

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE ROLE OF ICE BREAKING ACTIVITIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH AT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Naila Al Ghifarah¹, Ririn Pusparini²
Universitas Negeri Surabaya
Surabaya, Indonesia

nailaalghifarah57@gmail.com¹, ririnpusparini@unesa.ac.id²

ABSTRACT

One of many factors that can influence students' feelings while learning English is a teacher's method or style of instruction that is not precise or monotonous. A fun and attractive learning environment can help students focus better and become more motivated to learn. Applying learning strategies suitable to students' conditions is one solution for increasing students' motivation. For instance, the "ice-breaking" activity. Moreover, this research uses a qualitative approach to achieve the purposes of the research. The participants of this study were 30 students in a particular Islamic senior high school in Sidoarjo. This study used questionnaire, interview, and observation as research instruments. The study's findings indicate that students have a positive perception towards the role of ice breaking activities in learning English at senior high school. Ice-breaking is an effective strategy for increasing student motivation. Moreover, it has the potential to encourage students to learn. So that the classroom atmosphere becomes enjoyable and students' understanding of the subject matter improves.

Keyword: *students' perception; ice-breaking; motivation*

INTRODUCTION

English is a language that is widely recognized as an international language. For this reason, fluency in English is a requirement for everyone. In Indonesia, English is taught from elementary school to high school. Even though English is taught to students while they are still in elementary school, many of them find it challenging. Some students also feel less motivated to learn English because they believe that it is unimportant. As a result, this phenomenon presents a challenge for teachers to use their innovation to develop

an enjoyable learning environment for students. Henceforth, students are encouraged to take an attention and be motivated to learn English.

When the teacher explains the material, many students have a tendency to be passive and pay little attention. One of many factors that can influence students' feelings while learning English is a teacher's method or style of instruction that is not precise or monotonous. Students who are encouraged will be more engaged in the learning process, which will push them to understand English well (Purnama

et al., 2019). Therefore, the teacher must create a comfortable atmosphere during learning activities so that students can focus on receiving material and be more motivated in learning.

There are several strategies for boosting students' enthusiasm for English language learning in the classroom. For instance, the use of "ice breaking" activity. Several studies propose the advantages of implementing ice breaking in the classroom. For instance, Kavanagh (2011), explain that ice breaking activities can increase students' motivation for learning.

Another study is conducted by Yeganehpour (2016), who discovered that icebreakers are a good way to lighten the atmosphere and make students feel at comfortable. Therefore, the aim of the ice breaking activity is to encourage a positive learning environment so that the learning process is effective. As a result, the learning environment will become more conducive with the help of this icebreaker activity.

Students are given the opportunity to emotionally engage with the classroom environment through this activity which helps them to be motivated in learning (Indrayanti, 2014). It can be challenging for teachers to teach high school students

because it can be difficult to increase their motivation. According to Lesiak (2015), teenagers between the ages of 13 and 19 go through a period of emotional and moral development, which has an impact on their unpredictable motivation. Therefore, it is necessary for students to be motivated to learn English in order for them to fully understand the lesson and be motivated to learn other languages, especially English.

Faruqi (2016) stated that the level of students' learning comprehension increases through ice breaking activities during lessons. According to Riikka (2009), an icebreaker can be used as a facilitation activity aimed at assisting a group in overcoming their anxieties and nervousness. Therefore, ice breaking activities can assist teachers in sharing their excitement with the students, which is essential because teachers' enthusiasm may quicken students' academic progress in the classroom (Kavanagh et al., 2011).

Considering the effectiveness of ice breaking activities in improving students' motivation in learning, students' perceptions about the activities are badly essential. Nouh et al. (2016) emphasized that better academic achievement is connected to students' perceptions of the learning environment. Additionally,

students who performed better academically had more positive views of their education (Ahmed et al., 2018). Thus, teaching has the potential to affect students' perceptions, which in turn may have an impact on their academic performance.

The use of ice breaking in English language learning has been covered in numerous studies. Farwati et al. (2018) explains how ice breaking activities work and the compatibility of the ice breaking games with the theories used in English teaching. The findings of this study demonstrated how useful ice breaking activity are for stimulating students' interest in an English lesson as evidenced by their willingness to learn.

