



The Effect of the Inquiry Learning Model on Junior High School Students' Learning Achievement in Indonesian Language Subjects

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Submitted: January 6, 2026

Revised: January 26, 2026

Accepted: January 29, 2026

Published: February 29, 2026

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ABSTRACT

Background: Indonesian language learning at the junior high school level still faces challenges, including low student achievement, often due to the use of teaching models that do not actively engage students. Therefore, it is necessary to implement a learning model that encourages student participation, such as the Inquiry Learning Model. **Objective:** This study aims to examine the effect of the Inquiry Learning Model on the achievement in Indonesian language learning of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 5 Bengkulu City. **Method:** The research employed a quasi-experimental design with an experimental and a control class. Data were collected through achievement tests, and analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27, including tests for normality and homogeneity, and hypothesis testing. **Findings:** The results showed that the experimental class increased from 57.40 to 83.20, while the control class increased from 58.80 to 72.60. The t-test results indicated a t-value of 4.520 with a significance level of 0.000, leading to the rejection of H_0 and acceptance of H_1 . **Conclusion:** The Inquiry Learning Model has a significant effect on students' achievement in Indonesian language learning. **Contribution:** This study provides empirical evidence and serves as a reference for teachers in implementing active, student-centered learning approaches.

KEY WORDS

Inquiry Learning Model; Learning Achievement; Indonesian Language

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian is one of the subjects included in the national curriculum, including at the junior high school level. The goal of Indonesian language learning is fundamentally similar to that of other subjects: to acquire information, skills, creativity, and attitudes (Syihabudin & Ratnasari, 2020). Specifically, the curriculum emphasizes four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The most essential role of educators in Indonesian language learning is to create a learning environment that encourages changes in students, particularly in developing these four skills (Hermansyah et al., 2021).

To achieve optimal learning outcomes in Indonesian, teachers must design well-planned instructional strategies aligned with learning objectives and tailored to students' characteristics and needs (Pidrawan et al., 2022). Effective

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How to Cite (APA 7th Edition):

Anggriani, I., & Randi, R. (2026). The Effect of the Inquiry Learning Model on Junior High School Students' Learning Achievement in Indonesian Language Subjects. *Jurnal Indonesia Pendidikan Profesi Guru*, 3(1), 29-37. <https://doi.org/10.64420/jippg.v3i1.463>



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teaching strategies include selecting relevant materials, using varied learning media, and applying appropriate models and methods to support the comprehensive development of students' language skills (Shabrina et al., 2025). Additionally, teachers conduct regular assessments to monitor progress, assess competency, and use the results to improve teaching strategies, ensuring learning is effective and sustainable.

At SMP Negeri 5 Bengkulu City, Indonesian language instruction is implemented in accordance with the national curriculum. Ideally, student achievement should reflect a good level of mastery. However, observations indicate that eighth-grade students' learning outcomes are still low. This is evident from midterm exam results, where only a portion of students achieved scores above the school's minimum competency criteria (KKM). The causes of this problem are numerous and complex, but one suspected factor is the learning model used by teachers. Initial observations revealed that teachers still use traditional methods, such as lectures and question-and-answer sessions, without actively engaging students. As a result, students feel passive in the learning process, discussion skills decline, and participation is low, as students primarily respond to teacher questions. Moreover, teachers often require students to take extensive notes, consuming learning time without meaningful outcomes.

Therefore, a solution is needed to improve eighth-grade students' achievement in Indonesian at SMP Negeri 5 Bengkulu by implementing a student-centered learning model that engages students in a scientific inquiry process (discovery and investigation). Such a model is expected to engage students actively, thereby improving learning outcomes. In this approach, teachers act primarily as facilitators.

One such model is the Inquiry Learning Model. According to Widiya & Radi (2023), inquiry-based learning encourages students to actively participate in the learning process, particularly by posing questions and investigating answers. Damayanti & Anando (2021) explain that inquiry-based learning is grounded in the belief that students' independence and engagement strongly influence their development in scientific work. Furthermore, inquiry learning aims to develop students' ability to understand, carefully identify, and solve problems (Indawati et al., 2021), while also fostering courage and creative imagination (Rohayani & Hidayati, 2022).

