

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ICE-BREAKING ACTIVITIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AT THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates eighth-grade students' perceptions of ice-breaking activities in English language learning at SMPN 11 Palembang. Grounded in the need to enhance student motivation and classroom engagement in EFL contexts, the study employed a quantitative research design through survey approach. Data were collected through a closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 34 eighth-grade students. The findings indicate that most students hold positive perceptions of ice-breaking activities, perceiving them as helpful in increasing learning focus, reducing classroom boredom, and creating a more supportive learning atmosphere. Students generally agreed that the use of ice-breaking activities contributes to more engaging English lessons and improves classroom dynamics. However, the findings are limited to students' perceptions and do not claim direct effects on learning outcomes. The study underscores the pedagogical value of ice-breaking activities as a motivational strategy in English language classrooms and suggests their thoughtful integration into EFL instruction.

Keywords: *Students' perception, ice breaking, and motivate learning English.*

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Introduction

English is a language that needs to be mastered so that competitiveness between educators can be increased. This is the reason that English is one of the mandatory subjects in the Indonesian Education curriculum program. English Pronunciation is one of the most challenging skills to acquire and learn English pronunciation is quite tricky for Indonesian students since they have been used to speaking their mother tongue since childhood. Speaking is a productive skill that has an important meaning role in communication. Students can improve their English input through speaking. Speaking is a way of communicating with other people by conveying things, ideas, feelings, creating and constructing information. When learning English, students not only study learning aspects, meanwhile also the four aspects of language (i.e.

Listening, speaking, writing, and reading). Because one of the most important language skills is speaking. Speaking is very important. This skill is just as important as any other. Therefore, by speaking a lot we can express our thoughts and hone our skills for public speaking.

According to Astuti (2020), Ice breaking is an activity that can be used to solve the tension and saturation of students in learning, therefore that the class becomes fun and more conducive before entering into core activities. The conducive situation would be more effective to help students achieve learning goals compared to a tense situation. Ice breaking can do in various activities, such as game, short story, and guessing. This activity done in time 5 until 15 minutes (p211). Therefore, implementing Ice Breaking can help reduce student tension when studying in

class and Ice Breaking activities can also be used when students feel bored or sleepy while the teacher is giving a lesson.

Research Method

This study employed a quantitative research method using a survey approach to examine students' perceptions of ice-breaking activities in English language learning. Quantitative survey research is appropriate when the purpose of a study is to describe attitudes, opinions, or perceptions of a population by analysing numerical data (Creswell, 2014). Similarly, Ary et al. (2018) argue that survey research enables researchers to systematically collect data from respondents in order to identify trends and patterns related to specific educational phenomena. Therefore, a survey design was considered suitable for capturing students' perceptions of ice-breaking activities in an EFL classroom context.

The participants of this study were 34 eighth-grade students from one class at SMPN 11 Palembang, Indonesia. The participants were selected using convenience sampling, as this technique allows researchers to involve accessible participants who are relevant to the research objectives (Etikan et al., 2016). Given the small and context-specific sample, the findings of this study are intended to provide descriptive insights rather than statistical generalizations to a wider population.

Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire adapted from previous studies on students' perceptions of ice-breaking activities in learning contexts. According to Likert (1932), Likert-scale questionnaires are effective instruments for measuring attitudes and perceptions because they allow respondents to indicate degrees of agreement or disagreement. The questionnaire consisted of 15 statements,

including both positive and negative items, rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), with reverse scoring applied to negative statements. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire items were reviewed to confirm their clarity, relevance, and suitability for eighth-grade students.

The data collection was conducted during regular English class sessions with the permission of the English teacher and school authorities. Prior to administering the questionnaire, students were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their participation was voluntary and their responses would remain confidential. According to Cohen et al. (2018), ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality are essential in educational research to protect participants and ensure data integrity.

The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies and percentages. Descriptive statistics are commonly used in survey research to summarize and interpret respondents' perceptions and attitudes (Sugiyono, 2018). The results were presented in tables and interpreted to identify dominant response trends related to students' motivation, learning focus, and classroom atmosphere during English language learning activities involving ice-breaking techniques.

Results and Discussion

In this research, the researcher elaborated on the result of the analysis of fifteen questionnaire items given to 34 students of eighth-grade students at SMPN 11 Palembang as respondents. The researcher found that most of the students at SMPN 11 Palembang, said "Agree" if ice-breaking activities are being able in the school. They also said, if ice-breaking has good values in teaching and learning activities in the

classroom, this can influence the level of focus of students in learning in the classroom.

