

## STUDENT'S PERCEPTION OF USING ICE BREAKING IN ENGLISH LEARNING AT SD ALAM MUARA BUNGO

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### ABSTRACT

This research title is Students' Perceptions of Using Ice Breaking in English Learning at At Sd Alam Muara Bungo. English learning in elementary schools often faces challenges in maintaining student concentration and motivation. One strategy used is icebreaking, an activity to break the ice, increase engagement, and create a pleasant learning atmosphere. This study aims to describe the perceptions of fourth-grade students at Muara Bungo Natural Elementary School regarding the use of icebreaking in English learning. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with fourth-grade students as subjects. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews, with interview protocol based on Bandura's social learning theory. Data analysis was conducted thematically using NVivo 12. The results showed that most students had positive perceptions, considering icebreaking to be calming, increase enthusiasm, focus, and self-confidence. However, a small number of students expressed negative perceptions, such as boredom due to the lack of variety and discomfort in participating. These findings emphasize the importance of icebreaking variations tailored to students' needs for optimal benefits.

**Keywords:** *English Learning, Perception, Ice Breaking*

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini yang berjudul Persepsi Siswa Tentang Penggunaan Ice Breaking Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris. Pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah dasar kerap menghadapi tantangan menjaga konsentrasi dan motivasi siswa. Salah satu strategi yang digunakan adalah ice breaking, yaitu kegiatan yang digunakan untuk mencairkan suasana, dan meningkatkan keterlibatan, serta menciptakan suasana belajar yang menyenangkan. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan persepsi siswa kelas IV SD Alam Muara Bungo terhadap penggunaan ice breaking dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan subjek siswa kelas IV. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, dengan pedoman wawancara berdasarkan teori social learning Bandura. Analisis data dilakukan secara tematik menggunakan NVivo 12. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan mayoritas siswa memiliki persepsi positif, menganggap ice breaking dapat menenangkan, meningkatkan semangat, fokus, dan rasa percaya diri. Namun, sebagian kecil siswa menyampaikan persepsi negatif, seperti rasa bosan akibat kurangnya variasi dan ketidaknyamanan berpartisipasi. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya variasi ice breaking yang disesuaikan dengan kebutuhan siswa agar manfaatnya optimal.

*Kata kunci: Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, Persepsi, Ice Breaking*

## INTRODUCTION

English language learning at the elementary school level played an important role in equipping students with basic communication skills needed in the era of globalization (Darmawan et al., 2024). However, according to (Rahman, 2021), the learning process at this stage often faced challenges in maintaining students' concentration and motivation. Elementary school students, who were in a developmental stage characterized by a fondness for play and exploration in both cognitive and socio-emotional aspects, tended to lose focus and feel bored easily, especially when the material was delivered monotonously (Limbong, 2020). In such conditions, the achievement of learning objectives was hindered, particularly in English subjects that required sustained attention, active participation, and repeated practice. One of the strategies frequently used to address these challenges was ice breaking.

According to (Safitri et al., 2024), in the educational context, ice breaking referred to short and interactive activities designed to ease the classroom atmosphere, encourage participation, and foster positive interactions among students. These activities included games, songs, physical movements, humor, or storytelling. (Manurung et al., 2025), stated that the main function of ice breaking was to reduce tension, build enthusiasm, and prepare students to be more

ready to engage with the learning material. (Zuhaery et al., 2024) argued that the implementation of ice breaking in English language learning was relevant in Indonesia, where English was taught as a foreign language and was often perceived as difficult by students.

This study showed that the presence of ice breaking activities in learning could reduce language anxiety and increase self-confidence. However, the success of ice breaking largely depended on the suitability of the activities with the students' needs, interests, and developmental stages. A mismatch could result in reduced student engagement or even lead to negative perceptions of the learning process (Trisnaningtyas & Setiyaningsih, 2024). The theoretical foundation of this study was the Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura. According to (Yanuardianto, 2019), this theory emphasized that learning occurred through the processes of observation, imitation, and modeling within a social environment. (Bandura, 1986) stated that effective learning was formed through the reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors. In the context of ice breaking, students not only participated directly in the activities but also observed their peers, evaluated the outcomes, and adjusted their own behavior accordingly.

Various previous studies on ice breaking in language learning generally reported positive impacts, such as increased motivation, reduced boredom, and improved classroom participation. For instance, (Al Ghifarah & Pusparini, 2023), in research conducted at the senior high school level, found that ice breaking could enhance students' willingness to communicate and foster a collaborative classroom atmosphere. However, studies that specifically focused on the perceptions of elementary school students, particularly fourth graders, remained limited. This indicated a research gap that needed to be addressed by exploring how students understood and experienced ice breaking in class, especially in the context of English language learning.

