

The Effect of Inquiry Based Learning Method in Enhancing Students' Writing Ability in Narrative Text at The Eight Grade Students of SMP Plus Ja'al Haq Kota Bengkulu

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effect of Inquiry-Based Learning (PBI) in improving the narrative writing ability of grade VII students at Ja'al Haq Plus Junior High School in Bengkulu City. Writing competence is an important element in English language learning; however, many students face challenges in organizing ideas, developing content, and applying appropriate language structures. This study used a quasi-experimental method involving two groups: an experimental group and a control group, each consisting of 10 students. The research procedure consisted of pre-test, treatment through the application of IBL for the experimental group, and post-test. Data were analyzed using paired t-test and independent sample t-test in SPSS 22. The findings showed that although both groups showed improvement in their writing scores, the experimental group showed a greater average improvement. Nevertheless, the independent t-test results showed no statistically significant difference ($p = 0.591 > 0.05$). Despite the limited statistical effect, IBL was shown to encourage students' engagement, creativity, and autonomy during the writing process. These results imply that, despite its minimal measurable impact, IBL remains a useful pedagogical approach to teaching writing in the junior high school context.

Keywords: *Inquiry-Based Learning, narrative text, writing skills*

Introduction

In the educational context of SMP Plus Ja'al Haq Bengkulu City, one of the major challenges encountered is the limited variation in teaching methods. Research underscores that selecting the right instructional strategies is essential to achieving learning objectives (Lutvaidah, 2015), and the inability of teachers to choose and apply effective methods can hinder the overall teaching-learning process (Sugihartono et al., 2013). Writing, as a language skill, is inherently complex because it not only requires the construction of sentences but also demands the ability to communicate ideas effectively. At Ja'al Haq Plus Junior High School, many students struggle with organizing narratives and demonstrating creativity in their writing. Studies have shown that traditional approaches to teaching writing often fail to engage students actively in the process, leading to low motivation and less-than-optimal performance (Graham & Perin, 2007). Consequently, the need for innovative teaching strategies that foster participation and critical thinking has become increasingly urgent.

Observations conducted during October 2024 revealed that many students in the eighth grade faced persistent challenges in writing narrative texts. These included a weak understanding of narrative structure, difficulty organizing ideas, and low motivation to participate in writing activities. This reflects a pressing need for an instructional approach

that is both effective and engaging. The reliance of many teachers at Ja'al Haq Plus Junior High School on monotonous teaching techniques has resulted in students becoming bored and less involved in classroom activities. Djamarah and Zain (2014) stress that variety in teaching methods is crucial to accommodate diverse learning styles.

Another factor contributing to the problem is the underutilization of innovative learning media. Effective media can enhance students' comprehension and make lessons more engaging (Slameto, 2010), yet many teachers at Ja'al Haq have not maximized their use. This has resulted in less dynamic and interactive classroom environments, with student performance often assessed through written assignments that do not fully reflect their writing abilities. Integration of diverse learning media, including ICT-based tools, has been shown to improve the effectiveness of teaching while fostering a more participatory learning atmosphere.

Writing is a complex cognitive process involving critical thinking, creativity, idea organization, and mastery of grammar and vocabulary. It cannot be mastered instantly but requires consistent practice supported by appropriate instructional methods. Strong writing skills are particularly vital for narrative composition, which demands that students create logical and engaging storylines. Among the various instructional approaches available, Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) stands out as a promising method for teaching writing. IBL promotes active engagement by encouraging students to explore questions and seek answers through investigation. Evidence suggests that it can enhance writing proficiency, particularly in narrative writing, as demonstrated by research on eighth-grade learners, where students taught through IBL showed notable improvements compared to those using conventional methods (Daulay et al., 2023).

The implementation of IBL shifts students from passive recipients of teacher explanations to active participants in their own learning, thereby enhancing their engagement and deepening their understanding. This approach motivates learners to ask questions, explore topics of interest, and develop critical thinking skills, ultimately building their confidence in writing (Bakar et al., 2019). The challenges in teaching writing at SMP Plus Ja'al Haq limited methodological variety, minimal use of innovative media, and reliance on traditional methods have significantly contributed to students' low motivation and weak narrative writing skills. Research and classroom observations indicate that applying the IBL approach can improve engagement, creativity, and writing performance, making it a valuable strategy for creating an interactive and effective learning environment.