Table 1 Skor Skala Likert

Positive Statements	Score	Negative Statements	Score
Strongly agree	5	Strongly agree	1
Agree	4	Agree	2
Undecided/Neutral	3	Undecided/Neutral	3
Don't agree	2	Don't agree	4
Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	5

Source: Sugiyono (2016)

The Results of Questionnaire

In this research, the data for measuring the student's perception of ice breaking was gained by using a questionnaire. This questionnaire consisted of 15 statements of questions related to the student's perceptions. The data was gained from 34 students as the sample of research.

The result can be described in the table as follows:

Table 2 The Result of Students Perception of Ice Breaking

NO	NAME	SCORE
1	F	87
2	MA	79
3	WK	65
4	MH	65
5	AS	89
6	RF	63
7	KLP	64
8	MO	77
9	MRP	87
10	MFH	76
11	PS	60
12	MYAF	69
13	RRM	87
14	MT	73
15	DA	87
16	DM	89
17	SP	72
18	SAN	67
19	WP	80
20	AS	89
21	RJ	60
22	MTA	69

23	MNP	77
24	IMP	88
25	BDU	87
26	ADF	85
27	AR	81
28	DA	84
29	KHA	87
30	KS	80
31	NA	83
32	PAP	80
33	SNK	88
34	MO	87

The data of students' perception of Ice breaking to motivate learning English as SMP Negeri 11 Palembang were mainly taken by using the questionnaire. There are have 15 questions. The first item of the questionnaire was "Ice-breaking activities help me during learning English in the classroom". It was found that, out of 34 students, the students response to the first question, 15 students responded "Strongly Agree" (44,1%), 9 responded "Agree" (26,5%), 10 responded "Neutral" (29,4%), and 0 responded to "Don't Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" (0%).

Table 3 The Results of Questionnaire 1

STATEMENT 1	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Strongly Agree	15	44.1
Agree	9	26.5
Neutral	10	29.5
Don't Agree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Total	34	100.0

The second item of the questionnaire was "Ice-breaking activities do not appropriate to apply in learning English". It was found that, out of 34 students, the student's response to the second question, 12 students responded "Strongly Disagree" (35,3%), 10 responded "Don't Agree" (29,4%), 12 responded "Neutral" (35,3%), and 0 responded to "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" (0%).

Table 4 The Results of Questionnaire 2

STATEMENT 2	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Strongly Agree	0	0.0
Agree	0	0.0
Neutral	12	35.3
Don't Agree	10	29.4
Strongly Disagree	12	35.3
Total	34	100.0

The third item of the questionnaire was "Ice-breaking activities made me lazy to learn in an English classroom". It was found that, out of 34 students, the student's response to the third question, 7 students responded "Strongly Disagree" (20,6%), 20 responded "Don't Agree" (58,8%), 5 responded "Neutral" (14,7%), 2 responded "Agree" (5,9%), and 0 responded "Strongly Agree" (0%).

Table 5 The Results of Questionnaire 3

STATEMENT 3	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Strongly Agree	0	0.0
Agree	2	5.9
Neutral	5	14.7
Don't Agree	20	58.8
Strongly Disagree	7	20.6
Total	34	100.0

The fourth item of the questionnaire was "Ice breaking can improve my English achievement in the classroom". It was found that, out of 34 students, the student's response to the fourth question, 6 students responded "Strongly Agree" (17,6%), 17 responded "Agree" (50,0%), 11 responded "Neutral" (32,4%), and 0 responded to "Don't Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" (0%).

Table 6 The Results of Questionnaire 4

STATEMENT 4	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Strongly Agree	6	17.6
Agree	17	50.0
Neutral	11	32.4
Don't Agree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0

Table 7 The Results of Questionnaire 5

STATEMENT 5	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Strongly Agree	8	23.5
Agree	1	2.9
Neutral	8	23.5
Don't Agree	16	47.1
Strongly Disagree	1	2.9
Total	34	100.0

The sixth item of the questionnaire was "Ice-breaking activities spent many times in English classroom". It was found that, out of 34 students, the students response to the sixth question, 3 students responded "Strongly Agree" (8,8%), 4 responded "Agree" (11,8%), 26 responded "Neutral" (76,5%), 1 responded "Don't Agree" (2,9%) and 0 responded "Strongly Disagree" (0%).

Table 8 The Results of Questionnaire 6

STATEMENT 6	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Strongly Agree	3	8.8
Agree	4	11.8
Neutral	26	76.5
Don't Agree	1	2.9
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Total	34	100.0

The seventh item of the questionnaire was "Ice-breaking activities were able to create a good atmosphere in the classroom". It was

found that, out of 34 students, the student's response to the seventh question, 10 students responded "Strongly Agree" (29,4%), 12 responded "Agree" (35,3%), 11 responded "Neutral" (32,4%), 1 responded "Don't Agree" (2,9%), and 0 responded "Strongly Disagree"(0%).

