

Students' Perception of Ice Breaking Activities in Seven Grade Students of SMP Plus Aisyah Samawa

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ABSTRACT

English plays a crucial role in the educational context of Indonesia, especially in enhancing students' communication abilities. However, many students, particularly in Islamic boarding schools, often face difficulties in mastering English due to limited practice time, teaching methods, and lack of motivation. This research aimed to explore students' perceptions of the implementation and benefits of ice breaking activities in English learning. The study employed a qualitative descriptive method and was conducted at SMP Plus Aisyah Samawa, involving seventh-grade students. Data were collected through classroom observations, questionnaires distributed to twenty-seven students, and semi-structured interviews with seven selected respondents. The findings revealed that students held very positive perceptions toward ice breaking activities. They considered ice breaking to be enjoyable, motivating, and helpful in reducing anxiety, increasing vocabulary retention, and creating a more engaging classroom atmosphere. Students also reported feeling more confident and enthusiastic in participating during lessons. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that ice breaking activities have a significant positive impact on both the emotional and cognitive aspects of students in English language learning. The implications of this study suggest that teachers should thoughtfully incorporate ice breaking activities into their instructional strategies to foster student engagement and improve learning outcomes in English classes.

Keywords:

Ice breaking activities, Student perception, English learning, Classroom engagement, Motivation

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Introduction

English plays a very important role in the education system in many countries, including Indonesia. This language is used in various aspects of global life, such as communication, education, business, and technology. Aulia, (2023) explained that the ability to communicate in English was an essential need for individuals in various aspects of life. As we knew, English, as the language of instruction for science, has played an important role in the spread, and development of science at the global level. Altbach, (2004) emphasized that English has become a universal language in higher education and research, with many universities around the world using this language to access and produce new knowledge. It opens the door to accessing abundant sources of knowledge. By mastering English, a person can broaden their horizons and increase their educational opportunities.

Furthermore, English is a very important subject in schools around the world. In many educational institutions, English language teaching begins early, with a focus on aspects of grammar, vocabulary, speaking, and writing skills. This strong foundation helps students develop a strong command of the language, which is critical to their academic and professional growth. Piaget, (1955) emphasized that children at an early age are in a phase of exploration and active learning. By introducing English at this stage, they can build critical thinking skills while developing their linguistic skills. This process simultaneously strengthens their academic foundation, preparing them for a better future.

In Indonesia, English is a mandatory subject taught from elementary to intermediate levels. The aim is to improve students' ability to communicate, both in formal and informal situations. According to Brown, (2007), learning English must consider various aspects, including a balance between reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. In line with this, UMAR et al., (2023) state that English has four skills that students need to understand. These skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are a crucial component in the language learning process. Speaking skills help students to communicate effectively in English. The process of learning to speak needs to include various important communication skills. These skills include the use of appropriate sentence structures, deep understanding, and the ability to convey ideas clearly and regularly. Cahyanti et al., (2021) state that speakers must deliver speeches by considering language structure, word choice, intonation, etc. This is important to avoid misunderstandings. Therefore, speaking ability is closely related to two main aspects, namely fluency and accuracy (grammar), in learning to speak.

Even though English language teaching in schools had been carried out with various approaches and methods, students still faced a number of challenges in mastering this language skill thoroughly. Several factors that influenced this situation included less than optimal teaching methods and time constraints. In addition, the lack of opportunities to practice independently often became an obstacle in mastering English. Specifically, in Islamic boarding schools English served as the third language after Indonesian and Arabic. This was a challenge for students in mastering English. Krashen, (1982) explains that effective language teaching requires comprehensible input and adequate time to process language naturally. However, in many schools, especially in Islamic boarding schools, available time was often limited and the focus of learning varied. This condition could prevent students from receiving sufficient input, thereby hindering the development of their English language skills. In addition, conventional teaching methods and a lack of variety in learning

approaches often resulted in boredom among students and difficulty in understanding the material. Moreover, busy activities in Islamic boarding schools meant that students' rest time was not optimal, so many of them felt sleepy during class. Therefore, it is very important to develop appropriate strategies to increase student enthusiasm and motivation, especially in learning English. Ellis, (1997) states that mastering a third language requires a different learning approach, because students must manage interference from their first and second languages. By implementing interesting and innovative strategies, it was hoped that students would be more enthusiastic and enthusiastic in participating in the learning process.

The strategy to raise students' enthusiasm and motivation in learning English is the use of "*ice breaking*" activities. Several studies explained the benefits of implementing ice breaking in the classroom. Ghifarah & Pusparini, (2023) explained that the purpose of ice breaking is to encourage the creation of a positive learning environment so that the learning process becomes effective. It was observed that before implementing ice breaking, students tended to be sleepy and bored in learning. Then, after implementing the ice breaker, students became enthusiastic and enthusiastic about learning. Ice breaking activities were very important to support the learning process so that the class atmosphere became more enjoyable and not boring. In other research conducted by Rusman, (2022) it was shown that ice breaking activities supported enjoyable learning, helped build a conducive classroom atmosphere and triggered students' interest and motivation towards their academic tasks.

