

UNRAVELING CLASSROOM STORIES: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF ENGAGING STUDENTS IN IMPLEMENTING INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM

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Abstract: Teachers must have a strategy to invite learners to engage more in the learning experience. Of course, in the development of the application of the Independent Curriculum over the past few years, there are still many shortcomings. This study aimed to know obstacles when inviting learners to be active in the classroom experienced by teachers after the curriculum was replaced by the new curriculum, and also to know steps or methods that make learners more active in the classroom that are frequently used by teachers in the knowledge acquisition. For research design, this study used a narrative inquiry design. Narrative inquiry is a type of qualitative research devoted to the human experience. This research took one English teacher who was teaching at a junior high school in Malang. Data collection for this research used in-depth interviews 3 times to ensure correctness. It was then analyzed using a content analysis approach. The result is several obstacles experienced by teachers when engaging students in active learning. These challenges include low student motivation, students' fear of responding, and teachers' lack of technological knowledge. Apart from that, this research found that the methods often used to engage students are PjBL, PBL, and discovery learning.

Key Words: Independent Curriculum, student engagement, learning method

INTRODUCTION

The Independent Curriculum has a curriculum with various extracurriculars of study where content will be optimized so that learners have sufficient time to explore ideas and enhance skills (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). In this new curriculum, teachers are free to choose media or study tools that suit the situation and conditions of both the class and the students themselves. The policy, popularly known as Independent Belajar, is intended to realize a self-ruling and malleable lesson process in schools to make a forward-thinking process, not restrictive, according to students' needs (Suryaman, 2020). In the learning experience, students are expected to be independent in achieving learning objectives, methods, materials, and assessments for teachers and students.

However, English language learning has changed along with the development of independent curriculum implementation. Changes in the learning elements are added from 4 language skills to 6 language skills, namely the addition of viewing and presentation skills (Suryaman, 2020). Following its name, the independent curriculum, the curriculum does not limit the way students think about the content given by the teacher. There is access to carrying out study, so every student will be able to explore according to the skills and attraction of students' talents. Therefore, the presence of the implementation of an independent learning curriculum will produce innovative also independent students (Nazmi et al., 2023). Good interaction between students and teachers will produce good understanding for students. Students will find it easy to respond and

think critically in learning. However, every student has different abilities, so the teacher also still pays attention to the learning style of each student. Essentially, teachers must observe the learning styles of learners in the classroom. This observation helps determine the most effective approach for delivering course materials during the learning process (Sahriyah et al., 2021).

Teachers can increase the capacity of the teacher's role as a facilitator by increasing literacy about learning and assessment through training, and conducting discussions with other teachers regarding problems in learning and assessment (Irmawan et al., 2023). Classrooms need to be structured in such a way that students can demonstrate that the learning tasks are worthwhile in the future. When students perceive ESL learning tasks as important and worthwhile, they are likely to put forth their best efforts to invite in the learning experiences (Nazmi et al., 2023). Cooperation and good relationships between teachers and students must also run well in the classroom and outside the classroom. That way, students will be motivated to take part in lessons and the class will be active (Martin, A j., & Collie, 2018).

Of course, in the development of the application of the Independent Curriculum over the past few years, there are still many shortcomings. These shortcomings include the lack of preparation carried out, so that it must be finalized first and then implemented, which requires training which takes a long time (Tri Mawarni et al., 2022). Preparation of human resources has not been formed, this curriculum is relatively new, so it is insufficient in preparing human resources. (Dirwan et al., 2023). In addition, some teachers do not get the meaning of the learning systems in the Independent Curriculum, so they do not implement Independent Curriculum in the stages of learning with their students (Dirwan et al., 2023). In K-13, the difficulty experienced by teachers is that teachers are asked to combine four skills, namely writing, reading, listening, and speaking in one learning activity where the facilities at school do not support these activities. In addition, teachers also experience difficulties where there is a shortage of practice or briefing on how to apply K-13 correctly and adequately following K-13 regulations (Anwar et al., 2021). From these shortcomings, it is also a novelty of this research which in this study has not discussed how to understand teaching methods that are suitable for various student characters in the classroom.

