

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Education plays a crucial role in human life and society, especially in improving living standards through various means, including formal, non-formal, and informal education. In the context of formal education, learning activities are mandatory for both students and teachers, aiming to achieve success in education. The success of learning itself highly depends on the effectiveness of the process that takes place in the classroom. As stated by (Silalahi et al., 2022) the success of teaching is not only influenced by educators but also by institutional support, students' learning motivation, and the teaching process.

In the process of learning English, creating a comfortable and conducive classroom environment is a challenge for educators. As (Anggun et al., 2022) point out, for some students, learning English is an enjoyable experience. However, for others, it can be quite challenging. These difficulties often stem from various factors, one of which is the difference between English pronunciation and the language they use daily. Students frequently feel confused due to the inconsistency between English spelling and pronunciation, which hinders their ability to spell and pronounce words correctly. Additionally, the complexity of English grammar presents another challenge. Differences in grammatical structures

compared to their native language make it difficult for students to understand and apply the rules correctly, both in speaking and writing.

It's not just linguistic aspects that play a role—psychological factors such as limited vocabulary, shyness, and anxiety about speaking also hinder the learning process. Many students are afraid of making mistakes when speaking English, causing them to become passive in class and less confident in participating in discussions or speaking activities. The impact of these challenges is significant. Students who struggle tend to lose motivation to learn, become easily bored with lessons, participate less in interactions, and have difficulty understanding the material properly. If this situation is left unaddressed, it will not only affect their academic performance but also their ability to use English as a communication tool in real-world situations.

The teaching and learning process is a planned and systematic activity where teachers and students collaborate to achieve optimal learning outcomes. In this process, teachers take on multiple roles, including educator, instructor, mentor, guide, coach, evaluator, and assessor (Haudi, 2021 in (Sari et al., 2024) That's why educators need to be more creative in applying engaging and effective teaching techniques to keep students motivated and enthusiastic about learning. Without the right approach, students can easily lose interest and struggle to understand the material.

To address the various challenges in learning English, different teaching methods have been implemented to enhance student engagement and comfort in the learning process. One effective method is ice-breaking activities, which can be used at the beginning, middle, or end of a lesson to create a more relaxed and interactive atmosphere. Ice-breaking activities not only help break the stiffness and monotony of the classroom but also play a crucial role in increasing student participation, strengthening interactions with peers and teachers, and building confidence in speaking English.

As implied in QS. Al-mujadillah verse 11 about always having high motivation in studying (Patimah et al., 2024) :

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ
وَإِذَا قِيلَ انشُرُوا فَانْشُرُوا يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ
وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١١﴾

Based on the implied meaning of the verse above, it is explained that individuals with high learning motivation tend to have a greater chance of achieving success, enjoying a better quality of life, and gaining broader insights. This statement is also relevant in emphasizing that the learning process is not just about transferring knowledge but also about creating a conducive classroom environment.

As (Solihat et al., 2020) put it, the literal meaning of the term ice breaker is "a breaker of stiffness." In this context, an ice breaker refers to an effort to create a more familiar atmosphere, ease tension, and make

interactions flow more naturally and comfortably. (Solihat et al., 2020) explain that ice-breaking activities or warm-ups can boost students' motivation and interest in the learning process. These activities play a crucial role in building a comfortable classroom environment, increasing student engagement, and reducing anxiety when learning English. Ice-breaking activities are typically conducted at the beginning of a session to introduce the material and set a relaxed learning atmosphere. Additionally, they can be used midway through the lesson as a way to re-energize students when their focus starts to decline. By the end of the session, these activities help wrap up the lesson on a fun and memorable note.

The research conducted by Mahmud et al. (2023), titled "The Implementation of Ice-Breaking Activities in English Classroom: A Descriptive Study of the Second-Grade Students' Perceptions at SMA Al-Irsyad Kota Ternate," investigated students' perspectives on the use of ice-breaking activities in English learning through a qualitative descriptive method. The results showed that students responded positively to ice-breaking activities, which helped create a more comfortable learning environment, increased motivation, and improved classroom interaction. This study is relevant to the present research, as both focus on the role of ice-breaking activities in English teaching. However, while the previous study primarily examined students' perceptions, the current research takes a broader approach by exploring the implementation and benefits of ice-

breaking activities based on the experiences of both teachers and students through a descriptive qualitative method.

