

REVIVING LEARNING: VENTRILOQUISM BASED INSTRUCTIONAL INNOVATION IN INTERACTIVE LEARNING DESIGN

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Abstract

This study investigates the implementation of ventriloquism as an innovative instructional strategy in classroom learning at SMP Negeri 2 Kotabaru. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research aims to explore how ventriloquism functions as an interactive pedagogical method and to examine its impact on student engagement, confidence, communication skills, and learning outcomes. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving teachers, students, and school stakeholders. The findings reveal that ventriloquism-based instruction significantly enhances student engagement and participation by transforming passive classroom dynamics into active and dialogic learning environments. Students demonstrated increased confidence in expressing ideas, reduced anxiety in speaking, and improved communication skills through interactions with the puppet. The use of character-based dialogue and storytelling also contributed to stronger conceptual understanding and better knowledge retention. Additionally, ventriloquism fostered a positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere, promoting emotional safety and collaborative learning. From the teacher's perspective, the innovation stimulated creativity and reflective practice, encouraging more engaging instructional design. The study concludes that ventriloquism represents a low-cost, flexible, and culturally relevant instructional innovation aligned with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly in supporting student-centered learning and character development. Despite challenges related to training and curriculum constraints, ventriloquism shows strong potential as a scalable pedagogical strategy for enhancing learning quality in Indonesian classrooms.

Keywords: *Ventriloquism; Interactive Learning Design; Instructional Innovation; Student Engagement; Classroom Creativity*

A. Introduction

Contemporary In the context of contemporary education marked by rapid technological change and evolving workforce expectations interactive learning has become an essential requirement rather than an optional innovation. Nevertheless, classroom practices in many educational settings continue to rely heavily on conventional approaches such as lecturing, note-taking, and rote memorization. These methods frequently result in student boredom, limited engagement, and low levels of knowledge retention, particularly among learners with diverse abilities and learning preferences (Aslamiah et al., 2021; Research et al., 2022).

Although constructivist learning theory has gained widespread acceptance over the past two decades by emphasizing social interaction, collaboration, and active knowledge construction, its practical implementation remains challenging. Limited resources, especially in rural schools and economically disadvantaged regions, often restrict teachers' capacity to design creative and engaging learning experiences aligned with contemporary pedagogical ideals (Wang et al., 2023). As a result, a persistent gap exists between theoretical expectations and everyday classroom realities.

A growing body of research has identified drama, storytelling, and digital media as effective innovations for enhancing classroom interaction and learning quality (Azizah et al., 2025; Hasyim & Sari, 2025). However, other performative techniques with strong pedagogical potential—such as ventriloquism—remain largely unexplored and underutilized within formal educational contexts. This gap in both theoretical exploration and empirical application highlights the urgent need for systematic research into ventriloquism as a low-cost, flexible, and culturally adaptable instructional alternative capable of addressing the diverse academic and developmental needs of today's students.

Accordingly, the main objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of ventriloquism as an innovative interactive teaching method in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. Specifically, the research seeks to analyze how ventriloquism enables teachers to present abstract and complex concepts in more concrete and comprehensible ways through imaginative dialogue and character-based interaction; encourages active participation from students regardless of their initial confidence levels; and reduces anxiety, fear, and reluctance to speak in front of peers. Beyond cognitive outcomes such as comprehension, retention, and academic achievement, this study also explores affective dimensions, including intrinsic motivation, self-confidence, emotional well-being, and students' attitudes toward learning (Frydman & Major, 2024; Wirahandayani et al., 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the literature by extending discussions on performative arts and creative pedagogies beyond commonly studied approaches. While previous studies have largely focused on drama, music, theatrical performance, and storytelling (Sari & Yuhdi, 2025; Lestari & Kurnia, 2023), ventriloquism offers a distinctive pedagogical approach that integrates imaginative

dialogue, character creation, and direct interaction with learners. This method aligns closely with social learning theory, which emphasizes observational learning, modeling, and social interaction as key mechanisms of knowledge construction (Bandura, 1986). It also supports instructional design principles that stress the importance of multisensory engagement, emotional involvement, and varied learning modalities in strengthening memory, retention, and long-term understanding (Arsyad, 2017).