In this study, it discusses how teachers can invite students to engage in the classroom, especially in the Independent Curriculum. Based on Trowler (2010) to optimize student understanding and what students gain in the classroom, there needs to be an involvement of time, effort, and related resources. (Wu et al., 2021). This research also discusses what methods teachers often use to help increase student participation in acquiring knowledge. According to Piaget (1968) and Vygotsky (1978) in active learning methodologies based on constructivist theories, students take on the role of constructing information and actively participate in the process of learning. (Erbil, 2020). The target of this research is to discover the problems of a teacher when inviting students to engage to create an active class and learning. In addition, this research also intends to discover what methods teachers often use and are considered successful in inviting students to play an active role in learning.

METHOD

This study used a narrative inquiry design. Narrative inquiry is a type of qualitative research devoted to the human experience. As Creswell (2012) proposes, as a design, "narrative research" aimed at "studying a single person, getting the data through the gathering of the stories, describing unique experiences, and debating

the significance of those experiences for "the individual" (Mahmudi et al., 2021). Therefore, narrative inquiry focuses more on the story of one's experience which is the focus of the research. This research took one English teacher who was teaching at a junior high school in Malang. The selected participant's identity will be kept secret by changing the participant's name to Mrs. Sasa. The data taken in this research uses oral data, where participants and researchers will conduct in-depth interviews by asking a total of 19 questions which will be given 3 times with the same questions. The 19 questions are divided into 3 parts, namely opening, main activity, and closing. After conducting 3 interviews with the aim of proving that the data provided was accurate, the data analysis process was then carried out. This research uses Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). In the realm of research, there exists the opportunity, unburdened by the necessity to take immediate action, to step back, analyze all available information, embrace various viewpoints, and acknowledge one's own biases and prior experiences, aiming to set them aside to the greatest extent possible (Rädiker et al., 2020). Systematic analysis entails the following:

- Initially, it requires incorporating all pertinent interviews into the analysis, ensuring no selective or arbitrary method is employed, thereby avoiding a fragmented or random approach.
- Second, the interviews obtained will be read thoroughly and then thoroughly analyzed. After thorough analysis, the interviews will be analyzed in detail. Thus, the interviews were analyzed twice, namely as a whole and in detail.
- Thirdly, it involves revealing the tools used for data collection and analysis, along with the entire research procedure, making it comprehensible and analyzable for the study's audience.
- Fourthly, it necessitates employing appropriate methodologies to ensure that the analysis adheres to intersubjective standards, thereby enabling multiple individuals involved in the research to achieve comparable outcomes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

For motivation so that students want to learn and become enthusiastic about the material, usually the participant is motivated in the middle of the lesson when students are getting bored and tired. So, when students have a little understanding of what the teacher talked about at the beginning of the lesson about the material, the teacher will motivate students to be more enthusiastic and have the intention to learn again. The motivation given is verbal or words. The words used to motivate must also be related to the material being studied. In addition to motivation in terms of material, Mrs. Sasa also motivates in terms of student interest in learning. Almost every day students after recess have started to get bored, lazy, tired to sleep. Then supported by English lessons at the last hour makes students even lazier to learn. Therefore, what the participant does is to create something new. The meaning of something new is that you can use a fun method by making students move or talk. This is believed by the participant to make students more active in class. According to the participant, teachers must create new creations that can be fun from the methods or media used, besides that in the learning process, it is the students who talk a lot, not the teacher.

How to motivate students to want to learn and be enthusiastic?

I usually motivate students in the middle of learning. So when the children have started to understand the material, for example the material about congratulations, they say that they have never congratulated anyone. Well, then from there I provide motivation. The motivation I give is through words to them, I say "Guys, when someone is happy it will be very memorable if we give congratulations" like that, so there is motivation in there. That's motivation in terms of material, now in terms of student interest in learning and enthusiasm. So sometimes, students are already lazy, especially when English is in the last hour, it's already hot and sleepy. What I usually do is to give

something new and demand students to speak. We have to create methods that make the child the subject or the main character.