Another research is conducted by Kadek Bagus Rusman (2022) which indicates that ice breaking activities can help foster fun learning, create a conducive learning environment, and spark students' interest and motivation in their academic work. On the other hand, ice breaking can impact students' score which related to the achievement of learning objectives. The evidence is that student scores increase and reach KKM scores.

From all the previous studies, it can be concluded that ice breaking is beneficial for students in learning English

since these activities can boost students' motivation to learn and encourage them to participate more actively in class. They conducted research to investigate the implementation of ice breaking and how it effects the students' English score. However, a few studies investigate the students' perception about the implementation of ice breaking activities. Hence, the study of students' perception about ice breaking activities is still undercover. Therefore, this research focuses on knowing the opinions or perceptions of high school students towards ice breaking activities.

Based on the study's background, this current study's formulation of the problems is:

- a) What does the students' perception on the implementation of ice breaking in learning English at senior high school?
- b) What does the students' perception on the benefits of ice breaking in learning English at senior high school?
- c) What type of ice breaking activities used in learning English at senior high school?

METHOD

In this study, the researcher wants to investigate the students' perceptions

toward the role of ice breaking and find out the type of ice breaking used at the senior high school level. As a result, the researcher investigates the use of ice breaking in senior high school. Consequently, this research uses a qualitative approach to achieve the purposes of the research

. According to Hancock (2009), qualitative research frequently focuses on methods for describing and comprehending reality. Also, Ary (2010) stated that the objective of a qualitative approach is a comprehensive picture and depth of understanding rather than a data analysis using numbers. The researcher uses a basic interpretative study because this study focuses on behavior and social perspectives.

This study was carried out in a particular Islamic senior high school in Sidoarjo in the academic year 2022-2023. The researcher chooses this setting because the English teacher implemented ice breaking activity which is related to the topic of this research.

The researcher uses purposive sampling in selecting a sample. According to Lodico et al. (2006), purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research. Purposive sampling means that the researcher chooses the subject by

considering the purposes of this study. The population of this study is eleventh grade students in a particular Islamic senior high school in Sidoarjo. Moreover, the researcher chooses one class in the eleventh grade as the subject of this study. There are typically 30 to 36 students in a class.

In this study, the researcher uses three types of instruments to answer the research questions, such as questionnaire, interview, and observation. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to 30 students in one class. Furthermore, the researcher uses google form in distributing a questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this study is composed of close-ended questions. It enables researcher to complete tasks quickly and code easily (Cohen et al., 2005).

Moreover, the researcher chooses 5 students to be interviewed based on their statements in the questionnaire. Students who provided responses that differed from the others were those who researcher looked for when choosing students to interview. Additionally, the researcher selected students who responded positively to each question. The researcher uses a semi-structured interview in this research, which uses several questions in a questionnaire as a guideline.

In this study, the researcher observes one class which implement ice breaking in the classroom. In addition, the researcher has to observe the participants. Here, field notes with pictures and videos are required of the researcher as a tool to gather data from observations. The data is presented in the researcher's field notes so that it can be later analyzed to understand the research environment and participant behavior (Ary et al., 2010).

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study were explained using the research questions as a guide. Moreover, the researcher analyzes the students' perception toward the role of ice breaking activities in learning English through google form as a questionnaire, interview, and observation.

1. Students' Perception

No	Statements	A	N	D
1	Ice breaking is a fun activity	90%	10%	0%
2	The importance of ice breaking in learning English	70%	30%	0%
3	Using icebreakers can help students relax	83.3%	16.7%	0%
4	Applying icebreakers can increase students' confidence	73.3%	26.7%	0%
5	Using ice breaking can	66.7%	33.3%	0%

	improve students' comprehension			
6	Ice breaking help students to increase vocabulary knowledge	70%	30	0%
7	Student anxiety can be reduced by using ice breaking	60%	36.7%	3.3%

The table above shows that students have a positive perception of ice-breaking activities. It indicated that 90% or 27 of the students agree that ice breaking is a fun activity. This result is consistent with the earlier research by Solihat et al. (2020), which stated that the use of icebreakers can make learning more fun.

Additionally, 70% or 21 of the students agree that ice breaking is an important strategy in learning English. This finding is in line with the previous study (Makhmudovna, 2022), which claimed that icebreakers are an essential component of EFL lessons that improve the teaching and learning processes and aid students in problem-solving.

