

THE EFFECT OF USING ICE BREAKING ON STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN ENGLISH LEARNING IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to discover the effect of using ice breaking activities on students' motivation in learning English. The study was conducted because preliminary observations revealed that many students showed low motivation in English class, often due to boredom, anxiety, and fear of peer judgment. This lack of motivation impacted their participation and learning outcomes. To address this issue, the researcher applied ice breaking as an engaging and interactive teaching strategy to create a fun and comfortable classroom atmosphere.

This research used a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test control group design. The population was eighth-grade students of SMPN 6 Bukittinggi, consisting of 190 students. The sample included two classes: VIII.1 as the experimental class (30 students) and VIII.2 as the control class (30 students). The instrument used was a motivation questionnaire with a 16-item Likert scale. The data were analyzed using SPSS, applying paired sample t-test and independent sample t-test to determine the effect of ice breaking on students' motivation.

The results showed a significant effect of using ice breaking on students' motivation in English learning. The paired sample t-test for the experimental group showed Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000 < 0.05, indicating that H_a was accepted. The independent sample t-test also revealed Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000 < 0.05, confirming a significant difference between the experimental and control classes. These findings indicate that using ice breaking is more effective in improving students' motivation compared to conventional teaching methods.

Keywords: Ice Breaking, Motivation, English Learning, Quasi-Experimental Design

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh penggunaan aktivitas ice breaking terhadap motivasi siswa dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini dilakukan karena observasi awal menunjukkan bahwa banyak siswa memiliki motivasi yang rendah di kelas Bahasa Inggris, seringkali disebabkan oleh rasa bosan, kecemasan, dan takut dinilai oleh teman sebaya. Kurangnya motivasi ini berdampak pada partisipasi serta hasil belajar mereka. Untuk mengatasi masalah tersebut, peneliti menerapkan ice breaking sebagai strategi pembelajaran yang

menarik dan interaktif guna menciptakan suasana kelas yang menyenangkan dan nyaman.

Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuasi-eksperimen dengan rancangan pre-test dan post-test kelompok kontrol. Populasinya adalah siswa kelas delapan SMPN 6 Bukittinggi, yang terdiri dari 190 siswa. Sampelnya meliputi dua kelas, yaitu kelas VIII.1 sebagai kelas eksperimen (30 siswa) dan kelas VIII.2 sebagai kelas kontrol (30 siswa). Instrumen yang digunakan adalah kuesioner motivasi yang terdiri dari 16 item dengan skala Likert. Data dianalisis menggunakan SPSS dengan menerapkan uji t berpasangan (paired sample t-test) dan uji t independen (independent sample t-test) untuk mengetahui pengaruh ice breaking terhadap motivasi siswa.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya pengaruh signifikan penggunaan ice breaking terhadap motivasi siswa dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris. Uji t berpasangan pada kelompok eksperimen menunjukkan nilai Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,000 < 0,05, yang berarti hipotesis alternatif diterima. Uji t independen juga menunjukkan nilai Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,000 < 0,05, yang mengonfirmasi adanya perbedaan signifikan antara kelas eksperimen dan kelas kontrol. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan ice breaking lebih efektif dalam meningkatkan motivasi siswa dibandingkan dengan metode pembelajaran konvensional.

Kata Kunci: Ice Breaking, Motivasi, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, Desain Kuasi-Eksperimen

A. INTRODUCTION

Learning motivation is a key factor in determining student success, especially in English language learning, which is often considered difficult and stressful. In junior high school, low motivation is often evident in a lack of active participation, boredom, and anxiety when speaking in front of the class. This is a serious challenge, especially in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes active student involvement and competency-based learning (Susanto & Syafitri, 2025).

Initial observations at SMPN 6 Bukittinggi show that most students lack motivation in English lessons. They are afraid of being judged by their peers, experience boredom, and

are trapped in a rigid classroom atmosphere. These conditions hinder engagement and academic achievement. Therefore, innovative learning strategies are needed to transform the classroom atmosphere into a more interactive and enjoyable one (Fitria, 2024).