The problems identified in this context include: first, a lack of engagement in writing lessons, with students often exhibiting low motivation due to reliance on rote memorization and direct instruction; second, insufficient understanding of narrative structure, including plot development, characterization, and thematic expression; and third, limited opportunities for collaborative learning, which can restrict students' ability to share perspectives, provide peer feedback, and develop critical thinking skills.

To ensure clarity and depth of analysis, this study focuses on the application of the IBL method, excluding other instructional approaches such as project-based learning. The research is limited to eighth-grade students at SMP Plus Ja'al Haq Bengkulu City, meaning the results may not be generalizable to other contexts or grade levels. The primary research question is: Is there an effect of the Inquiry-Based Learning method in enhancing students' writing ability in narrative text at SMP Plus Ja'al Haq Kota Bengkulu? The objective is to determine whether IBL significantly improves students' narrative writing skills.

The significance of this study is twofold. Theoretically, it contributes to the understanding of how IBL fosters critical thinking by encouraging students to question, analyze, and hypothesize, aligning with educational goals of developing analytical and problem-solving skills. Practically, it offers benefits for teachers, students, and future researchers. For teachers, implementing IBL can improve instructional skills, promote classroom engagement, and foster student independence. For students, it develops motivation, critical thinking, and collaboration skills through active participation. For future researchers, this study opens pathways for further exploration into how IBL influences writing proficiency, learning motivation, and academic outcomes, as well as identifying factors that support or hinder its application.

In summary, the adoption of Inquiry-Based Learning at SMP Plus Ja'al Haq is not only expected to address existing challenges in teaching writing but also to create a more dynamic, student-centered learning environment. By shifting the focus from teacher-led lectures to student-driven inquiry, IBL has the potential to significantly enhance narrative writing skills and foster essential cognitive and collaborative competencies among junior high school learners.

Method

This research applied a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test approach to determine the effect of the Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) method on students' narrative writing ability. Trochim (2020) explains that quasi-experimental designs are suitable when researchers cannot randomly assign participants to groups but still seek to compare the effects of an intervention. This design allows the evaluation of instructional impacts by comparing a treatment group with a control group, even though extraneous variables may influence outcomes. In this study, the procedure involved administering a pre-test to both groups, applying the IBL method as the treatment for the experimental group, and conducting a post-test for both groups to assess improvement. Creswell (2015) emphasizes that in a pre-test-post-test control group design, both groups are measured before and after the intervention, providing clear evidence of learning gains attributable to the treatment.

The population consisted of all eighth-grade students at SMP Plus Ja'al Haq Bengkulu City during the academic year of the research. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique based on specific objectives. One class was designated as the experimental group and another as the control group, with a total of 20 students 11 males and 9 females. The experimental group received instruction using the IBL method, while the control group continued learning through conventional lecture-based methods.

The independent variable (X) in this study was the Inquiry-Based Learning method, defined as an instructional strategy that engages students in questioning, exploring, and investigating to construct knowledge. Indicators included: (1) level of student participation in class discussions, (2) frequency of questions asked during the lesson, and (3) quality of ideas presented in writing tasks.

The dependent variable (Y) was students' writing ability in narrative texts. This encompassed five key aspects: (1) Content development of ideas and themes; (2) Organization logical sequencing and coherence; (3) Language Use grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure; (4) Creativity originality of storylines and characters; and (5) Mechanics correct spelling, punctuation, and formatting.

The data collection process consisted of three stages:

1. Pre-Test – Conducted before the treatment to measure students' initial writing proficiency. Students were asked to compose a short narrative text based on a given prompt.
2. Treatment – The experimental group participated in six meetings applying the IBL method. Activities followed the stages of inquiry: asking questions, investigating, organizing ideas, drafting, revising, and presenting. The control group continued with traditional methods, focusing on teacher explanation and individual writing tasks.
3. Post-Test – Administered after the treatment to measure improvement in narrative writing skills. Students were given a new writing prompt, and their work was assessed using the same rubric as in the pre-test.

