

Ice Breaking Strategy for Muhammadiyah Plus Gondang Elementary School Students In Indonesian Language Subjects

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the forms and implementation strategies of ice breaking activities in Indonesian language learning, as well as to analyze their effectiveness in enhancing the learning interest of fourth-grade students at SD Muhammadiyah Plus Gondang. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and documentation. Research subjects were determined using purposive sampling, comprising the Indonesian language teacher, the school principal, and fourth-grade students. The findings reveal that the teacher implemented ice breaking in a planned and integrated manner within the lesson plans, utilizing activities such as word chain games, interactive storytelling, and rhythmic clapping embedded with subject matter content. These activities were conducted at three strategic moments: at the beginning, middle, and end of the lesson, aligned with the natural rhythm of students' attention spans. The implementation of ice breaking proved effective in enhancing students' learning interest across four indicators: attention, positive affect, activeness, and willingness to participate. This effectiveness operated through four primary mechanisms: improved attention through cognitive stimulus renewal, establishment of a positive and anxiety-free classroom climate, strengthened social interaction supporting language competence development, and the formation of positive emotional associations toward Indonesian language as a subject. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of ice breaking is not automatic or permanent; it depends significantly on teacher creativity, contextual appropriateness, and the consistency of activity variation provided. This study recommends that schools actively facilitate the development of teachers' competencies in designing creative, varied, and pedagogically sound ice breaking activities, integrated with the curriculum and digital technology, as a means of sustaining and improving the quality of Indonesian language learning at the elementary level.

Keywords: ice breaking, learning interest, Indonesian language, elementary school, active learning

Abtrack

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan bentuk dan strategi implementasi ice breaking dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia, serta menganalisis efektivitasnya terhadap peningkatan minat belajar siswa kelas IV di SD Muhammadiyah Plus Gondang. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi non-partisipan, wawancara semi-terstruktur, angket, dan dokumentasi. Subjek penelitian ditentukan melalui purposive sampling, meliputi guru Bahasa Indonesia, kepala sekolah, dan siswa kelas IV. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru menerapkan ice breaking secara terencana dan terintegrasi dalam Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran (RPP), dengan jenis aktivitas berupa permainan kata berantai, storytelling interaktif, dan tepuk berirama bermuatan materi. Pelaksanaannya dilakukan pada tiga momen strategis, yaitu di awal, pertengahan, dan akhir pembelajaran, sesuai dengan dinamika ritme perhatian siswa. Implementasi ice breaking terbukti efektif meningkatkan minat belajar siswa berdasarkan empat indikator, yakni perhatian, perasaan senang, keaktifan, dan kemauan berpartisipasi. Efektivitas tersebut bekerja melalui empat mekanisme utama: peningkatan atensi melalui pembaruan stimulus kognitif, pembangunan

iklim kelas yang positif dan bebas kecemasan, penguatan interaksi sosial yang mendukung kompetensi berbahasa, serta terbentuknya asosiasi emosional positif terhadap mata pelajaran Bahasa Indonesia. Meski demikian, efektivitas ice breaking tidak bersifat otomatis, melainkan sangat bergantung pada kreativitas guru, kesesuaian konteks, dan konsistensi variasi aktivitas yang diberikan. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan agar sekolah secara aktif memfasilitasi pengembangan kompetensi guru dalam merancang ice breaking yang kreatif, variatif, dan terintegrasi dengan kurikulum serta teknologi digital sebagai upaya peningkatan kualitas pembelajaran yang berkelanjutan.

Kata kunci: ice breaking, minat belajar, Bahasa Indonesia, sekolah dasar, pembelajaran aktif

I. Introduction

Indonesian subjects in elementary schools often face an interesting paradox: despite being the everyday language of students, it is actually one of the fields of study with the lowest level of active involvement in the classroom. The dominance of mechanical text reading and writing activities creates a learning atmosphere that tends to be static and monotonous. This condition is exacerbated by the long duration of lesson hours, thus triggering a significant decrease in student concentration, especially in the middle to the end of the learning session (Rahmania et al., 2023). Self-study concentration refers to the full concentration of attention to a subject matter by putting aside all things that are irrelevant, which can be observed through indicators such as focus of view, ability to answer questions, courage to ask, and positive psychomotor responses during learning.

