



Developing a Preliminary Learning Syntax Based on Learners' Needs: A Plurilingual Blended Learning Model for Functional English Literacy

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Abstract

Non-formal education in Indonesia plays a strategic role in providing alternative and complementary learning pathways; however, learners in Community Learning Centers (PKBM) remain disadvantaged due to limited functional English and digital literacy. Existing studies on blended learning often prioritize technological integration without addressing learners' plurilingual realities, while English instruction in non-formal settings frequently replicates formal education patterns, resulting in low participation and limited skill relevance. This study addresses this gap by proposing a plurilingual blended learning model grounded in learners' actual needs. A qualitative needs analysis was conducted involving 18 participants (12 learners, 3 tutors, and 3 program coordinators) in a non-formal education setting. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, field observations, and they were analyzed using thematic coding to identify recurring linguistic, pedagogical, and contextual patterns. Findings reveal three core learner needs: (1) context-based communicative tasks that do not rely on partial instruction; (2) scaffolded digital support; and (3) flexible language use integrating local and global languages. These informed the development of a six-phase preliminary learning syntax: learners' language repertoires activation, plurilingual input, collaborative meaning-making, functional English transformation, functional literacy practice, and plurilingual reflection and digital reinforcement. The study is

limited by its small, context-specific sample, affecting generalizability. Nonetheless, it offers practical implications for designing adaptive, inclusive learning models in non-formal education. Future research should test the model's effectiveness through experimental and larger-scale studies.

Keywords: *Plurilingual Pedagogy; Blended Learning; Functional English Literacy; Non-formal Education; Needs Analysis; Learning Syntax; PKBM.*

Introduction

In Indonesia, non-formal education plays a vital role as an alternative and complementary pathway to formal education, particularly through Community Learning Centers (PKBM), training institutions, and learning communities. In Indonesia, non-formal education plays a vital role as an alternative and complementary pathway to formal education, particularly through Community Learning Centers (PKBM), training institutions, and learning communities (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Nomor 81 Tahun 2013 Tentang Pendirian Satuan Pendidikan Nonformal, 2013; UNESCO, 2017a).

However, in reality, learners in non-formal education, such as those in PKBMs, are in the most vulnerable position in this chain of educational disparities due to limitations in English literacy and digital literacy, which serve as gateway skills for understanding and utilizing advanced technology (OECD, 2021; Van Laar et al., 2017). In this context, functional English literacy is not positioned as an academic competency, but rather as both a medium and an indicator of the fulfillment of strategic basic literacy for: accessing global technological information, understanding digital and scientific terminology, and participating in online training and open educational resources (Council, 2018; UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning., 2021).

Normatively, non-formal education is aimed at developing life skills and community empowerment (Kebijakan Pendidikan Kesetaraan Dan Pendidikan Nonformal, 2020). However, this stands in contrast to what actually occurs in the field, where learners focus more on completing the learning program (outcome) than on developing their skills (process). This orientation often shifts the focus of learning from the development of functional competencies toward meeting administrative requirements, resulting in skills relevant to learners' real-life needs not developing optimally (Rogers, 2022). Observations at a Community-Based Learning Center (PKBM) in Nambo subdistrict, Banggai Regency, showed the majority of learners are adolescents and adults with diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Based on these issues, the concept of plurilingual pedagogy is proposed. This is an approach that utilizes the entire linguistic repertoire of these learners as a learning resource. International frameworks such as the CEFR Companion Volume emphasize that plurilingual competence is an integral part of holistic and contextual language proficiency (Hall et al., 2018)]. A number of studies also indicate that plurilingual pedagogy supports the development of more inclusive and meaningful literacy, particularly for adult learners and multilingual communities (Canagarajah, 2021; García & Kley, 2023; Piccardo et al., 2021).