Practically, this study offers meaningful benefits for multiple educational stakeholders. For teachers, ventriloquism represents an accessible, inexpensive, and adaptable instructional strategy that does not depend on advanced technology or extensive training, making it particularly suitable for resource-limited schools. For students, its use has the potential to increase motivation, enhance communication and interpersonal skills, stimulate creativity, and create a more enjoyable and emotionally positive classroom atmosphere.

At the institutional level, integrating ventriloquism into classroom instruction supports literacy development and the cultivation of essential 21st-century skills, including creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and adaptive communication. Evidence from similar arts-based initiatives suggests that creative instructional approaches can significantly enhance empathy, social awareness, and perspective-taking abilities (Azizah et al., 2025; Hasyim & Sari, 2025), indicating that ventriloquism may produce comparable or even greater educational benefits when applied systematically.

The novelty and significance of this research lie in its rigorous and systematic examination of ventriloquism as a formal instructional method within the Indonesian educational context. To date, its application has been largely confined to therapeutic or clinical settings, or to sporadic and informal classroom use without structured evaluation (Lees et al., 2022; Mills et al., 2016). By providing empirical evidence and structured analysis, this study aims to position ventriloquism as a culturally relevant, adaptive, and pedagogically sound strategy for teaching and learning in Indonesian schools and beyond.

Ultimately, this research not only addresses gaps in the literature on creative and performative pedagogies but also offers a practical framework and clear guidelines for educators seeking to enliven classroom instruction through simple yet impactful methods. In doing so, it aspires to contribute to meaningful educational transformation promoting learning experiences that are engaging, creative, emotionally resonant, and aligned with the complexities of the contemporary world faced by future generations of learners (De Carlo & Limone, 2024, 2025; Siregar et al., 2022).

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore and document the implementation of ventriloquism as an innovative instructional practice conducted by a teacher at SMP Negeri 2 Kotabaru. A case study design is particularly appropriate when the focus of the research is a contemporary phenomenon that is deeply

embedded in its real-life context and cannot be separated from it (Yin, 2018). This approach allows researchers to gain a holistic and in-depth understanding of complex educational practices within specific institutional and social settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Rather than aiming for statistical generalization, this study sought analytical generalization by providing a rich, contextualized description of how and why ventriloquism was effectively applied in classroom learning (Stake, 1995). Through this design, the research captures the interaction between pedagogical innovation, teacher agency, and student engagement within the natural classroom environment.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Kotabaru, a public junior high school where ventriloquism was intentionally integrated into classroom instruction. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of individuals who possessed direct experience and relevant knowledge of the instructional practice under study (Patton, 2015).

The participants consisted of the implementing teacher, selected students, school leaders, and fellow teachers. This diversity of participants enabled the researcher to obtain multiple perspectives on the rationale, implementation, and perceived impact of ventriloquism in classroom learning, thereby enriching the depth and credibility of the findings (Creswell, 2014).

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through three complementary qualitative techniques: in-depth interviews, document analysis, and participant observation. In depth interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, motivations, and perceptions regarding the use of ventriloquism as an instructional strategy. Interviews are particularly effective for capturing participants' subjective meanings and interpretations of educational practices (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

Document analysis involved examining lesson plans, teaching materials, puppets used in instruction, teacher reflection notes, school policy documents, and student academic records. Documents provide stable and unobtrusive sources of data that can support and corroborate findings from interviews and observations (Bowen, 2009).

Participant observation was carried out in the classroom to record teacher behavior, puppet-student interactions, classroom dynamics, and students' cognitive and emotional responses during learning activities. Observation allows researchers to directly examine instructional processes as they occur in natural settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The integration of these three techniques ensured methodological triangulation, which enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research findings (Denzin, 2017).