This phenomenon of decreased concentration is clearly observed in SD Muhammadiyah Plus Gondang, an elementary school that carries a vision of active, fun, and Islamic learning. Initial observations made in grade IV showed that in the 30th to 45th minute of a Indonesian language learning session, there were clear indications of academic *burnout* in students, characterized by increased unfocused behavior, reduced responses to teachers' questions, and decreased enthusiasm in doing assignments. This condition indicates that mastery of Indonesian language material is not enough only through linear content delivery, but requires dynamic classroom atmosphere management and responsiveness to the rhythm of students' attention.

One of the strategies that is considered relevant to overcome this problem is the application of *ice breaking*. Ice breaking is an interactive technique in the form of games, movements, or light activities that are inserted in the learning process with the aim of breaking up saturation, melting tension, and restoring student concentration (Sundari et al., 2022). In contrast to just entertainment, ice breaking that is designed in a directional manner has been proven to be able to increase *students' time on tasks*, namely the effective duration of students' attention focused on learning activities, which in turn contributes positively to learning outcomes (Salsabella et al., 2025). In the context of learning Bahasa Indonesia, ice breaking can be adapted through word games, guessing sentences, or *short role plays* that directly intersect with the language competencies being learned, so that this transitional activity is inseparable from the material context. A number of previous studies have proven the effectiveness of ice breaking in increasing student motivation and learning concentration in general (Mai Sri Lena et al., 2023; Rahmania et al., 2023).

However, studies that specifically explore the implementation of ice breaking in Indonesian language subjects in elementary schools based on Islamic values and character strengthening are still very limited. At SD Muhammadiyah Plus Gondang itself, teachers have routinely inserted ice-breaking activities in learning, but there has never been a systematic evaluation of its concrete impact on students' learning interests in Indonesian subjects in particular. The gap between current practice and measurable empirical evidence is the main foundation of this research.

Based on this background, this article has two main objectives: first, to describe the form and strategy of ice breaking implementation applied in Indonesian language learning at SD Muhammadiyah Plus Gondang; second, to analyze the effectiveness of the application of ice breaking on increasing students' interest in learning in Indonesian subjects. The novelty of this research lies in the adaptation of the form of ice breaking in the form of a *short role play* that is designed contextually in accordance with the Indonesian language material and Islamic learning values that are the hallmarks of SD Muhammadiyah. The results of this study are expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of responsive classroom management, as well as a practical reference for educators in designing meaningful transitional activities in elementary schools.

II. Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type of research. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to describe and analyze the phenomenon in depth, especially related to the implementation of ice breaking strategies in learning Indonesian as it occurs naturally in the field (Rahmania et al., 2023). The inductive nature of qualitative research allows researchers to let findings and patterns emerge directly from the data without imposing a rigid hypothesis framework, so that the picture of the phenomenon obtained is holistic and contextual.

This research was carried out at SD Muhammadiyah Plus Gondang, which was chosen in a purposive *setting* because the school has routinely integrated ice breaking activities in the learning process, but has never conducted a systematic evaluation of its impact. The research was carried out in the even semester of the 2024/2025 school year, with a focus on observation on Indonesian language learning activities in grade IV.

The subject of the study was determined using *the purposive sampling technique*, which is the selection of informants based on considerations of relevance and the capacity of informants in providing the required data. The informants in this study consisted of: (1) teachers of Indonesian subjects in grade IV as the main informants, (2) school principals as supporting informants related to learning policies, and (3) grade IV students who were selected representatively as supporting informants to gain perspectives from the perspective of students.

Data collection in this study was carried out through three main techniques, namely: **Observation** Observation was carried out directly (*direct observation*) on the Indonesian language learning process in grade IV, with a focus on observing the form, time of giving, and students' response to ice breaking activities applied by teachers.

Observations were made on two objects, namely the main object in the form of learning activities and the application of ice breaking, and the supporting object in the form of the physical condition of the classroom and the school environment in general. During observation, the researcher acts as a *non-participant observer* to maintain the objectivity of the data obtained, **Interview Interviews** are conducted using semi-structured *interview* guidelines to obtain in-depth but still directed data. The researcher is positioned as an interviewer who asks questions, digs for further answers (*probing*), and records informant responses systematically. The interviews were aimed at Indonesian language teachers, school principals, and a number of selected students to obtain triangulation of sources (Mai Sri Lena et al., 2023)., Documentation Documentation techniques were used as supporting data, including learning tools (RPP), *field notes*, and photos of activities during the observation process. Documentation data serves to strengthen and verify the data from observations and interviews.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Form and Strategy of Ice Breaking Implementation in Indonesian Language Learning at SD Muhammadiyah Plus Gondang

Ice breaking in the context of basic education is not solely understood as an entertainment activity, but rather as a planned, structured, and oriented pedagogical intervention aimed at achieving learning goals. Sunarto (2012) defines ice breaking as a simple game or activity that functions to change the atmosphere of freezing, boredom, or drowsiness in learning, so as to be able to foster a sincere commitment to learning and authentic enthusiasm to create a serious and fun learning climate. This definition emphasizes that the effectiveness of *ice breaking* is largely determined by the quality of planning and its relevance to the instructional goals to be achieved.