Inquiry-based learning is widely recognized as an effective educational model for developing 21st-century skills, including critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. This approach encourages students to actively engage in the learning process by asking questions, investigating problems, and constructing knowledge through hands-on experiences, rather than passively receiving information. Research indicates that inquiry learning not only enhances students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities but also fosters creativity, teamwork, and communication skills. By directly involving students in the exploration and analysis of real-world problems, inquiry learning promotes a deeper understanding and retention of subject matter. When applied effectively, this model has been shown to improve overall learning achievement, as students become more motivated, autonomous, and able to apply knowledge in meaningful contexts. Furthermore, inquiry-based learning cultivates lifelong learning habits by encouraging curiosity, reflection, and self-directed investigation, preparing students to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex and dynamic world.

Several studies have demonstrated that inquiry learning can significantly improve student achievement. Dharmayanti (2022) reported a marked increase in student learning outcomes following the implementation of inquiry-based learning. Other studies indicate that student achievement improves because inquiry learning actively involves students in the scientific process, from problem formulation to problem solving, ensuring that knowledge is fully understood and internalized (Iswatun et al., 2021). Similar findings were reported by Tulljanah & Amini (2021), showing that inquiry learning enhances higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) in science learning. Prasetyo & Rosy (2021) also confirmed that inquiry learning improves student learning outcomes. These studies collectively show that inquiry learning encourages students to think critically, be creative, collaborate, and engage directly in the learning process, facilitating better understanding and retention of material.

Previous research confirms that the Inquiry Learning Model not only targets cognitive achievement but also promotes active and participatory learning. However, studies specifically investigating its application in Indonesian language subjects at the junior high school level, particularly regarding student achievement, remain limited. Therefore, this study focuses on examining the effect of the Inquiry Learning Model on eighth-grade students' Indonesian language achievement, contributing empirically to the development of effective Indonesian teaching strategies.

The purpose of this study is to examine and analyze the effect of implementing the Inquiry Learning Model on eighth-grade students' achievement in Indonesian language subjects at SMP Negeri 5 Bengkulu City, providing an empirical overview of the model's effectiveness in enhancing student learning outcomes.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

Based on the research objectives described previously, this study employed a quantitative research approach. Quantitative research begins with theory and hypotheses, followed by the formulation of a research design, selection of research subjects, data collection, data processing and analysis, and the formulation of conclusions. In brief, the primary objective of quantitative research is to test theories or hypotheses empirically.

This study adopted an experimental research method, specifically a quasi-experimental design. A quasi-experimental design involves a control group; however, it does not fully control for all external variables that may influence the experiment. This design consists of two groups, namely an experimental group and a control group. The research employed the Matching Only Pretest–Posttest Control Group Design, which is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Design Scheme

Group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Experimental	O1	X	O3
Control	O2	-	O4

Notes:

O1 = Pre-test of the experimental group

O2 = Pre-test of the control group

X = Treatment

O3 = Post-test of the experimental group

O4 = Post-test of the control group

- = No treatment

2.2 Research Object

The subjects of this study were students divided into two groups: the experimental and the control. The selection of research subjects was conducted using a matching technique based on relevant characteristics related to the research objectives, ensuring that both groups had relatively equivalent initial conditions prior to the treatment

2.3 Data Collection Technique

Data collection in this study was carried out using a test instrument. The test was administered to both the experimental and control groups during the pre-test and post-test stages. Prior to implementation, the research instrument underwent validity and reliability testing to ensure it was appropriate and capable of accurately and consistently measuring the research variables.