Considering the influence of ice breaking in increasing student motivation, students perceptions of this activity were considered very important. Martela, (2020) defined perception as the process by which students interpreted and understood learning situations based on their personal experiences and context. Student perceptions were influenced by factors such as self-confidence, motivation, and social interactions in the classroom. If students saw ice breaking as an activity that was fun, useful, and relevant to their learning process, they tended to participate actively. Hattie, (2009) showed that students' perceptions of success and supporting learning factors, such as feedback and support from teacher, can increase their motivation to learn. Thus, this positive perception had the potential to encourage students to be more confident in participating in the next lesson. Ultimately, this contributed to better language attainment and retention.

Based on previous research, it was concluded that ice breaking activities had significant benefits for students, especially in increasing motivation and encouraging their active participation in class. Thus, when receiving lessons, students were able to more easily understand the material presented by the teacher. Although many had researched the benefits of ice breaking activities, only a few had specifically examined students' views regarding these activities in the context of English language learning, especially in Islamic boarding schools. Therefore, this research aimed to gain a deeper understanding of students' perceptions of the use of ice breaking activities in learning English at SMP Plus Aisyah Samawa.

Based on the background, the focus of this study is directed toward two main problems, namely:

- a) What are students' perceptions of the application of ice breaking in English language learning in the classroom?
- b) What are students' perceptions of the benefits of ice breaking in learning English?

METHODE

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method with a basic interpretive study design to explore students' perceptions of ice breaking activities in English learning. The research was conducted at SMP Plus Aisyah Samawa involving seventh-grade students of class VII-B. Furthermore, data were collected through three instruments: observation, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. The observation aimed to document student participation during ice breaking sessions. The researcher distributed questionnaires to 27 students in class VII-B using a likert scale. Interviews were conducted with 7 students who gave positive responses to further explore their perceptions. Data were analyzed using Miles & Huberman, (2014)model, which involves three interactive components. The first is data reduction, where raw data are selected and simplified to focus on relevant information. Then, the data are displayed in the form of narratives or tables to make it easier to interpret and analyze. Finally, conclusions are drawn and verified by interpreting the data to identify key patterns or meanings and cross-checking findings with relevant theories and previous studies. Moreover, the questionnaire results were presented in percentages, while the interview and observation data were analyzed thematically to identify common patterns in students' perceptions of ice breaking activities in English learning.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

FINDING

This section presents the results of the research conducted at SMP Plus Aisyah Samawa, focusing on students' perceptions regarding the implementation and benefits of ice breaking activities in English language learning. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations

1. Students'perception

The questionnaire consisted of 15 statements assessed using a Likert's scale (Agree, Neutral, Disagree)and was distributed to 27 students of class VII-B. The results showed that the majority of students had a positive perception toward ice breaking activities.

Table1

Percentage of students' perception questionnaire towards ice breaking activities of class VII-B students

No	Statement	A	N	D
1.	Ice breaking is a fun activity.	93.30%	3.70%	0%
2.	Ice breaking is important to use in learning English.	77.78%	22.22%	0%
3.	The use of ice breaking can help students become more relaxed.	96.30%	3.70%	0%
4.	Ice breaking can increase students' learning motivation.	96.30%	3.70%	0%
5.	Ice breaking can help improve students' understanding in learning English.	96.30%	3.70%	0%
6.	Ice breaking helps students to increase their English vocabulary.	100%	0%	0%
7.	Student anxiety can be reduced by icebreaking activities.	81.48%	11.11%	7.41%
8.	Ice breaking makes the classroom atmosphere more fun and less boring.	100%	0%	0%
9.	The application of ice breaking can increase students' self-confidence.	81.48%	18.52%	0%
10.	Ice breaking makes me more active in following English Lessons until the end.	92.59%	7.41%	0%
11.	Students are more enthusiastic about participating in learning after ice breaking.	92.59	7.41%	0%
12.	Ice breaking makes me feel closer to the English teacher.	77.78%	22.22%	0%

13.	I feel more interested in learning English because of the ice Breaking activities.	100%	0%	0%
14.	I find it easier to remember the lesson material after participating in ice breaking.	88.89%	11.11%	0%
15.	Ice breaking helps me understand the teacher's instructions faster.	100%	0%	0%

The results showed a consistently high percentage of agreement, indicating that students perceive ice breaking as not only enjoyable but also effective in increasing motivation, vocabulary retention, participation, confidence, and understanding.

Supporting Data from Interviews

Seven students were interviewed to gain deeper insights. They expressed that ice breaking:

- Helped develop their interest and enthusiasm for English lessons.
- Increased their motivation by reducing boredom and sleepiness.
- Made vocabulary easier to understand and remember.