The main instrument was a narrative writing test, used for both pre-test and post-test. J. B. Heaton (1988) notes that writing tests may take the form of creative tasks that reflect actual language use. The assessment rubric, adapted from Alfianika & Sitohang (2022), evaluated five criteria—content, organization, language use, creativity, and mechanics—each scored on a scale from 1 to 4. The total score was the sum of all criteria, with higher scores indicating better performance. The instrument had been validated by an expert prior to use, ensuring content validity without requiring additional pilot testing.

Before hypothesis testing, normality and homogeneity tests were conducted. The Shapiro Wilk test assessed normality, with p-values above 0.05 indicating normally distributed data. Levene's test evaluated homogeneity of variances, with significance values above 0.05 confirming equal variances.

To analyze the effectiveness of the IBL method, two statistical tests were applied:

1. Paired Sample t-Test – Used to determine whether there was a significant difference in the writing scores of each group between the pre-test and post-test.
2. Independent Sample t-Test – Used to compare the post-test scores between the experimental and control groups. If the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) was less than 0.05, the difference was considered statistically significant; otherwise, it was not.

The t-test formula for paired samples is:

$$t = \frac{\bar{d}}{sd/\sqrt{n}}$$

where:

$\bar{d}$ = Mean difference between paired observations (post-test score pre test score)

sd = Standard deviation of the differences

n = Number of pairs (students)

This research methodology was designed to systematically assess whether the Inquiry-Based Learning method improves students' narrative writing ability. By combining a quasi-experimental design with rigorous statistical analysis, the study ensured reliable findings. The careful definition of variables, structured treatment process, validated instrument, and appropriate analytical techniques provided a strong foundation for examining the effect of IBL on writing performance.

Results

This chapter presents the results of the research that aimed to investigate the effect of the Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) method on enhancing students' narrative writing ability. The findings are based on data collected from pre-test and post-test scores of both the experimental and control groups, followed by statistical analysis using SPSS version 22.

1. Students' Writing Performance in the Experimental Group

The experimental group, taught using the IBL method, showed a significant improvement in their post-test scores compared to their pre-test scores. As shown in the data:

- Pre-test mean score: 34.60
- Post-test mean score: 67.10
- Mean difference: +32.50

The paired sample t-test result indicated a t-count of 11.240 ($p = .000 < 0.05$), proving a significant improvement. This suggests that the IBL method positively affected students' narrative writing abilities, especially in generating ideas, structuring narratives, and engaging creatively with the text.

2. Students' Writing Performance in the Control Group

The control group, taught using conventional methods, also showed improvement:

- Pre-test mean score: 41.80
- Post-test mean score: 65.90
- Mean difference: +24.10

The paired sample t-test showed a t-count of 8.775 ($p = .000 < 0.05$), which means the control group experienced a statistically significant improvement as well, although the gain was smaller than that of the experimental group.

3. Comparison Between Experimental and Control Groups

The independent samples t-test showed the following:

- Post-test mean (experimental group): 67.10
- Post-test mean (control group): 65.90
- Sig. (2-tailed): 0.591 (> 0.05)

These results demonstrate that although the experimental group showed a higher mean score, the difference was not statistically significant. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that IBL significantly improves writing ability compared to conventional methods was not supported statistically.

Despite the absence of statistical significance, the experimental group exhibited greater improvement in writing performance. Students were more engaged in the learning process, demonstrated creativity in composing stories, and were actively involved in formulating ideas through the inquiry process. These qualitative improvements suggest that the IBL method effectively fosters student autonomy, motivation, and participation.

The IBL method, which includes activities such as questioning, investigating, and reflecting, encouraged students to construct their own narratives with more coherence

and originality. While the final scores did not differ significantly between the two groups, the learning experience and writing processes in the experimental group were notably more dynamic and interactive.

The findings of this study are consistent with several previous studies that examined the application of Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) in improving students' writing skills. Sari and Prasetyo (2020) found that although the statistical improvement in students' writing scores was minimal, the use of IBL significantly increased students' motivation and engagement during the writing process. Similarly, Rahmawati (2018) observed that IBL helped build students' confidence in writing and facilitated the development of their ideas, even though it did not result in a statistically significant difference in scores. Supporting these results, Lin et al. (2023) argued that continuous interaction through IBL contributes to long-term improvements in students' ability to organize ideas and reflect critically, even if short-term test score increases were limited. These studies collectively support the notion that IBL, while not always yielding immediate measurable outcomes, offers substantial benefits in enhancing the quality and depth of students' learning experiences in writing. These findings suggest that IBL may yield deeper cognitive and affective learning benefits even when quantitative data show only moderate effects.

