

The Application of Active Learning Methods to Increasing Students' Interest and Achievement in English Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the improvement in interest and achievement in learning English through the application of active learning methods among class XI TKJ students at SMK Tunas Bangsa Tawang Sari. This study is a Classroom Action Research (CAR) conducted in two cycles. The research subjects consisted of 32 students. Data collection techniques included observation, achievement tests, and documentation. The results showed that the students' average score in the pre-cycle was 65.6 with a classical mastery rate of 34.3%. After implementing interventions in Cycle I, the average score increased to 72 with a mastery rate of 62.5%. In Cycle II, the average score reached 82 with a classical mastery rate of 90.6% (29 out of 32 students). Additionally, student engagement increased from 54% to 83%. The researcher concluded that active learning methods are effective in improving the quality of the English learning process and achievement for SMK students.

INTRODUCTION

As an international language, English plays a crucial role in various aspects of life, including academic and career success in the era of globalization. However, many students in Indonesia still face significant obstacles in learning it, as evidenced by low levels of interest and poor academic performance (Mufidah, 2018). This situation is exacerbated by the dominance of traditional, one-way (teacher-centered) teaching methods, in which students are merely passive recipients of information without any active interaction. As a result, students feel bored, unmotivated, and struggle to understand the material presented.

Based on initial observations at SMK Tunas Bangsa Tawangsari, several tangible issues were identified in the English language teaching and learning process. First, student participation and enthusiasm were very low during the learning process. Second, academic achievement had not yet met the established competency standards or minimum passing scores. Third, the methods used lack variety and do not provide opportunities for students to practice communication skills. Additionally, students struggle to connect English language material to real-life contexts, particularly those related to their vocational backgrounds.

As a solution to these challenges, the implementation of active learning methods is proposed as a strategic alternative. This method emphasizes student participation through hands-on activities that foster analytical and critical thinking skills, rather than merely conveying information (Freeman et al., 2014). Students at SMK Tunas Bangsa Tawangsari, who tend to have a kinesthetic learning style and prefer practical activities, require an interactive approach relevant to their professional world. By actively involving students, this method is expected to increase motivation, deepen understanding of descriptive text material, and hone communication skills. Therefore, this study aims to test the effectiveness of active learning methods in increasing the interest and English learning achievement of class XI students at SMK Tunas Bangsa Tawangsari.

This research is expected not only to provide a solution for classroom challenges but also to offer a significant contribution to the development of teaching practices in vocational high schools. Through the implementation of active learning strategies, the writer aims to bridge the gap between curriculum materials and students' practical needs, making the learning process more meaningful. Ultimately, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for educators in creating a dynamic learning environment while simultaneously enhancing the overall quality of English instruction at SMK Tunas Bangsa Tawangsari.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Active Learning

Active learning refers to a student-centered instructional approach that encourages learners to participate actively in the learning process through meaningful engagement, collaboration, discussion, and problem-solving activities. Rather than receiving information passively, students are encouraged to construct knowledge through direct involvement in learning tasks (Hosnan, 2014; Warsono & Hariyanto, 2012). Previous studies have suggested that active

learning promotes deeper understanding, greater classroom participation, and improved learning outcomes by connecting new knowledge with learners' prior experiences (Mulyasa, 2004).

Learning Interest, Motivation, and Achievement

Learning interest and motivation are important factors influencing students' academic achievement. Students who demonstrate higher interest in learning tend to participate more actively in classroom activities and show greater persistence in achieving learning goals. Motivation functions as an internal and external driving force that encourages students to engage in learning activities and maintain their efforts toward academic success (Winkel, 2004). Consequently, increased learning interest and motivation are often associated with improved learning achievement.

Active learning has been reported to enhance these factors by creating interactive and meaningful learning experiences. Through discussion, collaboration, and active participation, students become more engaged in classroom activities, which may positively influence both their motivation and academic performance.