Table 9 The Results of Questionnaire 7

STATEMENT 7	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Strongly Agree	10	29.4
Agree	12	35.3
Neutral	11	32.4
Don't Agree	1	2.9
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Total	34	100.0

The eight item of the questionnaire was "Ice-breaking activities produced a chaotic atmosphere in English class". It was found that, out of 34 students, the students response to the eight question, 14 students responded "Strongly Disagree"(41,2%), 13 responded "Don't Agree"(38,2%), 6 responded "Neutral"(17,6%), 1 responded "Strongly Agree"(2,9%), and 0 responded "Agree"(0%).

Table 10 The Results of Questionnaire 8

STATEMENT 8	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Strongly Agree	1	2.9
Agree	0	0.0
Neutral	6	17.6
Don't Agree	13	38.2
Strongly Disagree	14	41.3
Total	34	100.0

The ninth item of the questionnaire was " I am not enthusiastic about learning English if the teacher does not use icebreaking activities". It was found that, out of 34 students, the students response to the ninth question, 7 students responded "Strongly Disagree"(20,6%), 11 responded "Don't Agree"(32,4%), 14 responded "Neutral"(41,2%), 2

responded "Agree"(4,9%), 0 responded "Strongly Agree"(0%).

Table 11 The Results of Questionnaire 9

STATEMENT 9	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Strongly Agree	0	0.0
Agree	2	4.9
Neutral	14	41.2
Don't Agree	11	32.4
Strongly Disagree	7	20.6
Total	34	100.0

The tenth item of the questionnaire was "I am easy to understand the material when the teacher used ice-breaking activities during teaching English in the classroom". It was found that, out of 34 students, the students response to the tenth question, 10 students responded "Strongly Agree"(29,4%), 11 responded "Agree"(32,4%), 13 responded "Neutral"(38,2%), 0 responded to "Don't Agree" and "Strongly Disagree"(0%).

Table 12 The Results of Questionnaire 10

STATEMENT 10	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Strongly Agree	10	29.5
Agree	11	32.4
Neutral	13	38.2
Don't Agree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Total	34	100.0

The eleventh item of the questionnaire was "I feel motivated to learn with the use of Ice Breaking". It was found that, out of 34 students, the students response to the eleventh question, 12 students responded "Strongly Agree"(35,3%), 10 responded "Agree"(29,4%), 11 responded "Neutral"(32,4%), 1 responded "Don't Agree"(2,9%), and 0 responded "Strongly Disagree"(0%).

Table 13 The Results of Questionnaire 11

STATEMENT 11	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Strongly Agree	12	35.3
Agree	10	29.4
Neutral	11	32.4
Don't Agree	1	2.9
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Total	34	100.0

The twelfth item of the questionnaire was "I feel Ice Breaking is capable aroused my interest in learning". It was found that, out of 34 students, the students response to the twelfth question, 10 students responded "Strongly Agree"(29,4%), 11 responded "Agree"(32,4%), 13 responded "Neutral"(38,4%), 0 responded to "Don't Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" (0%).

Table 14 The Results of Questionnaire 12

STATEMENT 12	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Strongly Agree	10	29.4
Agree	11	32.5
Neutral	13	38.4
Don't Agree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Total	34	100.0

The thirteenth item of the questionnaire was "Ice breaking helps to attract attention students". It was found that, out of 34 students, the students response to the thirteenth question, 3 students responded "Strongly Agree" (8,8%), 20 responded "Agree"(58,8%), 11 responded "Neutral" (32,4%), 0 responded to " Don't Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" (0%).

Table 15 The Results of Questionnaire 13

STATEMENT 13	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Strongly Agree	3	8.8
Agree	20	58.8
Neutral	11	32.4
Don't Agree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Total	34	100.0

The fourteenth item of the questionnaire was "I feel unhappy with there is Ice Breaking". It was found that, out of 34 students, the students response to the fourteenth question, 11 students responded "Strongly Disagree"(32,4%), 12 responded "Don't Agree"(35,3%), 10 responded "Neutral"(29,4%), 1 responded "Agree"(2,9%), 0 responded "Strongly Agree"(0%).

Table 16 The Results of Questionnaire 14

STATEMENT 14	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Strongly Agree	0	0.0
Agree	1	2.9
Neutral	10	29.4
Don't Agree	12	35.3
Strongly Disagree	11	32.4
Total	34	100.0

The fifteenth item of the questionnaire was "Ice breaking can improve my English achievement in the classroom". It was found that, out of 34 students, the students response to the fifteenth question, 21 students responded "Strongly Agree"(61,8%), 4 responded "Agree" (11,8%), 9 responded "Neutral" (26,5%), 0 responded to "Don't Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" (0%).