In the context of learning Bahasa Indonesia, this relevance is realized through the selection of types of *ice breaking* that directly stimulate students' language competence. Based on observation data at SD Muhammadiyah Plus Gondang, the types of *ice breaking* applied include chain word games, interactive storytelling, and rhythmic clap that contain the content of the subject matter. The selection of these three types is not *arbitrary*, but is based on careful pedagogical considerations: each activity is designed to simultaneously function as an icebreaker and as a meaningful language competency exercise.

From a neuroeducational perspective, Jensen (2008) explained that the human brain at elementary school age has a limited attention span that ranges from 10 to 15 minutes. Beyond that time threshold, students' cognitive efficiency tends to decline significantly, which has a direct impact on reduced information encoding and retrieval skills. Therefore, ice breaking functions as a re-engagement mechanism that *rejuvenates* students' attention capacity so that the learning cycle can continue optimally. In line with these findings, Purba et al. (2025) reported that the consistent application of interactive *ice breaking* can increase students' focus by up to 85%, while reducing boredom and increasing learning readiness.

The neuroeducational foundation is strengthened by Goleman's (1995) theory of emotional intelligence, which emphasizes that positive emotional states open up

students' cognitive pathways more widely, so that the process of receiving and processing information takes place more effectively and deeply. In other words, *ice breaking* does not only work at the level of surface attention, but more deeply affects the affective state of students which is the foundation for meaningful learning. Vygotsky's theoretical framework (in Santrock, 2011) through the concept of *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD) also provides scientific justification for the contribution of language-based ice breaking in the development of students' language competence.

When students engage in social interaction through *ice-breaking* activities, they indirectly practice in their proximal developmental zone, which is the region between the abilities that have been mastered and the abilities that can potentially be achieved through appropriate and directed social interaction. Amalia (2020) strengthens this argument by stating that ice breaking in learning can help teachers review the material that has been taught, as well as foster students' concentration, interest, and motivation to learn more organically.

Analysis of Student Learning Interest Indicators

The analysis of the effectiveness of the implementation of *ice breaking* in this study refers to four indicators of learning interest put forward by Slameto (2010), namely: (1) attention, (2) feeling of pleasure, (3) activeness, and (4) willingness to participate. These four indicators are used as an observation framework to measure changes in classroom conditions before and after the implementation of *ice breaking* in a systematic and verified manner.

Attention Indicator

The first indicator, namely student attention, showed a significant increase after the implementation of ice breaking. According to Gazali (in Slameto, 2010: 56), attention is an elevated activity of the soul that is completely focused on an object. Adequate attention to subject matter is a prerequisite for achieving optimal learning outcomes; Without attention, the material will not be absorbed effectively and boredom will easily appear. Based on the results of field observations, before ice breaking was implemented, a number of students seemed to be easily distracted by external factors and tended to be passive during the learning process. However, after the *ice breaking* was carried out, the students' collective attention was again focused on the teacher and learning activities, and the classroom atmosphere became more dynamic and responsive. This change shows that ice breaking successfully performs its function as a cognitive reset that restores students' attention capacity.

Positive Affect Indicator

The second indicator, namely the feeling of happiness, can be seen clearly from the students' facial expressions and verbal responses that are more positive during and after the *ice breaking* session. Slameto (2010) emphasized that a student who has a feeling of pleasure in a subject will continue to study it without any compulsion, because it is driven by intrinsic motivation that grows from within.

The results of the questionnaire collected from the students confirmed the findings of the observation: most respondents stated that they preferred Indonesian

lessons when the teacher inserted *ice breaking activities* in the learning process. These findings reflect the formation of a positive psychological association between learning experiences and Indonesian subjects, which in the long term has the potential to strengthen students' motivation to learn sustainably.

Indicators of Activeness and Willingness to Participate

The third and fourth indicators, namely activeness and willingness to participate, show the most visible changes behaviorally and measurably. Slameto (2010) emphasized that students who have an interest in a subject will tend to be actively involved in various learning activities related to that subject; They are diligent in asking questions, dare to express opinions, and always try to take a role in every class activity.

