



INNOVATIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH DIGITAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the application of innovative English language teaching at SD Muhammadiyah 36 Medan and its impact on boosting student engagement and language proficiency. At the elementary level, innovation in English language instruction is crucial for fostering meaningful, enjoyable, and student-centered learning experiences. This study utilized a qualitative descriptive methodology. Data was gathered through classroom observations, interviews with both English teachers and students, and documentation of teaching activities. The results indicate the implementation of various innovative approaches, including interactive media, educational games, and contextualized learning tasks. These strategies promoted active student involvement, heightened learning motivation, and facilitated the development of foundational English skills, particularly in vocabulary acquisition and speaking confidence. Despite these successes, challenges such as insufficient learning resources and diverse student proficiency levels were noted. In conclusion, innovative English language teaching at SD Muhammadiyah 36 Medan has a substantial impact on enhancing the quality of English education at the elementary level. The study suggests that ongoing professional development for teachers and institutional support are crucial for sustaining and advancing these innovative practices.

Keywords: Innovative learning, English language teaching, elementary school, learning motivation.

1. INTRODUCTION

English has emerged as a global language, crucial for international communication, education, technology, and cultural exchange. In the era of globalization, proficiency in English is no longer seen as an optional skill but as an essential competence for academic achievement and future career prospects (Rao, 2019; Uljayeva, 2024; Salomone & Salomone, 2022). As a result, many countries, including Indonesia, have incorporated English as a foreign language at the elementary school level to lay the foundation for students'

language abilities from an early age (Cameron, 2021; Shi et al., 2024; Nation & Newton, 2020).

Teaching English to young learners requires specific pedagogical approaches, as elementary school students have unique cognitive, emotional, and social characteristics (Sakhiyya, 2019; Williyani et al., 2025; Crompton et al., 2024). These learners tend to respond better to active engagement, meaningful interaction, and enjoyable activities rather than traditional, teacher-centered instruction (Harmer, 2017; Thankavel, 2023; Dash, 2022). However, the

teaching of English in elementary schools is often hindered by constraints such as limited instructional time, inadequate learning resources, and low student motivation (Dewi, 2020; Meisani & Purnawarman, 2019; Carter, 2023). These challenges underline the need for innovative methods in English teaching to create engaging and effective learning environments.

Educational innovation involves the introduction of new strategies, tools, or practices aimed at improving teaching and learning quality (OECD, 2019). In English language instruction, innovation may encompass the use of interactive media, digital technologies, game-based learning, contextual teaching, collaborative activities, and student-centered approaches. These innovative methods can enhance student motivation, promote active learning, and support the development of essential language skills like vocabulary, pronunciation, and basic communication (Skehan, 2018; Wang, 2022; Brown, 2019).

Moreover, innovative English language teaching is grounded in constructivist learning theory, which posits that students actively build knowledge through interaction and experience (Omid, 2023). By engaging students in meaningful learning tasks, teachers can help learners use English in real-world situations, thereby boosting their confidence and communication skills. Studies have shown that innovative and interactive learning techniques positively affect students' language performance and their attitudes toward learning English (Sidik & Fahmi, 2021; Zahara & Jupri, 2022; Sreeletha, 2022).

Teachers are central to the success of innovative English language teaching. As facilitators and instructional designers, teachers are expected to creatively adapt their teaching methods, materials, and media to suit the needs and learning styles of students. Professional competence, creativity, and institutional support are key elements in ensuring the effective implementation of innovative teaching practices (Kartini et al., 2020; Saptiany & Prabowo, 2024; Ji, 2022). Without sufficient support and training, innovative learning practices may not be fully realized in the classroom.

SD Muhammadiyah 36 Medan is one of the elementary schools that has embraced innovative English language teaching to enhance students' learning experiences. The school encourages its teachers to implement creative instructional strategies, interactive media, and engaging activities. However, the application of these innovative methods also encounters challenges, such as limited facilities, varying levels of English proficiency among students, and time and curriculum constraints (Dachi, 2020; Khan & Sarkar, 2025; Mahesti et al., 2025). Therefore, it is essential to explore how innovative English teaching is being implemented at SD Muhammadiyah 36 Medan and its effect on students' motivation and language proficiency.