Furthermore, 83.3% or 25 students agree that ice breaking can help students relax during class. According to Indrayanti (2014), icebreakers can be a helpful tool for promoting a relaxed environment. Additionally, 73.3% or 22 of the students agree that ice breaking activities can

improve their performance, such as self-confidence. This is in accordance with Solihat et al. (2020), who claimed that ice breaking activities have many benefits for increasing students' performance.

Moreover, 66.7% or 20 of the students agree that icebreakers can improve student understanding of the English lesson. According to Hariati (2018), ice breaking activities help the students understand the material. As a result of their positive experiences with icebreakers, students have a positive opinion of ice breaking activities.

Besides, most of the students agree that ice breaking can increase vocabulary knowledge. However, it cannot be verified because the researcher did not notice any changes in the student's vocabulary. Additionally, it shows that 60% of students believe icebreakers can lessen anxiety. This is in line with the previous study by Pratama et al. (2021), who stated that the icebreaker activity has advantages, such as the ability to reduce anxiety.

2. Advantages of Ice Breaking

Five students in the eleventh grade at a specific Islamic senior high school in Sidoarjo were interviewed by the researcher. Five questions were asked about their perception of the use of

icebreakers in learning English. The researcher interviewed the students after they filled out the questionnaire. Based on the interview, the researcher found several benefits of ice breaking activities from the perspective of high school students.

Based on the result of interview, the researcher found that two students agree that ice breaking can boost students' motivation to learn English.

(Student 1), *"Yes, ice breaking is beneficial. it can increase the enthusiasm of students in learning."*

(Student 2), *"In my opinion, ice breaking is useful, because it can boost students' motivation to learn."*

From the two statements above, it appears that the students agree that ice-breaking is helpful in increasing students' motivation.

Additionally, in terms of increasing students' interest in learning English, the researcher found one student who agreed with the statement.

(Student 5), *"In my opinion, there are many benefits of ice breaking activities. It can foster enthusiasm for learning, train student concentration, so that students are more active in class."*

The researcher concentrates on the expression "it can foster enthusiasm for learning" in the statement above. It relates

to the interest of students in the learning process. Both findings concur with Solihat et al. (2020), who suggested that giving treatment with an icebreaker could help students become more motivated and interested.

Furthermore, one student stated that icebreakers can encourage students to actively participate in their English lesson.

(Student 4), *“I think, ice breaking is beneficial to encourage more participation from the students in the lesson.”*

This is in accordance with Rahmayanti et al. (2019), who stated that ice breaking is effective at boosting students' motivation to learn English. The fact that all of the students showed enthusiasm while learning was also demonstrated through observation. As a result, the researcher found that ice breaking activities are a great way to enhance students' motivation.

In terms of helping students to concentrate and focus in learning English, the researcher found one student who support this statement.

(Student 5), *“Ice breaking is essential for high school students, in order to improve students' concentration.”*

Therefore, this is in accordance with Adi et al. (2021), who stated that ice

breaking can improve students' focus and concentration. Also, according to Sari et al. (2021), a happier learning environment will lead to better concentration in the students.

The researcher discovered three students who concur that ice breaking can lessen boredom during learning based on the results of the interview.

(Student 1), *“Breaking the ice is a fun activity because it helps pass the time when students feeling bored.”*

(Student 3), *“Ice breaking is very useful, because it can restore the energy of sleepy students.”*

(Student 5), *“In my opinion, ice breaking is an activity carried out by the teacher when students feel bored”*

Student 3 stated that “because it can restore the energy of sleepy students”. It means that students who are bored may feel sleepy. Therefore, ice-breaking can lessen students' boredom. Moreover, according to Mepieza (2023), ice breaking can help students overcome their boredom and reduce their anxiety. It additionally assists the teacher in establishing an enjoyable atmosphere for learning.

Consequently, ice breaking is a good learning strategy to use in class because it has many advantages. It became a transition between boring situations to

relax and become excited again. Hence, the learning process is more effective when the teacher applies ice breaking in the classroom.

3. Type of Ice-Breaking Used in Senior High School

The researcher makes observations in order to answer the third research question. The researcher observed the use of ice breaking among high school students. Here, the researcher found that the English teacher used "games" as an icebreaker. Additionally, it is supported by the findings from the questionnaire and interview, which were conducted to find out the kind of icebreakers high school students prefer to use.

