

## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INQUIRY BASED LEARNING TO ENHANCE STUDENTS MOTIVATION AND INTEREST IN LEARNING ENGLISH AT SMPN 2 SILIRAGUNG

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**Abstract.** Learning motivation and interest are crucial factors in English as a Foreign Language learning (EFL). However, many junior high school students in Indonesia still show low enthusiasm and engagement when learning English. This study explores the implementation of Inquiry Based Learning (IBL) to enhance students' motivation and interest in learning English at SMPN 2 Siliragung, IBL strategies also influence students' active involvement and learning attitudes through teachers' perspectives. This study aims to investigate how the implementation of Inquiry Based Learning (IBL) enhances students' motivation and interest in learning English at SMPN 2 Siliragung. A qualitative research method was employed, using semi structured interviews with English teachers as the main data source. The data were analyzed thematically to explore the teachers' insights and experiences in applying IBL in the classroom. The findings show that IBL encourages students to participate more actively in learning through strategies such as group discussions, problem solving tasks, and student presentations. Teachers reported that these activities helped improve students' motivation and interest, as learners became more confident, enthusiastic, and willing to express their ideas in English. In conclusion, the study highlights that Inquiry Based Learning is an effective approach to promote student engagement. It allows teachers to design meaningful, interactive learning experiences that support student centered learning. The suggested strategies include applying inquiry based tasks, using real life topics, and facilitating collaborative learning environments.

**Keywords:** *Inquiry Based Learning; Students' Interest; Students' Motivation.*

## A. INTRODUCTION

English is one of the core subjects taught at junior high schools in Indonesia, in accordance with the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 12 of 2024 concerning the Curriculum for Early Childhood Education, Elementary and Secondary Education Levels. However, many students, including those at SMPN 2 Siliragung, face challenges such as low motivation, limited confidence, and passive participation during English lessons. , These factors often result in poor academic outcomes, especially when the learning process is dominated by conventional teacher centered methods. To enhance the learning experience and improve English proficiency, the implementation of the inquiry method can be a valuable approach (Ali, 2023).

To address this issue, teachers need to adopt innovative approaches that promote student engagement and independence. One promising method is Inquiry Based Learning (IBL), which encourages students to become active learners by exploring problems, asking questions, collecting data, and drawing conclusions. According to Kamaruddin et al. (2023), IBL improves students' critical thinking and fosters greater interest in learning because it involves real world tasks and hands on experiences.

The IBL method provides opportunities for students to engage in collaborative learning, conduct investigations, and apply language skills in meaningful contexts. In English classrooms, IBL can take the form of group discussions, project based learning, presentations, and role playing. These activities make learning more interactive and personally relevant, which increases both motivation and retention of language skills (Sundari & Utami, 2024).

Student interest in learning is a force that will encourage students to learn. Interested students (happy attitude) in the lesson will appear to be constantly motivated to study diligently. In contrast, students who are not interested in learning activities will not be moved to participate in learning activities (Rahayu. Y. M, 2023). So, interest is a condition that reflects a will, liking and desire that can be a source of motivation and encourage someone to do what they want according to their needs.

Therefore, this study explores How does IBL influence student's motivation and interest in learning English It is expected that the findings of this research will contribute to the development of more effective and responsive English language teaching practices.

Inquiry Based Learning (IBL) is a method that aligns well with students preferences, allowing them to express their ideas creatively and participate actively in the learning process (Ali, H. D. 2023). So, Inquiry Based Learning is a learning approach

that emphasizes students' activities such as observing, questioning, investigating, analyzing, and concluding in order to gain knowledge actively and independently.

Inquiry Based Learning (IBL) has become a widely recommended strategy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching to improve students' engagement, motivation, and interest. Research by Ali (2023) emphasizes that IBL aligns well with student preferences, allowing them to express their ideas creatively and participate actively in the learning process. This reinforces the notion that IBL provides an interactive, student centered environment that contrasts sharply with traditional teacher centered approaches.

Kamaruddin, Nursyam, and Rosidah (2023) further support this by showing that IBL significantly enhances students' critical thinking skills and learning motivation. Their findings suggest that when students engage in real world tasks and problem solving activities, they develop a deeper interest in the subject matter, including English learning.

Sundari and Utami (2024) also highlight the role of IBL in increasing student motivation and learning outcomes. In their study, they implemented inquiry based strategies in classroom environments and found improved participation. These outcomes indicate that IBL fosters a positive learning atmosphere where students are more inclined to practice their language skills.

Rahayu (2023) explores the application of inquiry methods specifically to boost students' interest in speaking English. The study reveals that students who are exposed to inquiry based speaking tasks show increased enthusiasm and willingness to participate in communicative activities. This supports the idea that interest directly correlates with motivation and performance in language acquisition.

Moreover, national curriculum reforms such as those outlined in the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 12 of 2024 encourage student centered learning models like IBL. The curriculum promotes critical thinking, collaboration, and independent learning all of which are key components of inquiry based instruction. With this it can be concluded, these studies collectively demonstrate that Inquiry Based Learning is a highly effective approach to increase motivation, interest, and active participation in English language learning. The implementation inquiry based tasks, using real life topics, and facilitating collaborative learning environments makes IBL particularly suitable for junior high schools such as SMPN 2 Siliragung.