Additionally, (Fitria, 2023) , in her study *"Breaking the Ice in the Classroom: Using Ice Breaking in the Teaching and Learning Process,"* discusses various types of ice-breaking activities in English learning and their benefits, such as reducing student anxiety, fostering interaction, and creating a supportive learning atmosphere. The study emphasizes the crucial role of teachers in adapting ice-breaking techniques to meet students' needs, which is essential for their successful implementation. Therefore, this research attempts to fill this gap by using a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the direct experiences of teachers and students regarding the application of ice-breaking in English language learning in more depth.

Furthermore, the study conducted by Rusman (2022), titled "Implementation and Benefits of Learning through Ice Breaking," examines the application and advantages of ice-breaking activities in learning using a descriptive qualitative method, particularly through observation and documentation. The findings indicate that ice-breaking can transform a passive classroom into an active one, enhance student motivation and interaction, and strengthen teacher-student relationships. The study highlights that various ice-breaking techniques, such as games, chants, songs, humor, and physical activities, can be easily incorporated into learning without requiring specialized skills. While this research

aligns with the current study in exploring the benefits of ice-breaking in increasing student engagement, it does not specifically focus on English learning and does not employ a descriptive qualitative approach to explore in depth the experiences of both teachers and students as done in the present study.

Based on previous studies, ice-breaking has been proven to provide benefits in learning, especially in improving student interaction and comfort in the classroom. Studies by Mahmud et al. (2023), Fitria (2023), and Rusman (2022) showed that ice-breaking activities can increase motivation, reduce boredom, and create a more active learning atmosphere. However, these studies were still limited to student perceptions or literature-based analyses, and few have directly examined the experiences of both teachers and students in implementing ice-breaking activities in the classroom, particularly in the context of English language learning. Therefore, this research is important to further explore how teachers and students experience the application of ice-breaking through a descriptive qualitative approach, with the aim of providing a realistic picture of its implementation, benefits, and the challenges faced during the learning process. Through this approach, the findings of the study are expected to serve as a useful reference for teachers in optimizing ice-breaking strategies to create more effective and enjoyable English language learning.

This research is entitled “Exploring the Benefits of Implementing Ice-Breaking Activities in English Language Teaching.” The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of teachers and students in implementing ice-breaking activities during the English teaching and learning process. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to clearly describe how teachers design and implement ice-breaking in the classroom, its impact on student motivation and engagement, and the challenges teachers face during its implementation. Data were collected through observations and interviews to obtain direct information from both teachers and students. The results of this study are expected to provide valuable input for teachers in applying ice-breaking activities more effectively, so that the learning atmosphere becomes more engaging, interactive, and enjoyable. Consequently, the quality of English language learning in schools is also expected to improve.

B. Definition of Key Terms

The To avoid misunderstanding, some terms relevant to this research are clarified.

1. Exploring

Exploring means investigating or digging deeper into a topic or concept to understand it deeply and gain more information. The word “exploring” indicates that this research is exploratory in nature, that is, it aims to investigate, explore and further understand the benefits of implementing ice-breaking activities in English language teaching.

2. Benefit

Benefit can be defined as the advantages, benefits, or uses obtained from something or another party. In this study, it refers to the benefits of implementing ice breaking activities in the classroom to eliminate boredom.

3. Implementing

Implementing is the process of applying or implementing ideas, strategies or programmes that have been designed. In this study, the focus is on implementing ice breaking activities in the classroom.

4. Ice Breaking

Ice breaking is done to relieve tension, and create a more relaxed and interactive atmosphere. . In this research, icebreaking activities in English classes are expected to create a positive learning mood. Effective icebreaking activities can also help students can also help students achieve optimal learning outcomes and make them feel happy to learn.

5. Teaching

Teaching is the process of conveying knowledge to be understood and mastered. In this research, English teaching is associated with ice-breaking as a strategy to overcome student boredom, create a fun learning atmosphere, increase motivation, and encourage active involvement in learning.

C. Research Questions

1. What Kinds of Ice-Breaking Activities are Implemented, and how are They Applied in the English Teaching and Learning Process?
2. What are the benefits of implementing ice-breaking activities in English language teaching?

D. Objectives of Study

1. To identify the kinds of ice-breaking activities implemented in the English teaching and learning process.
2. To explore the benefits of implementing ice-breaking activities in English language teaching.

E. Significance of Study

1. Teachers. Through this research, teachers are expected to be more effective educators by applying ice breaking strategies to increase focus, reduce boredom, build interaction, foster confidence, and increase student motivation in learning English.
2. Students. Through this research, students are expected to be more enthusiastic in learning English with effective ice breaking strategies, thus increasing motivation, reducing boredom, and improving the quality of learning.
3. Readers. This study benefits researchers and teachers by highlighting how ice breaking activities can increase student engagement and motivation, as well as being a reference for interactive teaching strategies.