



IMPLEMENTATION OF INQUIRY LEARNING IN ENGLISH LEARNING TO INCREASE THE LEARNING ACTIVITY OF GRADE VII STUDENTS OF TAHFIDZ DARUL QUR'AN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study aims to investigate the implementation of the Inquiry Learning model in improving the learning activeness of seventh-grade students in English learning at Tahfidz Darul Qur'an Junior High School. The study was conducted based on the low participation and passive learning behavior of students during English classes.

Methodology – This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach using a case study design. The participants consisted of one English teacher and eight seventh-grade students selected purposively based on their level of learning activeness. Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation studies. The research procedures included classroom observation during the implementation of Inquiry Learning, interviews with teachers and students, and analysis of learning documents and reflection journals. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The validity of the data was ensured through source and technique triangulation.

Findings – The findings revealed that before the implementation of Inquiry Learning, students tended to be passive, lacked confidence, and rarely participated in classroom discussions. After the implementation, students showed significant improvement in learning activeness, including increased participation, confidence in asking questions, involvement in group discussions, and oral communication skills in English. The Inquiry Learning stages successfully created a more interactive and student-centered learning environment. The study concludes that Inquiry Learning effectively enhances students' learning activeness and motivation in English learning.

Novelty – This study provides originality by exploring the implementation of Inquiry Learning qualitatively in a tahfidz-based junior high school context, which has rarely been investigated in previous studies.

Significance – The findings of this study are beneficial for English teachers, researchers, and educational institutions, especially Islamic boarding school-based schools, in developing active and student-centered learning strategies.

Keywords: English; Inquiry learning; Junior high school; Learning activeness; Qualitative research

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1. Introduction

Education is the main foundation in shaping a competent and competitive generation in the global era. Education not only functions as a process of knowledge transfer, but also plays a role in developing 21st century competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration of students (Departing et al., 2021). In line with (Scott, 2021) The learning process at school is not only oriented towards mastering the material, but also plays a role in shaping the character of students and developing social and academic interaction skills. Therefore, innovative learning approaches and strategies are very important in improving the quality of education in an era that continues to develop.

In the context of learning, choosing the right model can encourage active student engagement as well as maximize their learning potential. The application of active and contextual learning approaches, such as Inquiry Learning, provides opportunities for students to build knowledge independently through the process of inquiry and discovery (S. P. Salsabila & Syaban, 2022) . This not only deepens students' understanding of the material, but also enhances their ability to think critically and communicate.

English learning at the junior high school (SMP) level has a strategic role in equipping students to face global challenges. Based on several recent studies, the low speaking ability of students shows that English learning in Indonesia still faces obstacles in building students' confidence and active oral communication (Doorvina, 2021) . This condition is exacerbated by teaching methods that tend to be passive and dominated by teacher activities, so that it does not provide space for students to actively participate in learning.

Based on initial observations at Tahfidz Darul Qur'an Junior High School, the learning activity of grade VII students in learning English is still relatively low. Most students tend to be passive, do not dare to ask questions, and lack enthusiasm in participating in learning activities. This phenomenon reflects the difference between curriculum expectations and the reality of implementing learning in the classroom, especially in creating active and communicative learning (S. P. Salsabila & Syaban, 2022).

The Inquiry Learning learning model is one of the solutions that can overcome these problems. In line with the opinion, the Inquiry Learning Approach can increase student learning activities because students are directly involved in the process of observation, exploration, investigation, and conclusion of learning concepts (Agustina & Setyawan, 2022). Inquiry-based English learning is able to increase students' active participation because students are involved in the process of asking questions, exploring, and using language directly in learning activities (Dawiyah, n.d.).

Previous research has shown that the Inquiry Learning model is able to increase student activity in various subjects, including English. However, most of the research still focuses on urban public schools and has not explored much of the implementation of this model in depth in pesantren or tahfidz-based schools, especially through qualitative studies that explore experiences, perceptions, and learning processes holistically. This research offers a novelty by qualitatively examining the implementation of Inquiry Learning at Tahfidz Darul Qur'an Junior High School.

