cannot be generalized to a broader context. Additionally, this study focuses strictly on student engagement and has not quantitatively measured the in-depth effect of Sentence Puzzles on improving reading comprehension skills or

academic achievement. Therefore, the most urgent recommendation for future research is to conduct a multi-session or longitudinal study to observe the implementation of Sentence Puzzles over an extended period. This is crucial to verify whether student enthusiasm is sustainable or merely a temporary novelty effect. Furthermore, future studies should systematically compare learning sessions with and without Sentence Puzzles within the same class to isolate and confirm the media's direct impact. Beyond these immediate methodological refinements, subsequent research could expand to various educational levels, diverse learning materials, and different madrasah contexts with larger participant pools, utilizing a mixed-methods approach to obtain a more comprehensive picture of this Cooperative Learning strategy in developing Arabic reading skills.

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