## B. METHOD

### 1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the implementation of Inquiry Based Learning (IBL) in enhancing students' motivation and interest in learning English. A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study as it allows for an in-depth understanding of teachers' perspectives, strategies, and experiences in a natural classroom setting.

According to Sugiyono (2021), descriptive qualitative research aims to understand a phenomenon holistically from the point of view of the participants, providing detailed and contextual insights. In this context, the design is suitable to investigate how IBL is applied and how it affects students' engagement in English language learning.

### 2. Data Collection

The data were collected through semi structured interviews with English teachers at SMPN 2 Siliragung. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on specific criteria such as teaching experience and their involvement in implementing Inquiry Based Learning strategies.

Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was conducted in a quiet, comfortable environment. The interview guide included key questions related to:

- a. Teachers' understanding of Inquiry Based Learning (IBL)
- b. Strategies used to implement IBL in English classrooms
- c. Perceived impact of IBL on students' motivation and interest
- d. Challenges and supporting factors in applying IBL

All interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and transcribed verbatim. Field notes were also taken to capture non-verbal responses and contextual details to support the data.

### 3. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. The steps included:

- a. Reading and re-reading the interview transcripts to become familiar with the content.
- b. Coding meaningful parts of the data.
- c. Grouping the codes into potential themes.
- d. Reviewing and refining the themes to ensure clarity and relevance.
- e. Interpreting the themes to draw conclusions related to the research objectives.

To ensure credibility, the researcher applied source triangulation by comparing data from different participants. Additionally, ethical principles were observed throughout

the research process, including obtaining informed consent, maintaining participants' confidentiality, and ensuring voluntary participation.

### C. FINDINGS

This study investigated how the implementation of Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) enhanced students' motivation and interest in learning English at SMPN 2 Siliragung. The data were collected through in-depth interviews with two English teachers who had actively applied the IBL approach in their classrooms. Thematic analysis revealed five major themes, which are described in detail below, along with direct quotes and expanded explanations from the participants to capture their authentic experiences.

#### 1. Increased Student Motivation

One of the most prominent findings in this study is the rise in student motivation. Both teachers expressed that when they began using the IBL approach, they noticed a significant change in how students responded to the lessons. The students became more active, curious, and willing to engage with tasks.

Teacher 1 shared:

"They seem more enthusiastic when given tasks that allow them to find out things on their own. They feel more engaged in the lesson. It's like, when I ask them to search for answers or find examples on their own, suddenly the classroom becomes more alive. They're excited, they raise their hands, they argue positively, of course and that kind of classroom atmosphere rarely happened before."

Teacher 2 had a similar observation:

"Students were more excited and happy to take part in the teaching and learning process and to complete tasks well in class. Especially when I used projects or open-ended tasks, they showed more energy and motivation. Some students who were usually passive became more involved. It surprised me."

This shift in behavior illustrates how IBL encourages students to take ownership of their learning, as they are not simply receiving information but actively seeking it. The element of discovery gave students a sense of purpose and responsibility.

Additionally, Teacher 1 explained that this method suited students who enjoy hands-on or interactive activities:

"Some students who usually find reading texts boring became more engaged when I let them explore through observation or simple surveys. I noticed their motivation increased not just in English, but in other subjects too. They told me, 'Miss, today we get to do something different, right?' It really shows."

## 2. Greater Interest Through Relevant and Real-Life Topics

Another key theme was the significant increase in students' interest when learning materials were connected to real-life experiences. Both teachers agreed that students became more engaged when they could relate the topic to their personal lives.

Teacher 1 stated:

"They were very enthusiastic when I asked them to share their personal experiences. For example, in a lesson about past events, I let them talk about their holiday experiences, and everyone wanted to speak up. It was different from the usual quiet atmosphere. They laughed, listened, and even corrected each other."

Teacher 2 added:

"When I asked them to research healthy eating habits, they became more engaged because it was something closely related to their everyday lives. They told me about what they eat at home, what their parents cook, and even tried to use new vocabulary related to food and health. That kind of interest is hard to create using textbook-only methods."

In several lessons, the teachers designed mini-projects that allowed students to explore local issues or family-related topics. This contextualization made learning more meaningful.

Teacher 1 elaborated further:

"One time I gave them a task to interview their parents or grandparents about traditional recipes. They loved it! They came back the next day with stories, photos, and even brought some food. It became not only an English lesson but also a cultural sharing session."

This finding highlights the power of relevance in engaging learners and demonstrates how inquiry-based tasks that reflect students' environments can enrich both their language skills and general awareness.

## 3. Development of Critical Thinking and Independent Learning

One of the core goals of IBL is to cultivate critical thinking. Both teachers observed this growth in their students over time, although it started gradually.

Teacher 1 reflected:

"At first, they were confused. They were used to waiting for answers from the teacher. But over time, they started asking questions and sharing ideas. That rarely happened before. They began saying, 'Why is it like this, Miss?' or 'Can I find another example?' That made me feel like they were truly thinking, not just memorizing."