This significant participatory change was confirmed by the statement of Mrs. Retno as the fourth grade homeroom teacher of SD Muhammadiyah Plus Gondang, who stated that the most visible impact of the implementation of ice breaking is the increase in the intensity of interaction between students, the strengthening of emotional relationships between students and teachers, and the growth of more organic and sustainable learning motivation. This statement is in line with the findings of Harianja and Sapri (2022) who concluded that *ice breaking* has proven to be effective in building positive relationships between teachers and students, as well as improving students' memory of subject matter.

Empirical Findings: Implementation Patterns in SD Muhammadiyah Plus Gondang

Field data obtained through triangulation methods including participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and questionnaires reveal a number of empirical findings that reinforce each other. These findings are organized into three main dimensions: (1) curricular planning and integration, (2) implementation time patterns, and (3) relational dimensions.

Curricular Planning and Integration

The first finding showed that Indonesian language teachers at SD Muhammadiyah Plus Gondang implemented ice breaking in a planned and integrated manner in the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP). The type of *ice breaking* chosen is explicitly adjusted to the basic competencies being taught, so that there is a substantive alignment between the icebreaker activity and the learning material. This integration is in line with the views of Vivi et al. (2024), who state that *ice breaking* can be applied at the beginning, middle, and end of learning as a cheerful and motivating conclusion.

The alignment between ice breaking and basic competencies is a crucial differentiating factor. *Ice breaking* that is not integrated in a curricular manner risks becoming a disruption of the learning flow instead of being a reinforcement of it. In contrast, ice breaking designed with instructional objectives in mind serves a dual function: as an attention restorer as well as a medium for fun language competency training.

Implementation Time Pattern

The second finding is related to the implementation time pattern which shows that teachers apply ice breaking at three strategic moments. First, at the beginning of learning to awaken students' psychological and cognitive readiness. Sunarto (2012) noted that ice breaking in the form of yells is very effective in preparing students' psychological conditions to be ready to take lessons, with an average duration of only 3 to 5 minutes. Second, in the middle of the session when the energy of the class begins to decline and students' attention begins to be divided, as a form of re-engagement referred to by Jensen (2008). Third, occasionally at the end of the learning as a conclusion that leaves a positive impression and strengthens the emotional association with the subject. This three-moment pattern reflects the teacher's good understanding of the psychological dynamics of the classroom and the learning rhythm of elementary school students. Timely and contextual ice breaking placement is the key to its effectiveness, as underlined by the principle of attention management in the information processing theory of Atkinson and Shiffrin (in Sanjaya, 2012).

Relational Dimension: Strengthening Teacher-Student Relationships

The third finding concerns the relational dimension, where ice breaking has been shown to strengthen the emotional closeness between teachers and students in a meaningful way. Harianja and Sapri (2022) noted that ice breaking is used to create a more relaxed and conducive atmosphere in the classroom, build a good relationship between teachers and students, and improve students' memory of the material. This safe, comfortable, and fun psychological condition encourages students to be more courageous in expressing themselves in various language activities, such as reading aloud, speaking in front of the class, and creative writing. This courage to express itself has significant implications in the context of learning Bahasa Indonesia, because language competence can only develop optimally through active practice that requires a sense of security and confidence. *Ice breaking*, thus, serves as a catalyst that lowers students' *affective filters* in language, a concept that is relevant to Krashen's (1982) hypothesis about the importance of positive emotional states in language acquisition.

Supporting and Inhibiting Implementation Factors

Supporting Factors

The success of the implementation of *ice breaking* at SD Muhammadiyah Plus Gondang is supported by several supporting factors that interact synergistically with each other. The main factor that is most determinant is the teacher's individual creativity in designing *ice breaking* that is contextual, varied, and relevant to the subject matter. Mulyasa (2013) emphasized that a good teacher's pedagogic competence is reflected in their ability to create a learning environment that is adaptive and responsive to the emotional and cognitive needs of students. Without this creativity, ice breaking risks turning into a mechanical routine that loses its appeal and pedagogical function. The second supporting factor is the school culture of SD Muhammadiyah Plus Gondang which institutionally emphasizes active, characterful, and student-centered learning. The support of the principal who provides space and freedom for teachers to innovate is an inseparable element of this success.

This is in line with the concept of effective schools put forward by Fullan (2007), who emphasizes that a collaborative culture and supportive leadership are key factors in encouraging sustainable and meaningful learning innovation. Purba et al. (2025) added that interactive ice breaking also functions as an effective classroom management strategy: helping teachers create a conducive and collaborative atmosphere, stabilizing classroom situations, overcoming uncooperative student behavior, and strengthening interaction between students. Thus, the benefits of ice breaking go beyond the mere motivational function and touch the broader dimension of classroom management.