Previous Studies

Previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of active learning strategies in English language instruction. Rahayu and Prasetyo (2018) found that the use of role-play activities increased students' learning interest, motivation, and English achievement. Similarly, Widiastuti (2017) reported that the Think-Pair-Share cooperative learning model improved students' participation and learning outcomes in English classes. These findings suggest that active learning approaches can contribute positively to both affective and cognitive aspects of learning.

However, limited research has examined the implementation of active learning within the context of vocational high school students, particularly at SMK Tunas Bangsa Tawang Sari. Therefore, this study investigates the use of active learning to improve students' learning interest and achievement in English language learning within this specific educational context.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a Classroom Action Research (CAR) project that adopts the spiral model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart. This design was chosen for its reflective and collaborative nature, which enables the practical resolution of classroom learning problems. The research was conducted in two cycles, each following a systematic sequence of steps. 1) Planning, during which the researcher developed instructional materials such as lesson plans based on active learning methods, assessment instruments, and descriptive text materials relevant to the Computer Science program. 2) Implementation (Acting), involving the practical application of active learning methods through small-group discussions to foster interaction. 3) Observation, during which the author recorded all dynamics of student engagement using an observation sheet. 4)

Reflection phase involved analyzing test results and observations to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken and determine necessary improvements for the next cycle.

The subjects of this study were 32 students of Class XI Semester 1 at SMK Tunas Bangsa Tawangsari, who served as the primary participants in the application of active learning methods using descriptive text materials to increase interest and achievement in English learning.

The data in this research are presented in the form of real objects and verbal descriptions because this research employs a descriptive qualitative approach supported by quantitative evidence. The qualitative data include the interaction between teachers and students, observations results, and interview transcripts. Meanwhile, the quantitative data consist of students' scores from the pre-test and post-tests. The primary data sources are the results of interviews with the English teacher and the class XI students, as well as documents such as observation sheets, teaching modules, student assignments, and field photographs.

In this study, tests are used to measure academic achievement, while observation and interviews are employed to capture the learning process and students' responses to the active learning methods. This approach is consistent with Arikunto (2021), who states that data collection in Classroom Action Research may involve both test and non-test instruments. The researcher employed three main techniques. 1) Observation, conducted directly to monitor students' activities, participation, and engagement during the active learning process. 2) Interviews, conducted with students and classroom teachers to explore perceptions, responses, and challenges that might not be captured by numbers, thereby providing the author with a complete pictures of changes in the classroom learning environment. 3) Tests, consisting of pre-tests (before the intervention) and post-tests (after the intervention in each cycle) to objectively measure students' learning achievement.

According to Sugiyono (2019), research instruments are tools used to measure observed natural and social phenomena. To obtain accurate and comprehensive data. To obtain accurate and comprehensive data, the researcher used three main techniques: observation, interviews, and tests. 1) Observations were conducted directly to monitor students' activities, participation, and engagement during the active learning process. 2) Interviews were conducted with classroom teachers and students to explore their perceptions and the qualitative barriers that arose. 3) Tests consisting of pre-tests and post tests were used to objectively measure students' learning achievements in each cycle. To ensure the validity of the qualitative data, the researcher applied data triangulation. This technique involved comparing and cross-checking information obtained from different sources, namely the results of student activity observations, interview results, and supporting documents such as test results and field photos.

According to Sugiyono (2019), data analysis technique is the process of systematically searching and arranging data obtained from interviews, field notes, and documentation. In this study, the writer employs two analytical approaches to process both qualitative and quantitative data. Data Analysis

Techniques The collected data was analyzed using two types of analytical approaches. 1) Qualitative analysis is used to describe nonnumerical data derived from observation sheets and interview transcripts. This analysis provides an in-depth explanation of how students' interest and engagement develop in each session. And 2) Quantitative analysis is used to statistically compare test scores across cycles. The researchers compares the percentage of learning mastery and the class average score from the pre-cycle stage through Cycle 2. The success of this study is measured based on established performance indicators, namely a class average score of ≥ 70 and a minimum percentage of classical mastery of $\geq 85\%$.