In addition to pedagogical challenges, there are also challenges posed by the uneven dynamics of digital transformation. On the one hand, access to digital devices and social media is becoming increasingly widespread; on the other hand, their use in learning remains limited. For this reason, blended learning has been chosen as a relevant strategy for non-formal education because it offers flexibility in time and place of learning, and enables the use of authentic learning resources that support the development of life skills. However, research indicates that blended learning not supported by a strong pedagogical design tends to be merely a technical combination of face-to-face and online elements without a significant impact on learners' competencies (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019; Hrastinski, 2019; Puentedura, 2020; Rasheed et al., 2020). Therefore, a systematic effort is needed to formulate a pedagogical model capable of bridging the needs of learners, the multilingual reality of Indonesia, and the potential for

utilizing learning technologies to be explored through this study by focusing on exploring the learning needs for functional English literacy in non-formal education from the perspective of plurilingual pedagogy and the implementation of blended learning and proposing certain blended-learning-based plurilingual pedagogical model that can be designed based on the results of an analysis of English learning needs in non-formal education.

Research Methods

Respondents

This study aims to develop a blended-learning-based plurilingual pedagogical model to enhance functional English literacy in non-formal education. Specifically, the study addresses two main objectives: (1) to identify the learning needs for functional English literacy from the perspective of plurilingual pedagogy and blended learning implementation, and (2) to design a pedagogical model based on the results of the needs analysis.

To achieve these objectives, this study employs a Design and Development Research (DDR) approach, situated within the domain of Instructional Design and Educational Research and Development. The study focuses on the initial phases of development, particularly the analysis and design stages, conceptually aligned with the ADDIE Model, which includes Analysis and Design processes. The research instruments consist of observation guidelines, semi-structured interview protocols, and documentation checklists, all designed to capture comprehensive data related to learners' needs, instructional practices, and contextual conditions in non-formal education settings.

The study was conducted in selected non-formal education institutions, including Community Learning Centers (PKBM) and training programs. The participants were purposively selected based on their involvement in the learning process, including learners, tutors/instructors, and institutional administrators. These participants were considered key informants capable of providing in-depth insights into the learning needs and instructional challenges.

Primary data obtained from observations and interviews with learners, tutors, and administrators. Secondary data derived from institutional documents, such as curriculum guidelines, teaching materials, and program reports. They were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to examine the actual teaching and learning processes, learner engagement, and the integration of language use in instructional settings. Field notes were used to document relevant phenomena. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with learners, tutors, and administrators to explore their perspectives on learning needs, challenges, and expectations related to functional English literacy and plurilingual practices. The semi-structured format allowed flexibility in probing deeper into emerging issues. Document analysis was carried out to review relevant institutional records, including syllabi, teaching materials, and program documentation, to triangulate findings from observations and interviews. Then, the data were analyzed using an interactive qualitative analysis model, which involves three concurrent steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, raw data from observations, interviews, and documents were organized, coded, and categorized based on emerging themes related to learning needs and instructional practices. The results of the data analysis in the needs analysis phase were then used as the basis for designing

the blended-learning-based plurilingual pedagogical model in the subsequent development phase.

Results and Discussion

Result

- 1) What are the learning needs for functional English literacy in non-formal education from the perspective of plurilingual pedagogy and the implementation of blended learning?

The empirically identified needs constitute the foundation for the proposed instructional model. These needs inform the design of a six-phase preliminary learning syntax: (1) activation of learners' linguistic repertoires, (2) exposure to plurilingual input, (3) collaborative meaning-making, (4) transformation into functional English, (5) functional literacy practice, and (6) plurilingual reflection supported by digital reinforcement. This sequence demonstrates a systematic alignment between learner needs and pedagogical design, thereby ensuring contextual relevance, instructional coherence, and practical applicability within non-formal education settings.

Then, findings from interviews and observations further substantiate the urgency of integrating flexible and digitally supported learning approaches. One of the key challenges identified is the difficulty of organizing regular face-to-face sessions, as reflected by the PKBM principal:

"The need for digital learning sources is very urgent here since it has been very difficult to gather our PKBM learners for synchronous and offline meetings." (PKBM Principal, translated version)

In addition, although English instruction has been incorporated into existing learning modules, its implementation remains inconsistent and delayed. The English instructor highlighted that the materials had been contextually adapted to diverse learner backgrounds—including fishermen, housewives, and out-of-school adolescents—yet learner participation in English classes remains low:

"We have already used several modules, including English, which I personally designed and adapted to the learners' diverse backgrounds. However, it is still very rare for them to attend English classes regularly." (PKBM English Instructor, translated version)

Interestingly, the data also reveal that learners respond positively to the use of local languages as a pedagogical resource. One instructor noted the successful integration of the Saluan language in teaching mathematics, which increased learner engagement:

"We have very engaging learning experiences when local languages like Saluan are used, for example in teaching mathematics. One of our tutors explains mathematical concepts in Saluan, and the students are very enthusiastic." (PKBM Instructor, translated version)

However, despite the availability of instructional modules, English continues to be perceived as a difficult subject, which discourages learner participation. As a result, the institution tends to prioritize life skills and vocational training programs, such as computer literacy and sewing:

"Although modules have been prepared, it is difficult to encourage learners to study English willingly because it is considered a difficult subject. Therefore, we tend to offer more life skills training, such as computer literacy and vocational skills like sewing." (PKBM Principal, translated version)

These findings highlight a critical gap between instructional provision and learner engagement. They also reinforce the need for an adaptive, plurilingual, and digitally supported instructional model that aligns with learners' socio-cultural contexts, learning preferences, and practical needs.

- 2) How should a blended-learning-based plurilingual pedagogical model be designed based on the results of an analysis of English learning needs in non-formal education?

There are a few factors that are required to ensure effective learning through experience in Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984). A learner should be willingly active to engage in a particular experience. Then, she/he will be able to reflect on the experience, interpret and logically understand the experience through analytical skills, before use the information learnt through the experience by taking appropriate decisions and forming relevant opinions or generalizations. However, experiential learning does explain learning stages in individuals but does not emphasize learning in social groups. Therefore, we propose to extend those four stages in Experiential Learning Theory stages (ELTs) into this Plurilingual Model.

Table 1
Extension Model of Experiential Learning Theory into Plurilingual Model

ELT Stage	Your Plurilingual Extension
Concrete Experience	Experience occurs in multiple languages
Reflective Observation	Reflection may involve L1, L2, or mixed
language Abstract Conceptualization	Concepts negotiated across languages
Active Experimentation	Learners apply knowledge using flexible linguistic

Table 2
Syntactic Phase of the Blended-Learning Based Plurilingual Pedagogy Model

No.	Learning Phase	Learning Activities
1	Language Repertoire Activation	Learners identify and activate their existing linguistic repertoires (local languages, Indonesian, and English) as valuable resources for learning and communication.
2	Plurilingual Exploration (Plurilingual Input)	Learners explore learning materials through multiple linguistic resources using both face-to-face and digital environments, allowing exposure to diverse perspectives and authentic input.
3	Collaborative Meaning Making	Learners collaborate to negotiate meaning, share ideas, and construct understanding by drawing upon their complete linguistic repertoires.
4	Functional English Transformation	Learners transform their multilingual understanding into meaningful and functional communication in English through guided language production activities.
5	Functional Literacy Practice	Learners apply English in authentic real-life tasks that promote functional literacy, problem-solving, and communicative competence.
6	Plurilingual Reflection and Digital Reinforcement	Learners reflect on their learning experiences, evaluate their language use, and reinforce their learning through digital platforms, online resources, or AI-assisted language learning tools.

DISCUSSION

Previous research has shown a shift from a monolingual paradigm toward a plurilingual pedagogy that leverages learners' entire linguistic repertoire as a learning resource to enhance awareness, inclusivity, understanding, and meaningful literacy (Astoria, 2024; Galante, 2022; Hardianti et al., 2021; Piccardo et al., 2021). Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the trend toward blended learning has shown a significant increase, as this approach is considered an effective strategy for supporting students' flexibility and digital literacy in both formal educational settings and the adoption of blended learning in non-formal learning contexts [(Canagarajah, 2021; Hardianti et al., 2022; Kurniawan & Pramana, 2021). In addition, this study fills the gap by developing a blended-learning-based plurilingual pedagogical model grounded in needs analysis for non-formal education.

The main principles of the model proposed start in the phase of understanding all language repertoires of the students. collaborative meaning making, contextual and meaningful learning, digital reinforcement, reflective, transformative. Based on its base, this digital-based plurilingual ecosystem makes use of various resources like E-portfolio, corpus & multilingual resources, online collaboration, AI and language learning tools, educative social media, and digital reflection.