Inhibiting Factors

On the other hand, there are three inhibiting factors that systematically limit the effectiveness of ice breaking implementation. The first obstacle is the pressure of a dense curriculum, which forces teachers to shorten the duration of *ice breaking sessions* in order to pursue the target of achieving basic competencies. This limited time allocation is a real dilemma for teachers who are aware of the benefits of ice breaking but are constrained by inflexible curricular demands. The second obstacle is the heterogeneity of student characteristics.

Gardner (1983) through his theory of multiple intelligence explained that each student has different intelligence tendencies, so not all types of ice breaking will give the same response to each individual. Some students may be less responsive to motion-based ice breaking, while others may be more stimulated by verbal or visual activities. Vivi et al. (2024) confirmed this by noting that there were students who did not want to participate or felt embarrassed to participate in the *ice breaking* given. The third obstacle is the limited variety of ice breaking repertoire mastered by teachers. Atkinson and Shiffrin (in Sanjaya, 2012) emphasized that novelty and stimulus variation are important variables in maintaining attention at the *sensory register stage* in the information processing model. Ice breaking that is repeated without variation will lose its *novelty* effect and potentially become boring.

Vivi et al. (2024) emphasize the need for teachers to actively read references, develop creativity, and maintain high spirits, because the positive energy of teachers is directly transmitted to students in the learning process. Facing these three obstacles, the development of teacher competencies through focused training, comparative studies, and professional learning *communities* is an urgent need that cannot be ignored. Purba et al. (2025) also recommend the integration of ice breaking with visual media and digital applications that are in accordance with the characteristics of students in the digital era, as an effort to increase concentration and reduce distractions in 21st century learning.

Synthesis: Mechanism of Ice Breaking Effectiveness

Based on the overall analysis of field data and theoretical studies that have been presented, the effectiveness of the implementation of ice breaking in increasing students' interest in learning Indonesian subjects at SD Muhammadiyah Plus Gondang can be explained through four main interrelated mechanisms. First, the mechanism of increasing attention through the renewal of cognitive stimulus, which works on the

basis of neuroeducational principles about the limitations of the attention span of elementary school students. Second, the mechanism for building a positive, safe, and anxiety-free classroom climate, which lowers students' affective barriers to active participation. Third, a mechanism to strengthen social interaction that supports the development of language competence through authentic communication practices in a pleasant context. Fourth, the mechanism for forming positive emotional associations with Indonesian subjects, which in the long term contributes to strengthening students' intrinsic learning motivation.

These four mechanisms work synergistically and reinforce each other, so that the impact of the implementation of ice breaking is not momentary, but has the potential to make a sustainable contribution to improving the quality of Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level. However, such effectiveness is not automatic or permanent; It relies heavily on the quality of teacher planning, the suitability of the context, the consistency of the variation provided, and the systemic support of a conducive school culture.

CONCLUSION

Based on the overall analysis that has been presented, it can be concluded that the implementation of ice breaking at SD Muhammadiyah Plus Gondang is a pedagogical practice that has a strong theoretical foundation, supported by consistent field data, and has a measurable positive impact on increasing students' interest in learning in Indonesian subjects. The benefits obtained from the application of *ice breaking* are to eliminate boredom, boredom, and drowsiness with simple things that can be done by anyone without the need for qualified skills.

The *ice breaking* approach has succeeded in creating an interactive and fun learning environment, as well as encouraging active involvement of students, so this method is recommended as one of the effective learning strategies in fostering interest in learning at the elementary school level, and has the potential to be applied to other subjects and different levels of education. This effectiveness is realized through four main mechanisms: increased attention through cognitive stimulus renewal, development of a positive and anxiety-free classroom climate, strengthening social interactions that support the development of language competence, and the formation of positive emotional associations with Indonesian subjects.

However, the effectiveness of *ice breaking* is not automatic or permanent; it is highly dependent on the variables of teacher quality, the suitability of the context, and the consistency of the variation given. The literature emphasizes the importance of innovation and the integration of ice breaking with curricula and technologies, such as visual media and digital applications, that improve concentration, reduce distractions, and fit the needs of students in the digital age. This finding implies that education policies at the school level need to actively facilitate the development of teachers' competencies in designing creative, varied, and pedagogically standardized ice breaking, so that the good practices that have been running at SD Muhammadiyah Plus Gondang can continue to be maintained, strengthened, and used as a model of implementation for other schools in the context of learning Indonesian at the elementary school level.

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