Building on this background, the purpose of this study is to analyze how innovative English language teaching is implemented at SD Muhammadiyah 36 Medan and assess its impact on students' engagement and language skills. The results of this study are expected to offer valuable insights for English teachers,

school administrators, and policymakers, contributing to the development of effective and sustainable innovative teaching practices at the elementary school level.

2. METHODS

This research adopted a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the implementation of innovative English language teaching at SD Muhammadiyah 36 Medan. A qualitative approach was deemed suitable because it enables a comprehensive understanding of educational phenomena and facilitates the interpretation of participants' experiences in their natural environments (Neuman, 2019; Tisdell et al., 2025). This design allowed the researcher to explore teaching methods, learning processes, and classroom interactions related to innovative English language instruction.

The study was carried out at SD Muhammadiyah 36 Medan, with participants including English teachers, elementary students, and school administrators directly involved in the implementation of innovative teaching practices. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, which is effective for choosing individuals with relevant knowledge and experience concerning the study's focus (Cohen et al., 2019; Etikan et al., 2018).

Data collection involved classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis (Anufia, 2019; Daruhadi & Sopiati, 2024). Observations were conducted to capture real-time teaching and learning activities and to examine student engagement and interactions during English lessons. Observation is a

powerful method for understanding actual classroom practices (Cohen et al., 2021; Van Maanen, 2025; Kosslyn & Miller, 2017). Semi-structured interviews were held with English teachers and school administrators to gain deeper insights into their perceptions, experiences, and challenges in implementing innovative English language teaching. Interviews provide the flexibility to explore participants' viewpoints in detail (Kvale, 2021).

Document analysis was employed to support and triangulate the data obtained through observations and interviews. Relevant documents, including lesson plans, teaching materials, students' worksheets, and school policy documents, were reviewed to enhance the credibility of the findings. Document analysis is an essential tool in qualitative research, offering contextual and historical insights into the research setting (Sugiyono, 2021).

The data analysis followed an interactive qualitative data analysis model that involved data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 2019). This process allowed the researcher to organize and interpret the data, identifying key themes and patterns related to innovative teaching strategies, student engagement, and language learning outcomes.

To ensure the reliability of the findings, several strategies were employed, such as triangulation of data sources and collection techniques. Triangulation improves the credibility and validity of qualitative research by cross-referencing data from different sources (Hamdani & Abid, 2025).

Member checking was also carried out to verify the accuracy of the interpretations with the research participants.

Ethical considerations were rigorously followed throughout the research. Approval for the study was obtained from the school authorities, and all participants were informed about the study's purpose. Participants' confidentiality and anonymity were preserved to uphold the ethical standards in educational research (Creswell, 2022).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings of this study reveal that innovative English language learning at SD Muhammadiyah 36 Medan has been implemented through various creative and student-centered strategies. Based on classroom observations, interviews, and documentation, the implementation of innovation in English language learning can be described in several key aspects.

First, the findings show that English teachers at SD Muhammadiyah 36 Medan integrated interactive learning media into their teaching practices. Teachers used visual aids, flashcards, videos, and simple digital media to support vocabulary learning and basic communication activities. These media helped students better understand lesson content and maintain their attention during learning activities. Classroom observations indicated that students were more focused and actively involved when interactive media were used compared to conventional teaching methods.

Second, the findings indicate that educational games and fun learning activities were frequently applied as part of innovative English language learning. Games such as word matching, guessing games, and role-play activities encouraged students to participate actively and practice English in a relaxed learning atmosphere. Students showed greater enthusiasm and willingness to use English during these activities. Interviews with teachers revealed that game-based learning was effective in reducing students' anxiety and increasing their confidence in speaking English.

Third, the study found that innovative English language learning promoted higher levels of student engagement and participation. Students were observed to be more responsive, collaborative, and motivated during English lessons. They actively answered questions, participated in group activities, and showed positive attitudes toward learning English. This increased engagement suggests that innovative learning strategies successfully created a more meaningful and enjoyable learning experience for elementary school students.