One relevant strategy is the use of ice breaking. This activity can lighten the mood, build positive interactions, and increase students' courage to participate (Fitriani & Melani, 2021). Previous studies have shown the effectiveness of ice breaking in increasing concentration and motivation, but not many have specifically examined it in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum (Keller, 2010).

The research questions in this study are:

1. Is there a significant effect of ice breaking on student motivation in English language learning?
2. Is there a difference in motivation between students taught with ice breaking and without ice breaking?
3. Is the motivation of students taught with ice breaking better than that of students taught with conventional methods?

This study aims to answer these questions and provide scientific contributions in the form of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of ice breaking in the context of junior high schools, thereby enriching English learning strategies in line with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum and the strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile (Kum, 2022).

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Ice Breaking

Ice breaking activities are fun, interactive exercises designed to "break the ice" and eliminate tension in group learning settings (Bambang et al., 2022). Based on Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, social interaction facilitates cognitive development, and ice breaking serves as a bridge that fosters communication and participation in classroom settings.

According to Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, motivation depends on competence, autonomy, and social relatedness (Keller, 2008). Ice breakers primarily support social relatedness by creating a

supportive and connected classroom community, which enhances motivation (Fitrianti & Reflinda, 2024)..

Common ice breaking activities include:

- a. A Round Word: Form new words from a base word to stimulate vocabulary and creativity.
- b. Draw a Word: Students draw words while peers guess, enhancing vocabulary comprehension, especially for visual learners.
- c. Crossword: A collaborative puzzle activity that encourages vocabulary recall and cooperation.

2. Motivation

Motivation is an internal drive or psychological mechanism that propels individuals to achieve their goals (Anita & Kardena, 2021). In learning, motivation affects students' engagement, persistence, and success.

Motivation is classified into:

- a. Intrinsic motivation: Desire to engage in an activity for personal satisfaction and interest.
- b. Extrinsic motivation: Driven by external rewards such as grades or recognition.

Both types are essential in education, and teachers can influence them through strategies including ice breaking, which promotes enjoyment and interaction.

3. Previous Studies

Several studies have found that ice breaking significantly improves student motivation in English learning (Putri Arifani & Loli Safitri, 2023; Rahmayanti et al., 2019). However, most prior research did not focus specifically on the Merdeka Curriculum context nor fully use quasi-experimental designs as in the present study.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test control group. The experimental class received ice breaking treatment, while the control class used conventional methods.

The population was 190 eighth-grade students at SMPN 6 Bukittinggi. Two classes (VIII.1 and VIII.2) were purposively sampled with 30 students each for experimental and control groups, respectively.

Motivation was measured using a 16-item Likert-scale questionnaire, validated by experts and tested for reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.740). The instrument was administered as pre-test and post-test.

Data were collected before and after the treatment. Normality and homogeneity tests confirmed data

suitability for parametric testing. Paired sample t-test analyzed within-group changes; independent sample t-test compared between groups using SPSS.

D. RESULT AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study are derived from the analysis of data collected on students' motivation in learning English, which consisted of pre-test and post-test measurements. The pre-test was administered to determine the students' motivation before the treatment, while the post-test was given after the treatment to observe any changes. The findings are presented in three parts: description of data, data analysis, and hypothesis testing.

1. Hypothesis Testing

- a. First Hypothesis: There is a significant effect of using ice breaking on students' motivation in English learning. Using paired sample t-test, the significance value (2-tailed) was 0.000, which is less than 0.05 (Table 4.6), indicating a significant effect of ice-breaking activities on motivation.

Table 1 Paired Simple Test

Paired Differences				t	df	Sig
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			(2-tailed)

				Low er	Up per			
Pair post xp - 1 posco nt	6.4 00	8.5 93	1.5 69	3.19 1	9.6 09	4.0 80	2 9	.00 0

- b. Second Hypothesis: There is a significant difference between students taught with ice breaking and those taught without ice breaking activities.

Table 2 Independent Simple Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.199	.278	3.900	58	.000	6.400	1.641	3.115	9.685
Hasil Equal variances not assumed			3.900	55.523	.000	6.400	1.641	3.112	9.688

Independent sample t-test results (Table 2) showed a significance value of 0.000, confirming significant differences between the groups.