Based on this background, the formulation of the problem in this study is: (1) What is the initial condition of students' activity in English learning before the implementation of the Inquiry Learning model? (2) What is the process of implementing the Inquiry Learning model in English learning in grade VII? (3) What is the impact of the implementation of Inquiry Learning on students' active English learning?

2. Methods

The qualitative research method with a case study design was chosen because it was able to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of learning and the experience of the research subject in a natural situation (S. D. Salsabila, n.d.). The qualitative approach is considered the most appropriate considering that researchers seek to understand phenomena from the perspective of participants, not just measuring or quantifying changes in scores.

The research was carried out at SMP Tahfidz Darul Qur'an, with participants consisting of one English teacher in grade VII and eight students who were selected purposively based on variations in the level of learning activity (active, moderately active, and less active). In line with (Lenaini, 2021) The selection of participants was purposively carried out to obtain rich, in-depth data, and in accordance with the research objectives because participants were selected based on certain criteria relevant to the research focus.

Data collection is carried out through three main techniques, namely:

1. Participatory observation: the researcher directly observed the learning process in the classroom during the application of the Inquiry Learning model, focusing on indicators of student learning activity such as participation, interaction, question submission, and presentation.
2. In-depth interviews: conducted in a semi-structured manner with selected teachers and students to explore their perceptions, barriers, and experiences during the implementation of the Inquiry Learning model.
3. Documentation study: includes analysis of the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP), field notes, teacher reflection journals, and student work results as supporting evidence of active learning.

Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive data analysis model emphasizes an ongoing process of analysis through data collection, data reduction or condensation, data presentation, and verification of Conclusions (Pos, n.d.). The validity of the data is ensured through triangulation of sources and techniques, namely by comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation to ensure the consistency and credibility of the findings.

3. Results

3.1. Initial Student Activity Conditions Before the Implementation of Inquiry Learning

Before the Inquiry Learning model was applied, the results of observations and interviews showed that the learning activity of grade VII students of SMP Tahfidz Darul Qur'an in learning English was still very low. The majority of students tend to be silent, avoid eye contact with teachers, and do not dare to express opinions or ask questions spontaneously. This is confirmed by the statement of the English teacher during the interview:

"Before I tried the different models, the classroom atmosphere was very quiet. Students only answer if asked directly, sometimes it is just a nod of the head. They are afraid of making mistakes, afraid of being laughed at by friends."

Classroom observation also showed that interaction in learning was dominated by teachers, while students played more roles as passive recipients of information. Students rarely ask questions independently, and group discussions hardly occur without explicit instruction from the teacher. This condition is in line with the findings (Fikri, 2024) That conventional learning models cause student involvement in learning to be limited so that students' critical thinking skills and active participation are less developed.

Based on the analysis of teachers' diary documents, it was found that the low activity of students was also influenced by the density of the tahfidz program schedule which made students cognitively exhausted and less motivated in following academic subjects outside of memorizing the Qur'an. This is a unique contextual challenge in tahfidz-based schools.

3.2. The Process of Implementing Inquiry Learning in English Learning

According to Sanjaya in (Hr & Hasan, 2017) The implementation of Inquiry Learning is carried out through six stages, namely orientation, formulating problems, proposing hypotheses, collecting data, testing hypotheses, and formulating conclusions and adjusted to the context of English learning at Tahfidz Darul Qur'an Junior High School. The six stages are: (a) orientation, (b) formulating a problem, (c) proposing a hypothesis, (d) collecting data, (e) testing a hypothesis, and (f) formulating a conclusion.

At the orientation stage, the teacher presents a stimulus in the form of a text or real communicative situation in English to arouse students' curiosity. Observations show that students begin to show enthusiasm when teachers present context that is relevant to their daily lives. One of the students revealed in an interview:

"When the teacher gave me a short video about a stranger's conversation, I became curious. I want to know what it means and I want to be able to say that."

At the stage of formulating problems and proposing hypotheses, students are encouraged to identify questions related to the English material they are observing. Initially, many students were hesitant, but with the guidance of the teacher and a conducive classroom atmosphere, gradually students began to dare to express their conjectures or predictions in simple English.