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection through an iterative and cyclical process. The first stage involved data reduction, including verbatim transcription of interviews, organization of observation field notes, and classification of collected documents. Data reduction is essential for focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data into meaningful analytical units (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Inductive coding was then applied to identify emerging themes such as student participation, teacher motivation, classroom management, and emotional engagement. The second stage involved data display, in which the reduced data were organized into matrices, tables, and descriptive narratives supported by direct quotations and detailed observational excerpts (Miles et al., 2014).

The final stage consisted of conclusion drawing and verification, where patterns and relationships among themes were interpreted and continuously verified through triangulation across data sources. Negative case analysis was also employed to avoid premature conclusions and to enhance analytical rigor (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Interpretation Strategy

Data interpretation emphasized the relationship between ventriloquism as an instructional practice and the broader school context. Consistent findings across interviews, observations, and documents were synthesized into coherent analytical narratives, while divergent data were examined to deepen understanding of the instructional phenomenon (Yin, 2018).

This interpretive strategy enabled the study to capture not only the effectiveness of ventriloquism but also the challenges encountered, adaptive strategies developed by the teacher, and the practical implications for applying similar approaches in other educational contexts (Stake, 1995).

Validity and Reliability of the Study

Validity was enhanced through triangulation of data sources and techniques, as well as member checking. Preliminary findings were shared with key participants to confirm the accuracy and credibility of the interpretations, a process that strengthens qualitative validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Reliability was ensured through systematic documentation of research procedures, repeated reading and coding of the data, and careful verification of consistency across data sources. Maintaining an audit trail further supports the dependability of the research process and findings (Miles et al., 2014).

Through this rigorous methodological design, the study produced findings that are credible, dependable, and meaningful, offering a reliable account of ventriloquism as an instructional innovation in the Indonesian classroom context.

C. Finding and Discussion

1. Finding

a. Impact of Ventriloquism-Based Instructional Innovation

The implementation of ventriloquism-based instructional innovation at SMP Negeri 2 Kotabaru generated a range of significant and positive outcomes in the classroom. Classroom observations indicated a noticeable increase in student enthusiasm and engagement during lessons. Students appeared more attentive, demonstrated focused eye contact with the puppet, and showed greater willingness to participate in discussions. Several students who had previously been passive or hesitant began responding more confidently to questions delivered through the puppet, while overall levels of boredom decreased markedly, particularly in subjects that were previously perceived as difficult.

In addition to increased engagement, the innovation contributed substantially to the development of students' confidence and communication skills. Interaction with the puppet created a psychologically safe space that reduced anxiety and fear of making mistakes. As a result, students became more comfortable asking questions, expressing opinions, and engaging in dialogue. Over time, this confidence extended beyond interactions with the puppet and was reflected in more direct communication with teachers and peers.

The use of ventriloquism also enhanced students' conceptual understanding. Abstract or complex concepts became more accessible when presented through personified characters and storytelling. For instance, historical content delivered by a puppet portraying a grandfather figure was perceived as more personal and meaningful, allowing students to better visualize and internalize the material. Teachers observed that lessons delivered through this approach were more easily remembered, indicating improved knowledge retention and comprehension.

Furthermore, the presence of the puppet contributed to the creation of a more positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere. Learning activities became more relaxed, enjoyable, and welcoming, encouraging students to participate without fear of judgment. Teachers also used the puppet as a subtle and effective tool for managing classroom behavior and addressing sensitive issues in a gentle and well-accepted manner. This approach fostered a supportive learning environment in which students felt emotionally safe and motivated to collaborate.

Finally, the implementation of ventriloquism stimulated greater creativity among teachers. The innovation encouraged educators to move beyond conventional instructional routines and explore more engaging ways of delivering content. Teachers developed unique puppet characters and dialogues tailored to lesson objectives, which enriched instructional design and added a distinctive dimension to classroom interaction. This creative process not only enhanced student learning experiences but also inspired teachers to broaden their repertoire of innovative teaching strategies.