"Iya, awal nya saya kurang menyukai pelajaran Bahasa Inggris, tapi ketika ada Ice Breaking saya jadi menyukai Bahasa Inggris." (student 4).

"Iya Ms saya setuju sekali, karena Ice breaking benar-benar dapat menambah pemahaman kosakata Bahasa Inggris. Jadi banyak kosakata yang kita hafal dan dapat kita praktekkan dengan mudah." (student 2).

Iya benar ,Ms. Karena Ice breaking membuat kita lebih semangat dalam belajar dan menghilangkan rasa malas, dan ngantuk saat jam belajar. Dan Ice breaking membuat kita lebih semangat dan termotivasi untuk memahami pelajaran." (Student 5).

These qualitative findings reinforce the results of the questionnaire, showing that emotional and cognitive benefits from ice breaking are widely experienced by students.

Findings from Classroom Observations

Direct observations confirmed that:

- Students were highly active during ice breaking activities.
- The classroom atmosphere became more dynamic and friendly.
- Even previously quiet students showed increased participation.
- Ice breaking fostered positive teacher-student interaction and classroom inclusivity.

These findings highlight that icebreaking not only refreshes students emotionally but also prepares them cognitively for more effective learning.

DISCUSSION

From the data collection, several important points were found that helped understand the focus of this research. It was important to remember that the focus of this research was students' perception of the role of ice breaking activities and their benefits in learning English.

Table 2

Percentage of students' perception questionnaire towards icebreaking activities of class VII-B students

No	Statement	A	N	D
1.	Ice breaking is a fun activity.	93.30%	3.70%	0%
2.	Ice breaking makes the classroom atmosphere more fun and less boring.	100%	0%	0%
3.	Ice breaking can increase students' learning motivation.	96.30%	3.70%	0%
4.	Ice breaking helps students to increase their English vocabulary.	100%	0%	0%
5.	Student anxiety can be reduced by ice breaking activities.	81.48%	11.11%	7.41%

The table illustrates that students generally view ice breaking activities in a positive light. It indicated that 93.30% or 26 students agreed that ice breaking was a fun activity. In addition, 100% or 27 students agreed that ice breaking could create a more cheerful and less boring classroom atmosphere. These two results supported the findings of previous research which stated that "the use of ice breaking could create a more enjoyable learning atmosphere" (Solihat et al., 2020). In addition, 96.30% or 26 students agreed that ice breaking could increase their motivation in learning English. This finding was in line with the results of previous research conducted by Ghifarrah & Pusparini, (2023) which stated that ice breaking was an effective strategy to increase students' learning motivation.

Furthermore, 100% or 27 students agreed that ice breaking could enrich their English vocabulary. This finding was in line with research conducted by Yeganehpour & Takkaç, (2016) who said that ice breaking had a positive impact on the development of students' vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. In addition, 81.48% or 22 students agreed that ice breaking could reduce students' anxiety. This finding was consistent with previous research by Shavoun et al., (2024) which showed that ice breaking created a positive atmosphere, reduced anxiety, and encouraged social interaction between students.

Furthermore, ice breaking activities in English learning were explored further through interviews conducted after students filled out the questionnaire. From the interviews, the researcher found students' viewed on the benefits of ice breaking activities. They agreed that ice breaking could grow their interest and enthusiasm in learning English. This finding were in line with Rusman, (2022) opinion which indicated that ice breaking could increase students' interest and motivation to learn and create a fun and energetic learning environment. Furthermore, ice breaking could also improve understanding in learning English. Furthermore, Students' agree that ice breaking could help them deepen their understanding in learning English. This finding showed that ice breaking activities not only affected the emotional side such as motivation and enthusiasm for learning, but also provided benefits in terms of cognition, especially in mastering English vocabulary. This statement was in accordance with Mahmud et al., (2023) who stated that other benefits of ice breaking include increasing vocabulary, deep speaking of English, and enthusiasm for learning.

The observation results showed that students were actively and enthusiastically involved during the ice breaking activities, following the teacher's instructions with cheerful expressions and greater readiness to engage in the lesson. The classroom atmosphere, which was initially passive, became more dynamic, friendly, and interactive, with increased student confidence in answering questions and completing tasks. Even students who were usually quiet began to participate actively, indicating that ice breaking can create an inclusive learning environment and enhance emotional engagement. This finding aligns with the research by Mahmud et al., (2023), which stated that ice breaking plays an important role in fostering a positive learning atmosphere and strengthening

students' emotional and cognitive readiness to face English learning, which requires concentration, confidence, and active participation.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that students had a very positive perception of ice breaking activities in English language learning. Ice breaking was proven to enhance motivation, engagement, self-confidence, and students' understanding of the material. Therefore, teachers are advised to integrate ice breaking into their teaching strategies in a well planned manner and in accordance with students' characteristics. Further researchers are advised to expand the scope of the research to different schools or levels, and to examine the effectiveness ice breaking in more depth from the perspective of improving students' learning outcomes or English language skills.

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