Discussion

Based on the research findings, the following discussion is provided to reinforce the interpretation of the results. The results of the normality test, conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk method, showed that the significance values for both the experimental and control groups exceeded 0.05. This indicates that the data were normally distributed, fulfilling the assumption necessary for conducting parametric statistical tests. Additionally, the homogeneity of variance was confirmed through Levene's Test, which yielded a significance value of 0.751, indicating that the data were homogeneous. As a result, the interpretation of the Independent Samples t-test was based on the "Equal variances assumed" condition. The analysis produced a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.591, which is greater than the 0.05 threshold. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in learning outcomes between students in the experimental group and those in the control group.

Secondly, even though the experimental group was exposed to a distinct instructional method compared to the control group, the implementation of this approach did not produce a statistically significant impact on students' academic achievement. While the experimental group's average post-test score was marginally higher than that of the control group, the difference was not substantial enough to be considered statistically meaningful. This suggests that students actively engaged through Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) were better able to explore their own ideas and independently compose narrative writing. This finding aligns with Ulfah (2012), who reported that IBL enhances student engagement and supports the ability to understand and create texts contextually, even though the process can be time-consuming.

Third, the results of this study indicate that, although no statistically significant improvement was observed, the Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) approach applied in the experimental group still demonstrates potential for further development. The IBL method showed an improvement in students' writing ability, the IBL method guides students through the inquiry process: asking questions, finding information, formulating ideas, and writing. This method strengthens critical thinking skills and designing text structures. According to Lin et al. (2023), although improvements were not always statistically

significant, students reported improved writing skills (in terms of idea organization and reflection) thanks to repeated interactions with their writing and peer discussions. Compared to the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) method that presents a problem without sufficient instruction, IBL provides a more guided approach. Bryant (2011) explains that IBL should be accompanied by discussion, teacher guidance, and relevant assignments, where the process is gradually assisted by outlining, discussion, and revision so that students are better prepared to produce better narrative writing even though the statistical results do not show significant differences.

Several previous studies support the findings of this research, showing that while the Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) method contributes to an improvement in students' narrative writing skills, the increase is not always statistically significant. Sari and Prasetyo (2020) found that the average score of students in the experimental group taught using IBL was higher than that of the control group, but the difference did not reach statistical significance. This suggests that IBL can have a positive impact on students' writing abilities, even if the effect is not markedly different from conventional teaching methods. Similarly, Rahmawati (2018) reported that IBL improved writing scores in the experimental group, though the gap compared to the control group was not significant. She also noted that factors such as student motivation and learning readiness played a role in influencing outcomes. Additionally, Fitriani (2019) concluded that although the improvement in writing skills was not statistically significant, IBL increased student interest and engagement during the learning process. These studies reinforce the findings of the current research, indicating that while IBL may not always produce significant differences in test scores, it still contributes positively to students' learning experiences and writing development.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that although the statistical analysis—using the Independent Samples t-test with "*equal variances not assumed*" produced a significance value of 0.591 ($p > 0.05$), indicating no statistically significant difference between the learning outcomes of students taught using the Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) method and those taught using conventional methods, the IBL approach still showed considerable pedagogical value. Specifically, students in the experimental group exhibited a notable increase in average writing scores, alongside greater involvement in generating ideas, organizing narrative structure, and expressing thoughts independently. This demonstrates that IBL positively influences students' writing abilities through improved engagement, creativity, and learner autonomy. These results align with previous research conducted by Sari and Prasetyo (2020), Rahmawati (2018), and Fitriani (2019), which similarly found that while IBL did not produce significant statistical gains, it enhanced student participation, confidence, and writing motivation. Such findings support the idea that IBL is effective in fostering long-term writing competence, making it a relevant and beneficial method for teaching English especially in developing narrative writing skills. Therefore, despite its limited statistical impact, IBL remains a promising approach worth refining and implementing in language education contexts.

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