Table 1. Observed Impact of Ventriloquism-Based Instruction

Indicator	Description
Student Engagement	Increased active participation by up to 50%
Classroom Atmosphere	More joyful, relaxed, and interactive learning environment
Confidence and Communication	Students more willing to speak, ask questions, and present ideas
Knowledge Retention	Average formative assessment scores increased by approximately 20%
Emotional Presence	Reduced emotional absenteeism; students more mentally and emotionally present

The puppet functioned as a dialogic partner that facilitated understanding of complex concepts through storytelling and character interaction. Students who were previously reluctant to speak demonstrated greater confidence and participation during classroom activities.

b. Theoretical Alignment and Practical Relevance

The findings indicate that ventriloquism-based instruction aligns closely with constructivist and social learning principles. The puppet served not only as a visual aid but also as an interactive medium that supported dialogue, empathy, and meaning-making. Learning occurred through interaction, imagination, and shared experience, enabling students to actively construct knowledge rather than passively receive information.

From a practical perspective, the innovation is highly relevant to the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly in promoting creativity, character development, and student-centered learning. The approach encouraged active participation, self-expression, and collaborative interaction, demonstrating its potential as a contextual and adaptable instructional strategy within contemporary educational reforms.

c. Challenges and Adaptive Strategies

Despite its positive outcomes, the implementation of ventriloquism-based instruction was not without challenges. One of the primary constraints was the lack of formal training in ventriloquism techniques. To address this limitation, the teacher relied on self-exploration, experimentation, and collaboration with peers to refine performance and instructional delivery.

Resource limitations also posed challenges, particularly in terms of materials and equipment. These constraints were overcome through the creative use of handmade puppets and recycled materials, demonstrating that the innovation could be implemented

at minimal cost. Additionally, curriculum rigidity initially limited the integration of ventriloquism into certain subjects. This challenge was addressed by incorporating the approach into thematic lessons and extracurricular activities, allowing flexibility without compromising curriculum objectives.

Table 2. Challenges and Adaptive Strategies

Challenge	Adaptive Strategy
Lack of formal training	Self-exploration and peer collaboration
Limited resources	Use of handmade puppets and recycled materials
Curriculum rigidity	Integration through thematic and extracurricular activities
Replication barriers	Documentation and sharing of best practices

Despite the absence of formal preparation, the teacher demonstrated adaptive creativity by integrating ventriloquism across subjects using simple resources and reflective practice.

The findings of this study demonstrate that ventriloquism-based instructional innovation represents a powerful and low-cost strategy for transforming traditional classrooms into interactive and engaging learning environments. The approach effectively enhanced student participation, confidence, communication skills, and knowledge retention, while simultaneously fostering a positive classroom atmosphere and stimulating teacher creativity.

By evidencing improvements in engagement, conceptual understanding, and emotional presence, the study highlights the potential of performative instructional methods to support student-centered learning and the broader goals of the Merdeka Curriculum. Future research is recommended to expand the scope of investigation across different subjects, grade levels, and school contexts to examine the scalability and sustainability of this approach. In practical terms, schools and teacher education programs are encouraged to integrate ventriloquism and similar creative strategies into professional development initiatives to equip educators with innovative yet accessible tools for effective teaching and learning.

2. Discussion

a. Ventriloquism as an Interactive Learning Strategy

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that ventriloquism functions as an effective interactive instructional strategy capable of transforming traditionally passive classroom dynamics into active, dialogic, and student-centered learning environments. The observed increase in student engagement, enthusiasm, and participation suggests that ventriloquism successfully addresses one of the most persistent challenges in conventional classroom instruction, namely student disengagement and cognitive passivity. In lecture-dominated classrooms, students often assume the role of passive recipients of information,

which limits opportunities for interaction, reflection, and meaningful knowledge construction. By contrast, ventriloquism introduces an element of surprise, playfulness, and dialogue that immediately captures students' attention and sustains their interest throughout the learning process (Aslamiah et al., 2021).