What Mrs. Sasa does in delivering material in class is of course by using language that is easily understood by students. Mrs. Sasa said that actually, students understand what we convey to them, of course, using my language. However, the problem is that they have difficulty if asked to answer or respond if the teacher speaks or asks questions. Most of them do not want or have difficulty answering in English because they are afraid to speak. They are afraid if they answer that their answer turns out to be wrong or not by the context. Another reason is that students are embarrassed to speak a foreign language, a language that they do not use every day, they are afraid of being talked about by their friends because they speak a foreign language. In essence, students are afraid to make mistakes in speaking a foreign language. But at one time Mrs. Sasa had difficulty finding verbs or sentences that were easily understood by students, so Mrs. Sasa still used English but also explained in Indonesian. So, Mrs. Sasa explains using a mix of languages with the aim that they are not confused by what the participant is talking about. But in real life, most of them understood what Mrs. Sasa told them, sometimes they answered Mrs. Sasa's questions in Indonesian, but that was okay according to the participant. Although allowed by the participant to answer questions in Indonesian, students were still reprimanded by the participant and asked to try to answer in English.

What do you do in delivering the core material to students?

I deliver learning materials also by using my language. So, I use everyday language to make students better understand what I am talking about. The students understand what I ask them. For example, if I ask "Have you ever been to the zoo? What's going on there?" they understand but if they are told to answer, they cannot and tend to find it difficult to speak in English because they are afraid of speaking the wrong English. Sometimes if the language I use is difficult for them (students) to understand and I can't find a language that is easier for them to digest, then I explain by mixing my language with Indonesian. But still, I will try to speak English first with them, if they do not understand, I will speak in Indonesian or mix. Most of the students understand what I speak. But sometimes they answer my questions in Indonesian. If that's the case I will reprimand them and ask them to speak in English.

Mrs. Sasa said that the most correct learning is to follow the learning plan because the learning plan made by the teacher has been designed in such a way and prepared by adjusting several factors in the classroom, one of which is the student's ability. The learning plan made by the teacher with adjustments to the situation, conditions, and student abilities also includes what must be done to achieve a learning goal. However, what Mrs. Sasa feels is that when lesson planning has been made by paying attention to the situation, conditions, and students' abilities, sometimes it is still not appropriate when applied in the classroom.

Therefore, according to him, if such a problem occurs, the teacher must be able to follow the class situation by changing a little what has been compiled in the learning plan, but not planning with significant changes. Mrs. Sasa said in the interview process, that the learning plan made by the teacher is still a plan that cannot be run one hundred percent the same as the learning plan. Therefore, what must be done is to keep referring to the learning plan (RPP/Modul) that has been prepared, but also if there are difficulties when applying in the classroom, the plan must be changed following the situation and conditions in the classroom.

Does the delivery of material to students follow the flow or follow the students' HOTS?

The right thing is to follow the learning plan. Because after all, the plan has been arranged in such a way as to achieve all learning objectives on a material. In addition, the teaching module or learning plan is also adjusted to the student's ability. But sometimes when we have made a teaching module that we have adjusted to the conditions, situation, and abilities of students, when it is applied to students it is still not appropriate. Then the solution is that the plan must be changed by adjusting the situation in the classroom. Because however, the plan remains a plan it is impossible to achieve one hundred percent. So, the conclusion is to keep following the plan at the beginning but also adjust to the abilities of students, the important thing is that the learning objectives are achieved.

The methods used by participants vary. However, what is often used are PjBL (Project Based Learning), discovery learning, and PBL (Problem-Based Learning). When using PjBL, participants said that students tend to be more active and more independent, because students choose their projects to be made, so the teacher's job is only as a companion. then in the discovery learning method, students tend to be more active because each student has different knowledge and sources. in the last method, PBL, students are asked to

problem solve and find solutions to problems given by the teacher where the problems are taken from everyday life.