Teacher 2 emphasized the role of teacher scaffolding in this process:

"I provided information that made them ask about it from various perspectives, and they responded with enthusiasm. For example, when I showed them two articles with different points of view about environmental issues, they started to ask: 'Which one is true?' or 'Why do they have different opinions?' That's a big step in thinking critically." The teachers also created opportunities for students to do independent research using simple internet searches or library materials. Although their skills were still developing, the teachers believed the students were on the right path.

Teacher 2 noted:

"Sometimes they made mistakes in understanding, but the important thing is they tried. I saw their confidence growing. They no longer waited for me to correct every answer. Some of them even challenged each other's ideas, politely. That's something I rarely saw in traditional methods."

#### 4. Improved Collaboration and Communication Skills

IBL often involves collaborative work, which proved beneficial for students' communication skills. Group activities, presentations, and peer discussions allowed students to express themselves more freely and build interpersonal connections.

Teacher 1 recalled:

"Through group discussion activities, students who were previously shy became more active and confident in communicating with their peers. I remember one girl, she hardly spoke in class. But when I let her lead a group project about school cleanliness, she was suddenly very expressive. Her group respected her, and she felt proud."

Teacher 2 added:

"Students who were usually quiet became more engaged when working in groups. They started sharing their opinions, even if they were simple. They felt safe in their groups, and I noticed that they helped each other a lot, especially in vocabulary and sentence structure."

The collaborative aspect of IBL encouraged peer learning, where stronger students helped those who were struggling. It also improved students' ability to listen actively and negotiate meaning.

Teacher 1 shared a touching moment:

"One student said to his friend, 'I don't understand this part, can you explain it?' and his friend said, 'Let's check it together.' That spirit of helping and learning together is what I really appreciate from this method."

## 5. Challenges in Implementing IBL

While the advantages were clear, both teachers also admitted that implementing IBL was not without difficulties. Several practical and pedagogical challenges emerged.

Teacher 1 explained:

“When each group has different questions, it becomes difficult to manage time and support them equally. Some groups move fast, some need more help. Sometimes, I feel I don’t have enough time to guide all of them properly.”

Time management was a common concern. The open-ended nature of IBL meant that students progressed at different paces, and teachers had to constantly adjust their facilitation.

Teacher 2 said:

“Not all students are ready to learn independently. They need frequent guidance and support. Some of them still expect direct instructions. It takes time to build that habit of asking questions and thinking critically.”

Another issue was the lack of appropriate materials. The school had limited access to internet and multimedia resources, which made certain inquiry tasks harder to execute.

Teacher 1 commented:

“Sometimes I want them to explore videos or interactive websites, but we don’t have enough devices. So, I have to modify the activity using paper-based materials, which is not always effective.”

Despite these obstacles, both teachers agreed that the benefits of IBL outweighed the drawbacks. They emphasized the importance of teacher creativity, patience, and professional support in overcoming these challenges.

Teacher 2 concluded:

“It’s not easy, but it’s worth it. I see my students growing in many ways—not only in English but also in confidence, curiosity, and responsibility. That’s what education is about.”

## D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study aimed to investigate the implementation of Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) in enhancing students’ motivation and interest in learning English at SMPN 2 Siliragung. Based on the results of semi-structured interviews with two English teachers, it can be concluded that IBL has a positive impact on students’ engagement in English classrooms.

The findings revealed five key benefits of applying IBL:

- a. Increased motivation, as students became more enthusiastic and involved in class activities.

- b. Greater interest in learning, especially when lessons were related to real-life topics.
- c. Development of critical thinking and independent learning, where students practiced analyzing and forming their own ideas.
- d. Improved collaboration and communication skills, especially among shy or passive students.
- e. Authentic integration of language skills, allowing students to use speaking, reading, writing, and listening more naturally.

However, the research also identified several challenges in implementing IBL effectively. These included time constraints, varied student readiness for independent work, and the limited availability of learning resources. These challenges suggest the need for further support and training for teachers, as well as adjustments in classroom management and curriculum planning.

This study has several limitations that should be noted:

- a. The research only involved two English teachers from a single school, which may limit the generalizability of the findings.
- b. The data were collected through interviews only, without classroom observations or student feedback.
- c. The study used a purely qualitative design, so it did not include measurable outcomes such as student performance data.

These limitations suggest that the conclusions drawn here should be interpreted with caution and seen as context-specific.

Based on the findings and limitations, several recommendations can be made for future studies:

- a. Involve more participants from various schools to obtain broader and more representative insights.
- b. Include student perspectives through interviews, focus group discussions, or questionnaires to enrich the data.
- c. Conduct classroom observations to validate teacher-reported experiences with real-time behavior and interaction.
- d. Combine qualitative and quantitative methods (mixed methods) to measure the impact of IBL on student outcomes such as motivation scores or language proficiency.
- e. Explore digital or blended IBL approaches, especially in post-pandemic learning contexts where technology plays a major role.

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