The interactive nature of ventriloquism aligns strongly with dialogic learning approaches, which emphasize the central role of communication, questioning, and shared meaning-making in effective learning. Through imaginative dialogue and character-based interaction, the puppet invites students to actively respond, ask questions, and reflect on the learning material. This interaction shifts the classroom dynamic from a teacher-centered transmission model to a more participatory learning environment, where students are positioned as active contributors to the learning process rather than passive listeners.

From a constructivist perspective, this finding reinforces the principle that knowledge is constructed through active engagement and social interaction rather than passively received from an authority figure (Creswell, 2014). The puppet serves as a mediating tool that bridges the interaction between teacher and students, reducing hierarchical distance and creating a more approachable learning atmosphere. Students often perceive the puppet as a peer-like or friendly figure, which lowers psychological barriers and encourages more spontaneous participation. As a result, ventriloquism enhances not only behavioral engagement but also cognitive and emotional engagement, both of which are essential for meaningful learning.

b. Enhancement of Student Confidence and Communication Skills

One of the most significant contributions of ventriloquism based instruction identified in this study is its impact on students' confidence and communication skills. The findings indicate that students who were previously hesitant or reluctant to speak in class became increasingly willing to express opinions, ask questions, and engage in dialogue when interacting with the puppet. This transformation highlights the role of ventriloquism as a psychologically supportive medium that reduces fear of negative evaluation and public embarrassment.

This phenomenon can be effectively explained through social learning theory, which posits that learning occurs through observation, modeling, and interaction within a social context (Bandura, 1986). The puppet functions as a model and intermediary, demonstrating appropriate communication behaviors while simultaneously inviting students to participate in a low-risk interaction. By engaging with the puppet rather than directly with the teacher, students experience a sense of emotional safety that encourages experimentation with language and self-expression.

Furthermore, the puppet serves as a non-threatening interlocutor that allows students to practice verbal expression without the pressure often associated with formal classroom discourse. This reduction in anxiety supports findings that emotionally supportive learning environments significantly enhance students' willingness to

communicate and participate actively in learning activities (Frydman & Major, 2024). Over time, the confidence developed through interactions with the puppet gradually transfers to direct communication with teachers and peers. This transfer indicates that ventriloquism can function as a transitional pedagogical tool, helping students build foundational communication skills that extend beyond the immediate instructional context.

c. Contribution to Conceptual Understanding and Knowledge Retention

The discussion of findings further reveals that ventriloquism contributes positively to students' conceptual understanding and long-term knowledge retention. By personifying abstract or complex concepts through characters and storytelling, learning material becomes more concrete, relatable, and emotionally engaging. Students are better able to visualize ideas, connect new information to prior experiences, and construct meaningful mental representations of the content.

This finding aligns with instructional design theory, which emphasizes the importance of multisensory engagement, emotional involvement, and contextualization in strengthening comprehension and memory (Arsyad, 2017). Ventriloquism integrates auditory, visual, and emotional elements, thereby activating multiple cognitive pathways that support deeper learning. The use of narrative through the puppet further enhances this process, as stories provide coherent structures that facilitate understanding and recall.

Cognitive theories of learning suggest that information embedded in narratives is more easily remembered than isolated facts or abstract explanations. When students associate learning content with specific characters, dialogues, and emotional experiences, they form stronger cognitive connections that enhance retention. This finding reinforces previous research demonstrating that creative and performative approaches can significantly improve learning outcomes by making content more meaningful and memorable (Sari & Yuhdi, 2025).

d. Emotional Climate and Inclusive Classroom Environment

Another critical aspect emerging from the findings is the role of ventriloquism in creating a positive, inclusive, and emotionally supportive classroom climate. The presence of the puppet contributed to a relaxed and welcoming learning environment in which students felt safe to participate without fear of judgment or ridicule. Such an emotional climate is fundamental to effective learning, as students' emotional well-being is closely linked to their cognitive engagement, motivation, and academic performance (De Carlo & Limone, 2024).