- c. Third Hypothesis: The motivation of students taught

with ice breaking activities is better than those taught without. The mean post-test score of the experimental class (49.67) was higher than that of the control class (43.27) as shown in Table 4.8, confirming that students

who received ice breaking treatment had better motivation.

Table 3 Paired Simple Statistik

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
postexp	49.67	30	6.994	1.277
Hasil postcont	43.27	30	5.644	1.030

2. DISCUSSION

The study confirms that ice breaking activities effectively enhance students' motivation in learning English by providing a fun and supportive classroom environment. These activities reduce anxiety and boredom, encouraging active participation, consistent with findings from previous research.

The use of Brainstorm Round a Word, Draw a Word, and

Crossword contributed to vocabulary acquisition and critical thinking, making learning more engaging. The positive impact of these activities supports the adoption of ice breaking in curricula aligned with student-centered and competency-based education such as the Merdeka Curriculum.

Group Statistics

kelas	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Kelass exp	30	49.67	6.994	1.277
Kelas contr	30	43.27	5.644	1.030

From the Table above the score of mean score of experiment class was highest than control class. It can be concluded that the students' motivation with students who taught by using ice breaking in experiment class better than the students who taught by using

conventional strategy in control class.

E. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion of this research, it can be concluded that the application of ice breaking activities has a meaningful and positive effect on students'

motivation in learning English. The statistical results, particularly the independent sample t-test and paired sample t-test, confirmed that the use of ice breaking activities is not merely an additional classroom routine, but a strategy that significantly enhances students' interest and willingness to participate in English learning. This finding is crucial because motivation is one of the key factors that determine students' learning outcomes, especially in language acquisition, where persistence, practice, and engagement play a central role.

The results indicated that students who were taught with the integration of ice breaking activities demonstrated higher levels of motivation compared to those who were taught without such activities. The difference in mean scores between the experimental class (49.67) and the control class (43.27) provides clear evidence that students feel more encouraged, enthusiastic, and ready to engage in learning when the classroom atmosphere is supportive, enjoyable, and interactive. This suggests that the psychological and emotional conditions created through ice breaking can play a pivotal role in breaking barriers, reducing anxiety, and fostering a more positive perception toward English learning.

Furthermore, the study revealed a significant difference not only in the level of motivation between the two groups but also in the way students approached the learning process. The experimental group tended to be

more active, cooperative, and open to participation, while the control group, which did not receive ice breaking activities, displayed lower motivation and less engagement. These results highlight the importance of addressing affective factors in teaching, as traditional teaching approaches without attention to classroom dynamics may not fully cater to students' motivational needs.

The implications of these findings are highly relevant for teachers, students, and future researchers. For teachers, the integration of ice breaking should not be viewed as a time-consuming or trivial activity, but rather as a valuable pedagogical tool that can set the tone of the lesson and energize students for learning. However, it is important for teachers to carefully plan and manage the use of ice breaking activities so that they complement the lesson objectives without taking away from instructional time. When implemented effectively, ice breaking can stimulate curiosity, create a sense of belonging, and encourage students to take more initiative in learning English.

For students, the presence of ice breaking activities serves as both a motivator and a reminder that learning can be enjoyable. Students are expected to embrace such opportunities not only to increase their achievement in English but also to develop positive attitudes toward learning in general. A motivated learner is more likely to put in sustained effort, overcome difficulties, and achieve better outcomes.

Finally, for future researchers, this study opens the door for further exploration of innovative techniques to enhance student motivation. While ice breaking proved to be effective, there may be other interactive, student-centered methods that can complement or even surpass its impact. Investigating different approaches, contexts, and student populations will enrich the understanding of how motivation in language learning can be effectively fostered.

In summary, this research reaffirms that motivation is not solely influenced by the content of learning but also by the way it is delivered. Ice breaking activities, when used thoughtfully, create a classroom environment that supports students emotionally, socially, and cognitively, thereby leading to greater engagement and success in learning English.

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