This study set out to examine the learning needs for functional English literacy in non-formal education from the perspectives of plurilingual pedagogy and blended learning, as well as to design an instructional model grounded in those needs. The findings suggest that learners require instruction that is contextually meaningful, digitally supported, and linguistically flexible. Rather than viewing these needs as isolated instructional preferences, they should be interpreted as indicators of a broader shift toward learner-centered, socially situated, and multimodal language learning. This aligns with the original objective of the study, which emphasizes the development of a pedagogical model that is both responsive to learners' realities and theoretically grounded.

From a theoretical standpoint, the identified need for context-based communicative tasks reflects the principles of communicative language teaching and functional literacy, where language is understood as a tool for real-life interaction rather than an abstract system. The preference for holistic, non-fragmented instruction indicates that learners struggle with decontextualized teaching approaches, which often fail to bridge classroom learning with everyday communication. This supports the argument that adult learners, particularly in non-formal settings, benefit from task-based and experience-oriented learning, where meaning precedes form. Thus, the findings reinforce the importance of designing instruction that mirrors authentic communicative situations. The need for scaffolded digital support can be interpreted through the lens of blended learning theory, which emphasizes the strategic integration of technology to enhance face-to-face interaction. This finding suggests that learners do not merely require access to digital tools, but structured guidance in using them effectively. In contrast to studies that assume digital environments inherently promote autonomy, the present study indicates that learners in non-formal education still depend on guided support, particularly due to varying levels of digital literacy. This highlights a critical nuance: blended learning in this context must be adaptive and scaffolded, rather than fully self-directed.

Furthermore, the preference for flexible language use underscores the relevance of plurilingual pedagogy, where learners draw on their entire linguistic repertoire to construct meaning. This challenges traditional monolingual approaches to English

language teaching, which often marginalize local languages. The findings are consistent with recent perspectives that view multilingual practices as cognitive and pedagogical resources rather than barriers. However, unlike some prior studies conducted in formal education settings, this study reveals that plurilingual practices in non-formal education are not only natural but necessary, particularly for learners with diverse linguistic and educational backgrounds. This distinction reinforces the need for pedagogical models that legitimize and strategically integrate multiple languages.

Building on these interpretations, the proposed six-phase learning syntax can be understood as a direct pedagogical response to the identified needs. Each phase reflects a deliberate alignment between theory and practice: activating prior linguistic knowledge, providing meaningful input, facilitating collaborative construction of meaning, transforming knowledge into functional English, reinforcing literacy through practice, and sustaining learning through reflection and digital engagement. Compared to existing instructional models, which often separate language skills or prioritize linear progression, this model adopts a more cyclical and integrative structure. This represents a significant contribution, as it bridges plurilingual pedagogy with blended learning in a way that is specifically tailored to non-formal education contexts.

Overall, the study contributes to the growing body of research advocating for more inclusive, flexible, and context-sensitive language education models. While the findings are largely consistent with existing theories in communicative language teaching, blended learning, and plurilingualism, they also extend these frameworks by situating them within the realities of non-formal education. The differences observed highlight the importance of contextualizing pedagogical innovations. Therefore, the proposed model not only responds to identified learner needs but also offers a practical and theoretically informed framework for enhancing functional English literacy in similar educational settings.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that language learning in non-formal education settings must be grounded in learners' actual communicative realities and learning conditions. The findings highlight three essential needs: the provision of context-based communicative tasks delivered holistically, the integration of scaffolded digital support to enhance learning accessibility, and the adoption of flexible language practices that accommodate the interplay between local and global languages. The needs mentioned reflect not only pedagogical gaps but also the complex linguistic and socio-educational profiles of adult learners, particularly those from vulnerable backgrounds.

In response to these findings, the study proposes a structured yet adaptive instructional model in the form of a six-phase preliminary learning syntax. This includes learners' language repertoire activation, plurilingual input, collaborative meaning-making, functional English transformation, functional literacy practice, and plurilingual reflection with digital reinforcement. The model demonstrates a coherent alignment between needs analysis and instructional design, ensuring that learning processes are context-sensitive, functionally oriented, and pedagogically integrative. In conclusion, this current study contributes to the development of a plurilingual pedagogy-based blended learning model that is both theoretically grounded and empirically informed. It underscores the importance of designing instructional frameworks that are responsive to learners' linguistic diversity, digital realities, and functional literacy demands, thereby offering a relevant approach for strengthening language education in non-formal contexts.

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