The teacher's strategic use of the puppet to address classroom behavior, resolve tension, or introduce sensitive topics reflects an emotionally responsive pedagogical approach. Rather than using authoritative or punitive methods, the teacher employed humor, empathy, and indirect communication through the puppet, which was more readily accepted by students. This approach supports the argument that performative and

creative instructional methods can enhance empathy, social awareness, and emotional regulation within the classroom (Hasyim & Sari, 2025).

In this sense, ventriloquism extends beyond its function as a teaching aid and becomes a tool for socio-emotional learning. It helps students develop emotional literacy, empathy, and respectful communication skills, all of which are essential components of holistic education.

e. Teacher Creativity and Professional Growth

Beyond its impact on students, ventriloquism-based instruction also contributes to teacher creativity and professional growth. The findings indicate that the process of designing puppet characters, developing dialogues, and integrating them into lesson plans encouraged teachers to rethink instructional strategies and move beyond content-centered delivery. This shift reflects a more reflective and innovative approach to teaching.

Innovative pedagogical practices such as ventriloquism require teachers to integrate pedagogical content knowledge with creativity, emotional sensitivity, and adaptability. This aligns with contemporary perspectives on teacher professionalism, which emphasize continuous professional development, reflective practice, and responsiveness to student needs (Wirahandayani et al., 2023). Through experimentation and reflection, teachers expand their instructional repertoire and develop greater confidence in implementing creative approaches.

f. Relevance to the Merdeka Curriculum and Educational Practice

The findings and discussion indicate that ventriloquism-based instruction is highly relevant to the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum, which prioritizes student-centered learning, creativity, character development, and meaningful participation. By promoting active engagement, communication, collaboration, and emotional expression, ventriloquism supports the development of essential 21st-century competencies, including creativity, critical thinking, and adaptive communication.

Moreover, the low-cost, flexible, and technology-independent nature of ventriloquism makes it particularly suitable for schools with limited resources. This practical relevance enhances its potential as a scalable and sustainable instructional innovation within the Indonesian educational context, especially in addressing disparities in access to digital learning tools and educational media (Siregar et al., 2022).

g. Challenges and Pedagogical Implications

Despite its many benefits, the discussion also acknowledges several challenges identified in the findings, including limited formal training in ventriloquism techniques and constraints imposed by rigid curricular structures. These challenges highlight the importance of institutional support, targeted professional development, and collaborative learning among teachers.

However, the adaptive strategies employed by the teacher demonstrate that pedagogical innovation does not necessarily require extensive formal training or resources. Instead, innovation can emerge from reflective practice, creativity, and a

willingness to experiment. This suggests that educational institutions should create supportive spaces for experimentation, peer collaboration, and the documentation of best practices to ensure the sustainable implementation of creative instructional methods. Such efforts are consistent with broader calls for flexible, context-sensitive, and learner-centered pedagogical innovation in contemporary education (Yin, 2018).

E. Conclusion

A This study concludes that ventriloquism-based instructional innovation is an effective, low-cost, and adaptable pedagogical strategy for enhancing classroom interaction and learning quality at SMP Negeri 2 Kotabaru. The implementation of this approach improved student engagement, participation, confidence, communication skills, and conceptual understanding by transforming abstract content into dialogic and character-based interactions that reduced anxiety and emotional barriers to learning. In addition, ventriloquism fostered a positive and inclusive classroom climate, encouraged student collaboration, and stimulated teacher creativity and reflective practice without requiring complex technology. The findings also demonstrate strong alignment with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum in promoting student-centered learning, creativity, character development, and 21st-century competencies. Despite challenges related to training and curriculum constraints, ventriloquism shows significant potential as a practical and scalable instructional approach, particularly in resource-limited educational contexts, warranting further research across subjects, grade levels, and long-term learning outcomes.

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