(Student 1), *"The teacher usually uses games."*

(Student 4), *"The English teacher uses games as an ice breaking."*

The findings of the observation that the English teacher uses games as an icebreaker also support it. The English teacher used ice breaking activities before starting the lesson to get students' attention. The teacher explained the activity and the rules of the game to be played. The duration of ice-breaking activities is 5–10 minutes. The game used was "Simon Says", where all students must follow all the teacher's instructions if

the teacher uses the word "I say." All students appear to be familiar with this game. Moreover, all of the students appeared to enjoy the game when it was played. The "Simon Says" game also includes physical movement or activity such as stand up, jump, touch your head, etc. Due to the requirement that all participants focus on the teacher's instructions, this game was successful in capturing the attention of the class. As a result, this game served as an effective tool for improving students' focus and creating a pleasant learning environment in the classroom.

After playing games, the English teacher gave learning material about songs. The majority of students showed interest in the subject being studied. While the English teacher presented the material, all students listened and paid attention to the teacher's explanation. Additionally, one of the students confidently expressed an opinion about her favorite song. Subsequently, the teacher provided an example of a cover song. The video was viewed by all students, and some of them participated in singing the song that was played. Here, the researcher also considers it as an ice breaking activity carried out by the teacher. After watching the video, the teacher explains the material about

figurative language in the song. All students comprehend the information that the teacher has presented. As a result, it can be said that the ice-breaking activities were effective in boosting students' motivation and interest in learning. Furthermore, the researcher also examines the questionnaire result to discover the students' perception of the icebreakers used in high school.

Type of ice breaking	Frequency	Percentage
Games	23	76.7%
Songs	25	83.4%
Audio visual	23	76.6%
Body Movement	24	80%
Clap	23	76.7%
Jokes	27	90%

The table above demonstrates that jokes are the preferred type of ice-breaking among students. In this instance, the researcher believes that humor is a form of ice-breaking that high school students find interesting. Additionally, the researcher subsequently clarified that the type of ice breaking activities depends on the students' conditions in the classroom. Consequently, the teacher needs to be able to adjust the kind of icebreaker used in class.

The type of icebreaker used must be tailored to the needs of the students. In order to reap the benefits of ice breaking, it is crucial for teachers to choose the right type of icebreaker. The researcher discovered that high school students frequently use games as an icebreaker.

Playing games has become an effective strategy to reduce student anxiety while learning English. As stated by Ramadhaniarti (2016), games provide students with relaxation and enjoyment, allowing them to learn English more easily. Teachers should also take into account the advantages of games, including their capacity to capture students' attention, reduce stress, and offer opportunities for genuine communication. Furthermore, as a result of observation, all students appear to be enthusiastic while playing games. It also makes the classroom environment more pleasant. It can be concluded that the appropriate type of icebreaker used by high school students is games, which are useful for students to reduce anxiety while learning English.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to describe the students' perceptions toward the role of ice breaking activities. Regarding the findings in the previous chapter, the researcher

found that ice-breaking is an effective strategy for increasing student motivation. Moreover, it has the potential to encourage students to learn. So that the classroom atmosphere becomes enjoyable and students' understanding of the subject matter improves. According to the results of the student questionnaire, students have a positive perception of the use of icebreakers in English learning. Additionally, students contend that ice-breaking is beneficial for reducing boredom during class. Therefore, the use of icebreakers is highly recommended in order to get students involved in the learning process.

Furthermore, the type of icebreaker chosen is also essential for students. This must be customized for the needs and personalities of the students. Playing games is appropriate for high school students. According to the research's findings, students showed enthusiasm while playing games. Also, playing games is an effective way of capturing students' attention. Therefore, this study suggests that the teacher must determine the type of ice breaking that is effective for students in order to take advantage of the benefits of ice breaking.