What methods are used in learning?

As for methods, I usually look at the condition of the class first. The ones I often use are usually PjBL, discovery learning, and problem-based learning. PjBL students play an active role in the project they choose and the teacher does not need to interfere with their project. For discovery learning, they have different responses and create an active class. Finally, in the PBL method, in this method, students are required to think critically.

Participants in the interview session explained that they experienced difficulties when inviting students to be active in learning. There are several difficulties that the participant mentioned. The first is that students feel too lazy to learn or the situation is not possible such as a crowded and uncondusive classroom environment or even students who are still eating after breaktime. The second is students' difficulty or fear of speaking English, maybe students experience anxiety in speaking English in front of many people so they are afraid of mispronunciation or wrong sentence structure. Then the third is the difficulty of choosing media that can attract students to be active and play an active role in the classroom.

What are the challenges of engaging students?

There are several difficulties that I experience when inviting students to be active in the classroom. The first is that students are too lazy to learn or the situation and conditions are not conducive, for example, the class is still crowded or students are still eating. Second, students have difficulty responding to English or are afraid to speak English. The third difficulty I experienced was that the media was not interesting, so students felt bored.

Discussions

In the discussion section, the results of the interviews with the participants will be discussed by linking the previous research with the results of the interviews. There are several problems experienced by Mrs. Sasa in getting students to be active in the classroom related to previous research. Students' fear of speaking a foreign language is an obstacle for teachers to make students active in the classroom. Difficulty of choosing media that is suitable for students. participants are aware that the media used has an impact on student activeness. This is in line with research from Prabawati et al. (2021) who stated that students were motivated to learn in the presence of media, and the media could stimulate students to think analytically.

From the data that has been analyzed in the opening or the initial part of learning, the participant always asks about the conditions at that time experienced by the students. This is stated in line with Darkun (2019) who said that a good teacher understands the condition of students during teaching and learning activities. The task of the teacher as a teacher is not only to deliver the material but before that it is also to bring the conditions of the students and the class to be conducive and ready for the learning process. After understanding the condition of the students, the participant requires students to pray before starting learning, even though the prayers that students say are not long prayers. The purpose of the participant asking students to pray is so that students get used to positive activities and hope to have a positive impact on student character. In line with what is written in the research Aningsih et al. (2022) said that habituation is a process of forming attitudes and behaviors that are relatively stable and automatic through a learning process that is carried out repeatedly, either together or individually, such as praying before learning, praying in congregation, and so on.

That participants have limited knowledge about technology so they cannot provide interactive and innovative media by technological developments. According to Indriani et al. (2020), Digital literacy training is needed to open teachers' horizons and insights into the benefits of technology that can be practiced and used in the classroom. this proves the importance of technology in creating active and innovative learning.

In presenting the material, the participant has a way for students to understand the material, namely by showing videos. Participants use animated and colorful videos so that students are interested and motivated to learn English. This video also makes students more focused and interested in learning English. Using Video in Your ESL/EFL Program states that language is authentic, so the use of video in ESL/EFL classes will motivate students and also teach language in a useful way (Flynn, 1998). According to Qadha & Alward (2020) as a positive effect, watching videos for learning draws the learners' attention to the language input, hence producing efficient learning outcomes. So, what Mrs. Sasa said is in line with several studies that say that learning will be more interesting and more efficient if you use the right media such as animated videos to help students be more active in learning.