According to (eka erviana vivi, Tri Setiyoko & Moh, 2023), in the current Indonesian educational context, the implementation of ice breaking was influenced by the flexibility of the curriculum, particularly since the introduction of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This curriculum encouraged the use of innovative, student-centered learning strategies, and ice breaking aligned with this principle as it aimed to create an engaging, inclusive, and supportive learning environment. However, (Khasyia et al., 2024) noted that the success of ice breaking in elementary schools largely depended on the teacher's creativity, thorough preparation,

and sensitivity to the diversity of students' needs.

At SD Alam Muara Bungo, ice breaking had been used in English language learning with variations such as games, songs, humor, and physical movements. Initial observations showed that most students responded positively, while others expressed less interest due to the limited variety of ice breaking activities or discomfort with certain types of activities. These differences in perception highlighted the importance of adjusting the form of ice breaking to fit the classroom context and the individual characteristics of students.

Therefore, this study addressed an important yet underexplored topic in English language education at the elementary school level in Indonesia, namely students' perceptions of ice breaking. Grounded in Social Learning Theory, the study examined both the positive and negative dimensions of students' experiences while offering practical implications for teachers, schools, and future researchers. The ultimate goal was to enhance the effectiveness of ice breaking as a pedagogical tool that not only entertained but also enriched the learning process and outcomes. Based on this context, the research questions in this study are:

1. How is the student's positive perception of using ice breaking in english learning at Sd Alam Muara Bungo.

2. How is the student's negative perception of using ice breaking in English learning at Sd Alam Muara Bungo.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to examine in depth the students' perceptions of the use of ice breaking in English language learning at SD Alam Muara Bungo. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it was able to explore the subjective meaning of students' experiences based on their own perspectives (CRESWELL, 2012). The focus of this research was on students' positive and negative perceptions, which were analyzed using the framework of Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1986) with six main indicators: observation, modeling, self-efficacy, reinforcement, self-direction, and retention.

The participants of this study were five fourth-grade students of SD Alam Muara Bungo, selected through purposive sampling. The selection was based on the following criteria: (1) having participated in English learning activities that applied ice breaking, (2) being able to express opinions verbally, and (3) being willing to participate as respondents. All participants came from the same class and had experienced ice breaking activities conducted by the same teacher.

Data were collected through semi-structured interview

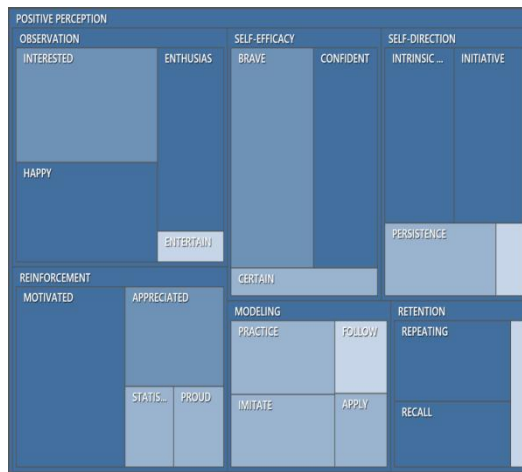
techniques using an interview protocol based on the six indicators of Social Learning Theory. Each indicator consisted of two main questions and additional prompts to elicit more detailed responses. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in a quiet classroom to ensure students felt comfortable. During the interview process, the researcher also took notes on non-verbal expressions such as gestures and voice intonation to enrich the findings. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the students and the teacher.

Data analysis followed the qualitative analysis procedure outlined by (CRESWELL, 2012), which consisted of six steps: (1) organizing and preparing the data for analysis, (2) reading through all the data, (3) coding the data to identify important themes, (4) applying description and classification processes into main themes, (5) interpreting the meaning of the data by linking it to the framework of Social Learning Theory, and (6) presenting the findings in a systematic narrative. The coding process was assisted by NVivo 12 software to ensure consistency and accuracy in categorizing the data into positive and negative perceptions.

Through this method, the study was expected to provide a clear and in-depth description of how students understood and experienced the implementation of ice breaking in English language learning at the elementary school level.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Positive perception



Picture 1.1 visualization of student's positive perception

At SD Alam Muara Bungo, ice breaking transformed the classroom from tense to lively within minutes, increasing students' enthusiasm for learning. Based on the (observation theme), four participants (p1-p4) expressed feelings of happiness and excitement, indicating that ice breaking was enjoyable and motivating. Under the (modeling theme), the dominant code was *imitate* (n=3), showing that students instinctively followed examples for guidance and security. *Practice* (n=2) reflected ongoing engagement through repetition, while *apply* (n=2) demonstrated the ability to transfer learned behaviors to new contexts, leading to greater readiness, openness, and active participation in lessons. This is in line with the findings of (Al Ghifarah & Pusparini, 2023),

which stated that ice breaking can significantly increase students' interest in English lessons, a similar thing is also reinforced by research (Sasan et al., 2023) in the Philippines which noted an increase in active student involvement when ice breaking was carried out consistently at the beginning of the lesson.