The researcher advises future researchers who will be researching the

same topic to further investigate the aspects in this field of study. This can be accomplished by changing the level of students, increasing the number of respondents, or modifying the research methodology, and so on.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, Y., Taha, M. H., Al-Neel, S., & Gaffar, A. M. (2018). Students' perception of the learning environment and its relation to their study year and performance in Sudan. *International Journal of Medical Education*, 9, 145–150.
<https://doi.org/10.5116/ijme.5af0.1fee>
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., & Sorensen, C. (2010). Introduction to Research in Education. In *Wadsworth, Cengage Learning* (Vol. 4, Issue 1).
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2005). Research Methods in Education. In *Routledge Falmer*.
<https://doi.org/10.1134/S0021364007220055>
- Faruqi, A. I. Al. (2016). MENINGKATKAN DAYA SERAP SISWA PADA PEMBELAJARAN GEOMETRI MENGGUNAKAN ICE BREAKING. *Jurnal Riset Pendidikan*, 2(1), 54.
- Farwati, D. Z., Rahmah, M., & Sutisna, E. (2018). the Application of Ice Breaking Activities in Teaching English To Junior High School Students. *Journal of English Teaching and Linguistics Studies (JET Li)*, 1(1), 16–26.
<https://doi.org/10.55215/jetli.v1i1.1489>
- Hancock, B., Ockleford, E., & Windridge, K. (2009). An Introduction to Qualitative Research. In *Qualitative Research* (Vol. 4th, p. 504).
<https://doi.org/10.1109/TVCG.2007.70541>
- Hariati, N. (2018). The Use of Ice-Breakers (Two Truths and A Lie) to Improve Speaking Ability for EFL Learners. *VELES Voices of English Language Education Society*, 2(2), 91–97.
<https://doi.org/10.29408/veles.v2i2.861>
- Indrayanti, I. (2014). *Icebreaker : a Strategy To Active Involvement for Young Adolescent Learners*. September, 385–392.
- Kadek Bagus Rusman. (2022). Implementation and Benefits of Learning through Ice Breaking. *International Linguistics and TESOL Journal*, 1(1), 1–4.
- Kavanagh, M., Wood, L. N., & Marilyn Clark-Murphy. (2011). The first class: Using icebreakers to facilitate transition in a tertiary environment. *Asian Social Science*, 7(4), 84–92.
<https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v7n4p84>
- Lesiak, K. (2015). Teaching English -- to missionaries! *World Scientific News*, 42(2), 192–198.
- Lodico, M. G., Spaulding, D. T., & Voegtler, K. H. (2006). *Methods in Educational Research: From Theory to Practice*. Jossey-Bass.
- Makhmudovna, K. G. (2022). Importance of Ice Breaking Activities in Teaching English. *International Scientific Journal*, 1(7), 117–120.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7223440>
- Mepieza, R. Y. (2023). The Power of Ice Breaker Activity : Examining the Impact of Icebreakers on Student Participation and Engagement in the Classroom. *European Journal of Learning on History and Social Sciences*, 1(1), 22–36.
- Nouh, T., Anil, S., Alanazi, A., Al-shehri, W., Alfaisal, N., Alfaris, B., & Alamer, E. (2016). Assessing Correlation between Students' Perception of The Learning Environment and Their Acedemic Performance. *National Library of Medicine*, 66(12), 1616–1619.
- Pratama, H., Maduretno, T. W., & Yusro, A. C. (2021). Online Learning Solution: Ice Breaking Application to Increase Student Motivation. *Journal of Educational Science and Technology (EST)*, 7(1), 117–125.
<https://doi.org/10.26858/est.v7i1.19289>
- Purnama, N. A., Rahayu, N. S., & Yugafiati, R. (2019). Students' Motivation in Learning English. *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)*, 2(4), 539.

<https://doi.org/10.22460/project.v2i4.p539-544>

Rahmayanti, P., Saraswati, P. A., & Bhuana, G. P. (2019). The Use of Ice Breaker To Improve Students' Motivation in Learning English At the Tenth Grade Students of SMK YPKKP. *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)*, 2(5), 594.

<https://doi.org/10.22460/project.v2i5.p594-600>

Ramadhaniarti, T. (2016). Teaching English Vocabulary Through Game: Views from the Students. *Proceeding of the Fourth International Seminar on English Language and Teaching*, 04(02), 382–387. ejournal.unp.ac.id

Riikka, H. (2009). *ECYC Game Book. Teambuilding Games, Energizers and Icebreakers From Youth Clubs Around Europe*. European Confederation of Youth Clubs.

Solihat, A., Astuti, A. R., & Satriani, I. (2020). The Influence of Ice Breaker To Students' Motivation in Teaching English. *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)*, 3(2), 210. <https://doi.org/10.22460/project.v3i2.p210-216>

Yeganehpour, P. (2016). Using Ice-Breakers in Improving Every Factor Which Considered in Testing Learners Speaking Ability. *International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implication*, 7(1), 58–68. www.ijonte.org