To improve students' way of thinking into critical thinking, the participant uses a way of asking students to analyze something, such as videos, text images, and others. Therefore, the teacher must properly prepare the method used during the learning process. In addition, the participant also provides questions that become problems in everyday life, then students are asked to find solutions to these problems. This is in line with research written by Pertiwi et al. (2023) said that critical thinking skills can be improved through PBL because the learning approach is on authentic problems, and students are not only asked to understand a problem but also must be able to work together to solve the problem, to stimulate students' abilities and skills, especially critical thinking skills. Then after students have HOTS thinking, students will automatically have the ability to solve problems, analyze, and tend to be active in class. This is in line with the research produced by Komalasari et al. (2021) said that with HOTS students become active, and stimulate critical thinking, analytical thinking, evaluative thinking, and creative problem-solving. The evaluation used by the participant is by asking at the end of each lesson, which part has not been understood. Participants also provide opportunities for students to ask questions related to the material. In addition, evaluation can also be in the form of daily tests, midterm exams, and final exams. What was said by the participant was also said by Fitrianti (2018) that students provide opportunities to ask students or students and/or ask them questions on the sidelines of learning activities, provide posttest at the end of learning activities, provide assignments outside the classroom, the existence of daily tests (UH) followed by the implementation of UTS and UAS. PBL (Problem Based Learning) where students find solutions to problems given by the teacher. From this method, students are required to be active and think critically. This is also in line with research from Almulla (2020) where it is mentioned that the findings reveal that the PBL approach has a positive impact on collaborative learning (CL), disciplined subject learning (DSL), interactive learning (IL), and authentic learning (AL), and student engagement.

PjBL (Project Based Learning), students play an active role in choosing project materials, Mrs. Sasa said that the teacher only assisted and helped if students had difficulties with the projects they chose. This is in line with Ngadiso et al. (2021) who said that students participated in selecting the materials and teachers did not have complete control over what they wanted to do in the projects. Then with the discovery learning method, at Wahid Hasyim Junior High School students are required to learn independently, this is included in guided discovery learning where the teacher only becomes a facilitator or guide in learning. In this method, students tend to have many responses because each student has different sources and results on a material, so the class becomes active because of the many opinions of each student. This is in line with what was researched by Annisa et al. (2022) by mentioned that student responses to the discovery learning model vary, this is because the intellectual knowledge of each student in expressing ideas is different.

This reflection activity is in the form of something they bring after the lesson. Students are asked to find moral messages and relate them to events in everyday life. This reflection is very important to recall the material that has been learned. Like the results of research from Wowor et al. (2022), It can be seen that 87.83% of students strongly agree with the statement that reflection activities help students to recall the material. After the reflection, Mrs. Sasa will explain a little about the material that will be discussed at the next meeting. Then it was explained that there were several difficulties in inviting students to play an active role in the learning process.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study concludes that there are several obstacles experienced by teachers when engaging students in active learning. The first difficulty is the difficulty in using technology. With these difficulties, teachers cannot provide creative and innovative learning by following technological developments. Thus, students sometimes feel bored with monotonous lessons. The second difficulty is that students are afraid to speak English. Students have reasons why they are afraid to speak English, namely because students are afraid and embarrassed to speak wrong. Another reason is that students have little English vocabulary and understanding of speaking English. Students are afraid to be wrong in the pronunciation of vocabulary and afraid to be wrong in the construction of English sentences. These difficulties can interfere with the teacher in inviting students to communicate, so it also does not give the impression of active learning. The third difficulty is that teachers have difficulty choosing suitable learning media for students. There are various students with different backgrounds and characters, making it difficult for teachers to choose learning media that are suitable for all students. it also hinders teachers from being able to invite students to play an active role in the learning process.

There are several methods that teachers can use to encourage students to play an active role in learning. The first is PjBL (Project-Based Learning). In this method, students can do their projects, so students play an active role in the chosen project without interference from the teacher. The teacher's job is only to be a facilitator who guides students if they have difficulties. The second method is PBL (problem-based learning). In this method, students are required to think critically about the problems given by the teacher. With the PBL method, teachers are more able to invite active students because each student has a different solution. The last method is Discovery learning. In this method, the teacher only provides the material to be discussed and a little explanation of the material, then asks students to find as much information as possible about the material. this method is considered to be able to invite students to play an active role in the learning process because students have different knowledge and sources, automatically causing many responses in the classroom.

Therefore, further research needs to be done regarding what media is suitable for students with each student's character. That way, it will be easier for teachers to choose media that is suitable for each student with different characters. So, if the media has been determined, it will be easier for students to play an active role and have a good response to the learning process.

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