Fourth, the findings demonstrate that innovative English language learning contributed to the improvement of students' basic English language skills, particularly vocabulary mastery and speaking confidence. Students were able to recognize and use new vocabulary more accurately and were more confident in expressing simple ideas in English. Although the improvement varied among students, overall progress was evident in their classroom performance and participation.

Finally, the findings also identify several challenges in the implementation of innovative English language learning. Teachers reported limitations in learning facilities, limited instructional time, and differences in students' English proficiency levels. Despite these challenges, teachers attempted to adapt their teaching strategies by using simple and low-cost media, adjusting learning activities to students' abilities, and providing additional guidance to students who needed more support.

In summary, the findings indicate that innovative English language learning at SD Muhammadiyah 36 Medan has been effectively implemented and has positively influenced students' engagement and basic English language competence. However, continuous support and further development are needed to address existing challenges and to ensure the sustainability of innovative teaching practices.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of innovative English language learning at SD Muhammadiyah 36 Medan has contributed positively to students' learning engagement and basic English language competence. The use of interactive media, educational games, and contextual learning activities created a more enjoyable and student-centered learning environment. These findings support the view that innovative teaching strategies are essential for young learners, who tend to learn more effectively through active participation and meaningful interaction rather than through traditional teacher-centered

instruction (Valieva, 2020; Hasan et al., 2021; Wiwin et al., 2022).

One of the key findings of this study is the increased level of student engagement during English lessons. Classroom observations showed that students were more enthusiastic and actively involved when innovative learning strategies were applied. This result aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that learners actively construct knowledge through social interaction and meaningful learning experiences (John-Steiner & Mahn, 2020). By engaging students in interactive activities, teachers were able to create learning experiences that supported students' understanding and use of English in real-life contexts.

The findings also reveal that innovative English language learning helped improve students' vocabulary mastery and speaking confidence. The use of games, visual media, and contextual activities provided students with repeated exposure to new vocabulary and opportunities to practice simple communication. This finding is consistent with previous studies suggesting that innovative and interactive learning strategies can enhance young learners' language development, particularly in vocabulary acquisition and oral communication skills (Zhang & Hanks, 2024; Lesiana et al., 2023; Jaya et al., 2025).

Moreover, the role of teachers was found to be crucial in the successful implementation of innovative English language learning. Teachers acted as facilitators who designed creative learning activities and adapted teaching

methods to students' needs and classroom conditions. This finding supports Bereczki and Kárpáti (2021) argument that teacher creativity and pedagogical competence are key factors in effective English language teaching. Teachers who are willing to innovate can create learning environments that foster students' motivation and confidence in using English.

Despite the positive impact of innovative English language learning, this study also identified several challenges in its implementation. Limited learning facilities, time constraints, and varying levels of students' English proficiency were among the main obstacles faced by teachers. These challenges are commonly reported in elementary school English instruction, particularly in contexts where English is taught as a foreign language. However, teachers at SD Muhammadiyah 36 Medan attempted to overcome these challenges by using simple and low-cost learning media and by adjusting teaching strategies to students' abilities.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that innovative English language learning plays an important role in improving the quality of English instruction at the elementary school level. The results are consistent with previous research emphasizing that innovation in teaching methods and learning activities can enhance students' motivation, engagement, and language competence. Therefore, continuous professional development for teachers and strong institutional support are essential to sustain and further develop innovative English language learning practices.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of innovative English language teaching at SD Muhammadiyah 36 Medan has effectively enhanced students' engagement and language competence. The incorporation of interactive media, educational games, and contextual learning activities fostered a student-centered environment that promoted active participation and a more enjoyable learning experience. Students demonstrated increased motivation, confidence, and a willingness to engage in English communication, particularly in vocabulary acquisition and basic speaking exercises.

The study underscores the vital role of teachers in applying these innovative methods. Teachers' creativity, flexibility, and dedication were pivotal in overcoming challenges such as limited resources, constrained instructional time, and diverse student proficiency levels. By employing adaptable and cost-effective strategies, teachers were able to deliver engaging lessons despite these limitations.

In terms of implications, this research highlights the need for ongoing professional development for teachers and institutional support to sustain and build on these innovative practices. Future research should focus on examining the long-term effects of innovative English language teaching and explore its impact in diverse educational contexts to provide broader insights into its effectiveness.

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