RESEARCH RESULT

The improvement of Active Learning Methods in enhancing students Interest and students English Learning Achievement

This section presents the results of the classroom action research conducted with 32 eleventh-grade students in the class XI TKJ at SMK Tunas Bangsa Tawangsari. Based on initial observations, the previous English learning process was still dominated by traditional or one-way methods, in which the teacher served as the primary source of information (teacher-centered) and students tended to be passive in receiving the material. This situation led to low student interest and focus during lessons. To address this issue, the researcher implemented active learning methods with the primary goal of transforming students' roles from passive recipients to active, creative, and independent participants through group collaboration. The material used in this intervention was descriptive text, which was adapted to the students' vocational background by utilizing technological objects as subjects for description.

The researcher analyzed the research results collected from several sources with several data collection techniques such as activeness observation sheets, interview sheets, teaching modules, descriptive text materials, pre-test and post-test results, as well as documentation in the form of field notes and photos. The researcher concluded the results of the study which included an increase in activeness, interest, and student achievement results in the teaching and learning process by using active learning methods.

The improvement in results can be seen from the increase in average scores on the Pre-Test, Post-Test 1, and Post-Test 2. The increase in students' average scores is as follows:

Table 1. Inter cycle comparison result

Indicator	Default Condition	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Active Learning	54%	69%	83%
Study Interest	Low. Passive	Fair, strating to be enthusiastic	High, Active
Mean value	65,6	72	82
Number of students passing (KKM $\geq$ 70)	11 Students	20 Students	29 Students
Learning completeness	34,4%	62,5%	90,6%

Based on the above results, it can be concluded that there was an increase in student learning activeness from only 54% in the initial conditions to 69% in Cycle 1, and reached its peak at 83% in Cycle 2. This shows that the strategy improvement from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2 was very effective in encouraging the participation of all students. This improvement is evident from the more even distribution of students' contributions in group discussions and their courage to ask questions and give responses in Cycle 2.

Students' interest in learning also showed significant development. From low and passive initial conditions, students began to show enthusiasm in Cycle 1, and reached a very high and active level in Cycle 2. This was reflected in students' active participation in each activity, and their initiative in seeking additional information or helping friends.

Interviews with subject teachers and students provided an in-depth picture of the learning conditions in the XI TKJ class at SMK Tunas Bangsa Tawangsari prior to the intervention. The subject teacher, Mr. Darwoto, S.Pd., revealed that student engagement remained very low, with the majority of students tending to be passive, often chatting, or daydreaming due to the dominance of one-way lecture-based methods. This situation was reinforced by students' accounts, which revealed a sharp disparity in interest levels; students with low interest tended to feel bored and frequently used their phones in class, resulting in low grades (range 50–70), while highly motivated students demonstrated enthusiasm and achieved satisfactory learning outcomes (range 85–95). This stark contrast confirms that low student engagement and a lack of variety in teaching methods are the primary factors hindering academic achievement. Therefore, there is an urgent need to optimize active learning methods capable of transforming students' roles into more participatory, responsible, and enthusiastic learners in exploring English language materials. The improvement in learning achievement was consistent at all stages. The average score increased from Pre-Test to Post-Test 2.

Table 2. Improvement in learning results

Indicator	Pre-test	Post-test 1	Post-test 2
Mean value	65,6	72	82
%students passing the KKM	34,4%	62,5%	90,6%

The average score on the Pre-Test was 65.6, on Post-Test 1 was 72 and on Post Test 2 was 82. The class average score rose by 6.4 points from the initial conditions to Cycle 1, and rose again by 10 points from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2. Most significantly, the percentage of learning completeness jumped from 34.4% at the beginning, to 62.5% after the first action, and finally reached 90.6% at the end of the study, exceeding the set target. This increase in completeness proves that active learning methods not only succeeded in increasing students' engagement and interest, but also directly impacted on improving their understanding and mastery of the descriptive text material. Finally, the researcher can conclude that students' activeness, interest, and learning outcomes have increased, so this research is declared successful.