In the (self-efficacy) theme, all participants (p1-p4) showed *confident* responses, indicating that ice breaking strengthened their belief in their ability to participate without fear of failure. *Brave* (n=3) reflected the courage to try new tasks despite uncertainty, while *efficacy* (n=2) showed a strong conviction in the accuracy of their performance. These findings suggest that ice breaking reduced anxiety, built self-assurance, and encouraged persistence through a supportive classroom environment. (Reffalleo, 2024), in his research showed that students' self-confidence increased after they participated in ice breaking activities, because these activities helped create a non-judgmental environment and provided a safe space for students to try.

In the (reinforcement) theme, all participants (p1-p4) showed *motivated* responses, indicating that ice breaking strongly encouraged participation through praise, peer involvement, and activity excitement. *Appreciated* (n=3) reflected positive responses to recognition, *satisfied* (n=2) indicated personal fulfillment, and *proud* (n=2) showed a sense of achievement.

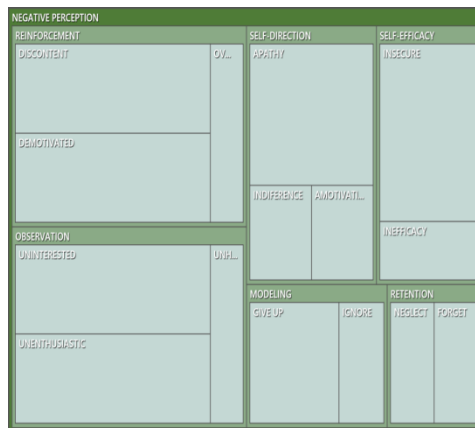
These findings suggest that both intrinsic enjoyment and external reinforcement played key roles in sustaining student engagement. (Muharrir et al., 2022), in his research stated that ice breaking activities can create an inclusive and harmonious learning environment, where all students feel part of a group without pressure or feeling marginalized. At SD Alam Muara Bungo, an atmosphere like this encourages healthier interactions, which are very important for the formation of character in elementary school students.

In the (self-direction theme), all participants (p1-p4) demonstrated initiative and intrinsic motivation, showing they willingly joined or initiated ice breaking without instruction, driven by enjoyment and perceived benefits. Persistence (n=3) reflected perseverance despite challenges, while curiosity (n=2) indicated a desire to explore and understand new activities. These findings suggest that ice breaking fostered independence, resilience, and active engagement in learning. According to (eka erviana vivi, Tri Setiyoko & Moh, 2023), in his research in Makassar, it shows that the use of ice breaking before learning can improve students' academic results because it makes them more focused and active during the lesson. The same thing was also felt by several students at SD Alam Muara who said that they felt it was easier to understand English vocabulary after

participating in the fun opening activities.

In the (retention) theme, all participants (p1-p4) demonstrated *remember*, indicating strong memory of ice breaking activities. *Recall* (n=3) showed their ability to deliberately retrieve these experiences, while *repeating* (n=3) reflected voluntary reenactment in different contexts. These findings suggest that ice breaking left a lasting cognitive and emotional imprint, making students more eager and engaged in future lessons. Research conducted by (Ratih Yuana Sari & Riris Nurkholidah Rambe, 2023), shows that class dynamics built through ice breaking have an impact on increasing enthusiasm for learning and a more positive classroom atmosphere overall. At SD Alam Muara Bungo, this effect was also evident. Ice breaking did not end as a one-time event, but was often recalled, reenacted, and retold by students outside of its original context, indicating that the experience was stored in long-term memory.

## 2. Negative Perception



Picture 1.2 visualization of student's negative perception

At SD Alam Muara Bungo, based on the interview analysis, only one participant (P5) demonstrated a negative (observational) response during ice breaking. This participant expressed emotional resistance and disengagement during the activity, indicating a breakdown in the observational process. The data was categorized under three potential negative observation codes unenthusiastic, unhappy, and uninterested with uninterested emerging as the dominant code in this case. The uninterested response suggests that the student was unable to relate to or find value in the activity being demonstrated. (pertiwi, 2015), stated that one of the main causes of student boredom with ice breaking is the lack of variation in implementation, which makes the activity seem like an empty routine without added value. At SD Alam Muara Bungo, this kind of boredom can arise if teachers are not creative enough in choosing the type of game that

suits the interests and age of students, or do not link ice breaking with the material to be studied.