The data collection and testing stage takes place in a small group discussion format. Students actively seek information from a variety of sources, discuss their findings, and formulate arguments in English. This activity encourages the emergence of significant verbal interaction among students, which was almost never the case before. In the final stage, which is the presentation of the conclusion, each group presents the results of its discussion in front of the class, which further strengthens the courage and confidence of students in communicating orally.

3.3. The Impact of the Implementation of Inquiry Learning on Student Learning Activity

After the implementation of the Inquiry Learning model, significant changes in student learning activity were observed consistently in classroom observation. Students who were previously passive began to actively ask questions, participate in discussions, and present the results of their group's work. The teacher confirmed this change in an interview:

"The most striking change is their courage. Now they are not afraid of being wrong, even competing to raise their hands. The group discussions came to life, and they were enthusiastic about the presentation even though their English was still limited."

The findings from the analysis of teacher reflection journal documents also indicate a sustained increase in activeness from meeting to meeting. Students are becoming more familiar with the inquiry structure and begin to internalize the critical thinking process as part of their study routine. This is in line with the findings (Yang Gusti Feriyanti et al., 2025) That Inquiry Learning effectively encourages students to take initiative in the learning process because learners are given the opportunity to ask questions, investigate, and discover knowledge independently.

In addition, interviews with students revealed an increase in intrinsic motivation. Students not only feel more physically active, but also experience increased confidence and a sense of belonging to their learning process. Some students state that they begin to practice English independently outside of the classroom, which is an indicator of learning success that goes beyond the boundaries of the classroom.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the initial condition of student learning activity at Tahfidz Darul Qur'an Junior High School is greatly influenced by conventional learning patterns that place teachers as the center of knowledge. The students' inability to actively communicate in English is not solely due to their limited linguistic abilities, but also due to a lack of structured spaces and opportunities to practice. Similar conditions were found in the study (Bulan Sari & Melyann Melani, 2022) which states that students in pesantren based schools still experience limitations in their ability to speak English due to the lack of opportunities to actively practice English outside of learning hours.

The process of implementing Inquiry Learning that takes place gradually has proven to be able to fundamentally change classroom dynamics. Through structured stages but still providing space for exploration, students are facilitated to become active learning agents. This mechanism is in line with Vygotsky in (Wati Eka Putri, 2024) That is, the learning process takes place optimally through social interaction with teachers and peers through the help of scaffolding in the proximal development zone (ZPD). In each stage of inquiry, there is a process of negotiation of meaning between students and between students and teachers, which inherently demands and trains English language activeness.

The context of tahfidz-based schools is not an obstacle, but rather a supporting factor in itself. Cognitive skills trained through the Qur'an memorization program also support students' capacity to process and process new information systematically in inquiry activities. This is in accordance with the perspective (Fauziyyah et al., 2018) which states that students with a memorization-based education background have good memory skills so that they can support the inquiry learning process which requires active thinking activities and information processing.

The positive impacts identified are not only academic, but also touch the affective dimension of learning. Increased self-confidence, intrinsic motivation, and courage to communicate are significant qualitative findings that are difficult to measure through a quantitative approach alone. These findings strengthen the argument that qualitative studies are able to uncover complex layers of learning phenomena that are not captured by numerical data (Sanki & Rais, n.d.). Thus, this research makes a methodological and substantial contribution in understanding the implementation of Inquiry Learning in the context of religious-based schools.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the application of the Inquiry Learning learning model qualitatively has been proven to be able to increase the learning activity of grade VII students of SMP Tahfidz Darul Qur'an in English subjects. Prior

to implementation, learning conditions were dominated by passive patterns with minimal verbal interaction between students and teachers. The implementation process that takes place through six stages of inquiry creates an exploration space that encourages students to actively ask questions, discuss, and present the results of their thinking in English.

The impact of implementation is not only seen in increasing academic participation, but also in the affective dimension in the form of increasing students' confidence and intrinsic motivation. The unique characteristics of tahfidz-based schools, which were originally seen as a challenge, turned out to be potential that could be optimized through an inquiry approach. This study recommends the continuous application of Inquiry Learning in English subjects at the junior high school level, especially in pesantren-based school environments, and encourages further research with multi-site studies to expand the transferability of findings.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this research article.

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