The Implementation of Active Learning Methods

The writer observed that the implementation of active learning strategies revealed a significant emotional and cognitive shift among the Grade XI TKJ students. At the initial stage, the writer identified substantial psychological barriers, or "pains," where students exhibited high levels of anxiety and reluctance to participate in small-group discussions. Many students, accustomed to traditional teacher-centered lectures, felt "exposed" when required to contribute actively. However, the consistent use of Small Group Discussions gradually dissolved this rigidity. Within these non-intimidating smaller circles, students began to feel secure enough to experiment with technical English terminology – such as router, connectivity, and bandwidth – incorporating them into their descriptive text drafts.

The application of Peer Feedback served as a crucial turning point in this research. Initially, students felt awkward or hesitant to critique their peers' work for fear of causing offense. To mitigate this, the writer provided clear guidelines on delivering constructive feedback. Consequently, students began to embrace their roles as "peer editors." They learned that grammatical errors were not signs of failure but essential components of the linguistic acquisition process. Feedback from classmates proved to be more readily accepted by vocational students than direct correction from the teacher, as the language used was more relatable and aligned with their daily communication styles.

The culmination of these activities was the Presentation phase. In Cycle 1, many students displayed nervous gestures and spoke in hushed tones while describing their chosen technological devices. However, by Cycle 2, bolstered by the moral support of their respective groups, students' self-confidence surged. The writer noted a profound sense of pride among students when they successfully explained the specifications of a smartphone or a gaming laptop in English before their peers. The feedback provided by the audience through simple inquiries turned the presentations into a vibrant, interactive forum. This progression empirically demonstrates that active learning does not merely improve academic grades; it also alleviates communication apprehension, effectively transforming initial boredom into genuine enthusiasm.

Implementation Strategies and Pedagogical Approaches, this success was driven by well-planned learning strategies, particularly through the formation of heterogeneous discussion groups that facilitated peer tutoring. In this process, the author served as a facilitator who provided scaffolding—or step-by-step guidance—to students who struggled with drafting texts. The use of descriptive objects relevant to the background of SMK students, such as technological devices and computers, proved highly effective in bridging the understanding of English language concepts with their real-world context. This approach ensures that the material is not only learned theoretically but also practically and meaningfully.

Furthermore, the quantitative findings of this research support these qualitative observations. This classroom action research focused on the application of active learning methods to improve students' skills in English. The research subjects were Grade XI TKJ students at SMK Tunas Bangsa Tawangsari, with the primary material being descriptive texts. Over the course of five sessions, the researcher implemented collaborative strategies designed to encourage students' active engagement in understanding the structure and linguistic features of the texts. This study was conducted in two consecutive cycles; Cycle 1 was held on May 6 and 9, 2025, while Cycle 2 was held on May 16, 20, and 23, 2025, with each session lasting 90 minutes.

In Cycle 1, the author focused on introducing the structure of descriptive texts through small-group discussions. This step was taken based on pre-cycle data indicating low student achievement, with only 34.3% (11 students) meeting the Minimum Passing Criteria (KKM) and a class average of 65.6. Additionally, student engagement at the initial stage was only 54%.

Following the intervention in Cycle 1, observation results showed an increase in student engagement to 69%. Improvements were also evident in the results of Post-test 1, where the class average increased to 72 and the number of students who met the criteria reached 20 (62.5%). Although progress was made, the reflection indicated that group division was not yet optimal and some students still tended to be passive. Therefore, improvements to the strategy are needed in the next cycle to achieve the established success indicators.

To address the challenges identified in the previous cycle, the author refined the strategy in Cycle 2. Adjustments were made by forming heterogeneous groups based on students' abilities and implementing peer feedback techniques. This approach proved effective in energizing the classroom learning environment.

Observation data from Cycle 2 showed a surge in student engagement, reaching 83%, which was categorized as "Very Good." Learning outcomes on Post-test 2 were also highly satisfactory, with the class average increasing to 82. Overall, 29 students (90.6%) successfully exceeded the minimum passing score, indicating the intervention's significant success.

Based on the results obtained from both cycles, the implementation of the active learning method has met all the research success indicators, namely student engagement above 80% and class-wide achievement above 85%. The increase in achievement from 34.3% on the initial test to 90.6% at the end of Cycle

2 proves that this method is effective in enhancing students' interest, engagement, and academic performance. With all set targets achieved, this classroom action research was deemed successful and concluded at the end of Cycle 2.