Table 17 The Results of Questionnaire 15

STATEMENT 15	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Strongly Agree	21	61.8
Agree	4	11.8
Neutral	9	26.5
Don't Agree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Total	34	100.0

Based on the total result of students' perception of Ice breaking to motivate learning English above, the result showed that students have positive responses with the average was 180 (Agree) and 149 (Strongly Agree). In the whole, some students agree if that

implementing ice breaking in class have good-side and bad-side for them.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that eighth-grade students generally hold positive perceptions of ice-breaking activities in English language learning. Most students perceived ice-breaking activities as helpful in increasing their learning focus, reducing boredom, and creating a more supportive classroom atmosphere. These findings suggest that ice-breaking activities play an important affective and motivational role in EFL classrooms, particularly at the junior high school level where learners' attention and emotional engagement are often unstable.

From a motivational perspective, the positive perceptions reported by students align with theories emphasizing the role of affective factors in learning. According to Dörnyei (2001), learners' motivation and emotional states significantly influence their engagement and persistence in language learning. Ice-breaking activities, as perceived by the students in this study, appear to function as an initial stimulus that helps reduce anxiety and prepares learners emotionally for instructional activities. This supports the view that creating a positive emotional climate is a prerequisite for effective language learning rather than a supplementary teaching strategy.

In addition, students' perceptions that ice-breaking activities help create a conducive classroom atmosphere are consistent with previous studies highlighting the importance of classroom climate and engagement. Wright (2017) argues that interactive and low-anxiety learning environments contribute to students' willingness to participate in EFL classrooms. Similarly, Panjaitan (2023) found that students responded positively to ice-breaking activities

because such activities made lessons more enjoyable and interactive. The present study reinforces these findings by showing that students value ice-breaking activities not merely as entertainment, but as a means of improving classroom dynamics and maintaining attention during English lessons.

However, it is important to interpret these findings cautiously. Although many students agreed that ice-breaking activities are beneficial, a noticeable proportion of respondents selected neutral responses on several questionnaire items. This suggests that ice-breaking activities may not be equally effective or equally valued by all students. Factors such as the type of ice-breaking activity, duration, frequency, and alignment with lesson objectives may influence students' perceptions. This finding resonates with Astuti (2020), who emphasizes that ice-breaking activities should be used strategically and not excessively, as poorly designed or overly frequent activities may reduce instructional time and learning focus.

Furthermore, while students perceived ice-breaking activities as supportive of English learning, this study does not claim a direct impact on English achievement. The data collected reflect students' subjective perceptions rather than objective learning outcomes. This distinction is crucial, as perception-based data can indicate learners' attitudes and motivational states but cannot be used to infer causal relationships between instructional techniques and academic performance. As noted by Creswell (2014), survey research is primarily descriptive and should be interpreted within its methodological limitations.

Overall, the discussion highlights that ice-breaking activities are perceived positively by students and are valued for

their role in enhancing motivation, focus, and classroom atmosphere in English language learning. These findings suggest that ice-breaking activities can serve as an effective supportive pedagogical strategy when integrated thoughtfully into EFL instruction. Nevertheless, teachers are encouraged to consider students' characteristics and instructional goals when selecting and implementing ice-breaking activities to ensure that such activities contribute meaningfully to the learning process rather than functioning as mere classroom fillers.

Conclusion

Backgrounds of this research, based on researcher observations at school, the level of students' boredom can be seen with many students not being enthusiastic during the process of learning, decreased motivation, and looking tired and lazy in the study. Based on this, researcher are interested and want to know students' perceptions regarding applying ice-breaking techniques when studying in class, especially when learning English combined with ice-breaking.

The main problem of this research is (1) What are the students' perception of ice breaking to motivate for learning English at SMP Negeri 11 Palembang. The objectives of this study are (1) To find the students' perception of ice breaking to motivate for learning English at SMP Negeri 11 Palembang. The significances of the study are given to the researcher herself, the readers, and the other researchers. In this study, there are two related previous study which had a connection with the researcher's study.

This research used qualitative research, meaning the data would be described descriptively. The research population was students at SMP Negeri 11 Palembang and the researcher took 1 class, class 8.5. The data collection

technique used documentation through questionnaires and this research used closed-ended questionnaires taken from previous research. Researcher used percentage analysis to analyse the data.

In relation to the data or results of the findings and interpretation in the previous chapter, the researcher intended to conclude her study. First, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the problem of this research is based on the following question: "What are the students' perceptions of ice breaking to motivate for learning English at SMP Negeri 11 Palembang? This question was answered in the findings of the study and it could be seen from the questionnaire that contained 15 items. Therefore, the researcher found there were positive perceptions toward ice-breaking activities being available in the school. In other words, most of the students responded "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" with the questions item given.

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