Based on interview data at SD Alam Muara Bungo, only one participant (P5) showed a negative perception toward the (modeling) aspect of ice breaking. The student's response reflected an unwillingness or refusal to imitate or engage in the demonstrated activity, which falls under the negative modeling codes: ignore and give up. Among these, the dominant code was ignore. The ignore response suggests a conscious choice by the student not to pay attention to or follow the modeled behavior, even when it was clearly demonstrated by the teacher or peers. This indicates a breakdown in the very first step of the modeling process attention. While the give up response was also apparent, indicating that the student initially attempted to follow but withdrew shortly after, it appeared secondary to the stronger theme of avoidance altogether.

Based on the interview only one participant (P5) exhibited responses categorized under negative (self-efficacy). This response was coded into two main categories: insecure and uncertain, with insecure emerging as the dominant code. The insecure code indicates that the student lacked confidence in their ability to perform the ice breaking activities correctly or comfortably. The inefficacy code reflects the student's hesitation or indecision



when facing the task. Rather than attempting and adjusting through trial and error, the student appeared unsure of their own abilities from the outset, which limited their willingness to participate. (Zuhaery et al., 2024), noted that not all students have the same level of comfort in participating in ice breaking activities, so teachers need to consider the diversity of student characters before choosing the type of activity to be carried out.

Based on the interview data, only one participant (P5) expressed a negative perception toward the (reinforcement) aspect of ice breaking. The student's experience was categorized under three negative reinforcement codes: overlooked, demotivated, and discontent, with the dominant code being demotivated. According to (Alkalah, 2019), emphasizes the importance of teachers to manage time allocation properly so that ice breaking does not interfere with the effectiveness of learning. At SD Alam Muara Bungo, students who are more focused on achieving learning outcomes can feel disturbed if learning time is sacrificed for activities that are not considered so important.

Based on (self-direction) during ice breaking. The participant's behavior was categorized under three codes: apathy, amotivation, and indifference, with the dominant code being amotivation. The amotivation code reveals a total absence of motivation—whether intrinsic or extrinsic to participate

in the activity. According to (Khairunnisa, 2020), Children who do not really like to perform can feel unappreciated or unimportant. If this continues, they can feel like they have no place in the activity, and this clearly contradicts the main purpose of icebreakers as an inclusive opener.

Based on (retention) aspect of ice breaking. The participant's data fell under two negative retention codes: forget and neglect, with "forget" identified as the dominant code. The forget code indicates that the student was unable to recall what had been learned or performed during previous ice breaking sessions. This suggests that the activity did not leave a strong enough cognitive or emotional impression to be stored in long-term memory. Forgetting in this context reflects a breakdown in the encoding or rehearsal process, potentially caused by a lack of meaningful engagement or interest during the activity. The neglect code complements this by reflecting a lack of effort to recall, repeat, or apply what had been learned. It implies that the student did not perceive the activity as valuable or worth remembering.

## CONCLUSION

### 1. Positive Perception

The findings indicated that the majority of fourth-grade students at SD Alam Muara Bungo perceived ice breaking in English learning as highly beneficial. Ice breaking activities transformed the classroom atmosphere into a lively and

engaging space, encouraged active participation, and fostered enjoyment. Through observation and modeling, students were able to follow examples, practice, and apply learned behaviors to new contexts, which improved their readiness and responsiveness during lessons. The activities also enhanced self-efficacy, as students gained confidence, bravery, and a stronger belief in their own abilities. Reinforcement from peers and teachers strengthened motivation and satisfaction, while self-direction was reflected in students' initiative, intrinsic motivation, persistence, and curiosity. Additionally, retention was supported by students' ability to remember, recall, and repeat activities, indicating long-term cognitive and emotional benefits. Overall, ice breaking contributed positively to students' engagement, focus, and learning outcomes when implemented creatively and consistently.

## 2. Negative Perception

In contrast, a small number of students expressed negative perceptions of ice breaking. These were primarily linked to a lack of variation, limited personal interest, or discomfort in participating. Such cases were reflected in negative observation (unenthusiastic and uninterested responses), reluctance to imitate during modeling, low self-efficacy (feelings of insecurity and uncertainty), and negative reinforcement experiences such as feeling demotivated or

overlooked. Some students also demonstrated amotivation in self-direction and reported forgetting or neglecting activities in the retention stage. These findings suggest that when ice breaking activities are not adapted to students' preferences, developmental needs, and classroom context, they may lead to disengagement and reduced learning impact.

For Future Research:

- a. Use a more diverse range of participants, for example from different grade levels or schools, so that the results can be generalized more widely.
- b. Consider using mixed-methods with quantitative incorporation (e.g., questionnaires) to strengthen the qualitative interview results.
- c. The focus of further research can be directed at the long-term effectiveness of the use of ice breaking on students' English learning outcomes.

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