Impact and Implications of Active Learning Methods, overall, these findings confirm that active learning methods are an effective solution for addressing student boredom in English language learning. These methods not only optimize cognitive aspects but also hone students' social skills and critical thinking abilities through group collaboration. The creation of a fun learning environment has been proven to reduce students' psychological barriers, making them more confident in exploring their language abilities. These results imply that a student-centered approach is highly appropriate for SMK to create dynamic learning experiences with long-term impact.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of active learning methods positively influenced both students' learning engagement and academic achievement. The improvement observed throughout the research process suggests that student-centered learning activities can create more meaningful learning experiences by encouraging active participation and interaction during classroom instruction. As students became more involved in the learning process, they demonstrated greater confidence, motivation, and willingness to participate in classroom activities.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the potential of active learning methods to address students' boredom and passivity in English language learning. By promoting collaboration, discussion, and active involvement, these methods not only support cognitive development but also foster social interaction and critical thinking skills. The learning environment became more dynamic and enjoyable, which may have helped reduce students' anxiety and encouraged them to explore and use English more confidently. Therefore, active learning can be considered a valuable instructional approach for vocational school students, particularly in creating engaging learning experiences that support both academic and personal development.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the classroom action research conducted through observations, interviews, and tests over two cycles, it can be concluded that the implementation of active learning methods significantly improved the interest and academic achievement in English among class XI TKJ students at SMK Tunas Bangsa Tawangsari.

The improvement of active learning methods in enhancing students' interest and achievement, the implementation of small group discussions and presentations proved highly effective. Students' interest and activeness increased significantly from 54% at the beginning of the study to 69% in Cycle 1, and peaked at 83% in Cycle 2, showing greater courage in arguing and higher enthusiasm. In terms of academic achievement, the class average score rose

consistently from 65.6 to 72 in Cycle 1, and reached 82 in Cycle 2. More importantly, the classical learning completeness jumped from 34.3% to 62.5% in Cycle 1, and finally reached 90.6% in Cycle 2. This achievement exceeded the research success target of $\geq 85\%$, confirming that active learning methods effectively improve student learning achievement.

The implementation of active learning methods in Class XI TKJ SMK Tunas Bangsa Tawangsari, the process took place gradually and showed improvements through systematic cycle. This implementation involved dividing students into heterogeneous groups and increasing the teacher's role as an active facilitator. In Cycle 1, the focus was on introducing students to the dynamics of group discussion and presentation, which then required adjustments based on reflection. In Cycle 2, the implementation was strengthened by ensuring every group member had an active role and the writer provided more intensive guidance and motivation for passive students. The reflection process at the end of each cycle was the key to success, allowing for continuous improvement of teaching strategies to better suit the students' needs.

Based on these findings,

- 1) For English Teachers it is recommended that teachers consistently integrate active learning models, particularly for collaborative materials like descriptive texts. Teachers should play an active role as facilitators to ensure balanced participation during group discussions and continue innovating with engaging learning media to stimulate students' critical thinking.
- 2) For Students are encouraged to be more proactive in learning activities. Beyond following the teacher's instructions, students should develop the confidence to ask questions, engage in discussions, and collaborate effectively with their peers to achieve a deeper understanding of the material.
- 3) For Schools authorities should consider facilitating professional development for teachers of all subjects to implement diverse active learning models. Furthermore, providing adequate infrastructure is essential to support the practical application of these student centered methods.
- 4) For Future Researchers the results of this study serve as a foundational reference for further Classroom Action Research (CAR). Future studies could explore different aspects of active learning across various educational levels or integrate advanced technology to optimize the effectiveness of these strategies.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

The results of this study can be used as a reference or basis for conducting further classroom action research with a focus on other aspects of active learning or on different subjects and levels of education. It can develop active learning materials with a wider variety of strategies or combine them with the utilization of technology for more optimal effectiveness.

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