2.4 Data Analysis Technique

The test results were analyzed using quantitative methods. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 27.0 for Windows. The analysis aimed to identify differences between the experimental and control groups and to determine the effectiveness of the treatment provided.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

As stated in the problem formulation in the previous section, this study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the Inquiry Learning Model in improving Indonesian language learning achievement among eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 5, Bengkulu City. To determine the effectiveness referred to above, an experimental design was employed in which the experimental class (Class VIII A) received instruction using the Inquiry Learning Model. In contrast, the control class (Class VIII C) was taught using conventional instructional methods without any treatment.

This section presents the following: (1) a description of the pre-test and post-test results; (2) normality testing; (3) homogeneity testing; and (4) hypothesis testing. All statistical analyses, including normality, homogeneity, and hypothesis testing, were conducted using SPSS version 27. The procedures and results are described as follows.

a) Description of Pre-test and Post-test Data

The pre-test and post-test data in this study consisted of two sets of scores from the experimental and control groups. The experimental group was Class VIII A, comprising 25 students, while the control group was Class VIII B, also comprising 25 students. In both groups, students' learning achievement was measured using a pre-test (administered prior to treatment) and a post-test (administered after treatment).

The pre-test for the experimental group was administered on September 4, 2024, while the pre-test for the control group was conducted on September 5, 2024. Following the pre-test, the experimental group received treatment through instruction using the Inquiry Learning Model. The treatment was conducted over two meetings, on September 11 and 13, 2024. Meanwhile, the control group received regular instruction without the Inquiry Learning Model. The distribution of pre-test and post-test scores for the experimental group is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Scores in the Experimental Group

Score Range	Pre-test Frequency	Pre-test Percentage	Post-test Frequency	Post-test Percentage
0-55	11	44%	0	0%
56-70	13	52%	2	8%
71-85	1	4%	16	64%
86-100	0	0%	7	28%
Total	25	100%	25	100%

The pre-test and post-test results for the control group (Class VIII C) are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Percentage Distribution of Scores in the Control Group

Score Range	Pre-test Frequency	Pre-test Percentage	Post-test Frequency	Post-test Percentage
≤ 55	10	40%	0	0%
56-70	14	56%	14	56%
71-85	1	4%	8	24%
86-100	0	0%	3	12%
Total	25	100%	25	100%

b) Normality Test

The normality test was conducted to determine whether the data were normally distributed. The data tested included the pre-test and post-test scores of both the experimental and control groups. The normality test was performed using SPSS version 27, and the results are as follows:

- 1) For the experimental group pre-test, the significance values were 0.148 (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) and 0.133 (Shapiro-Wilk). Since both values were greater than 0.05, the pre-test data of the experimental group were usually distributed.
- 2) For the experimental group post-test, the significance values were 0.088 (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) and 0.143 (Shapiro-Wilk). As these values exceeded 0.05, the post-test data for the experimental group were approximately normally distributed.
- 3) For the control group pre-test, the significance values were 0.170 (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) and 0.240 (Shapiro-Wilk). Therefore, the pre-test data of the control group were usually distributed.
- 4) For the control group post-test, the significance values were 0.071 (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) and 0.099 (Shapiro-Wilk). Since both values were greater than 0.05, the post-test data of the control group were also normally distributed.

c) Homogeneity Test

After confirming that the data were normally distributed, a homogeneity-of-variance test was conducted to assess whether the variances of the two groups were homogeneous. The homogeneity test was performed using SPSS version 27, and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Homogeneity of Variance Test Results

Test of Homogeneity of Variance	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Based on Mean	1.672	1	48	.202
Based on Median	.962	1	48	.332

Test of Homogeneity of Variance	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Based on Median (adjusted df)	.962	1	40.182	.332
Based on Trimmed Mean	1.537	1	48	.221

Based on the SPSS output, the significance value obtained was 0.202, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the pre-test and post-test scores of both the experimental and control groups had homogeneous variances. Consequently, the data met the requirements for further analysis using a t-test.

d) Hypothesis Testing

After fulfilling the prerequisite tests (normality and homogeneity), hypothesis testing was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the Inquiry Learning Model in improving Indonesian language learning achievement among eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 5 Bengkulu City. The data used for hypothesis testing were the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups.

An Independent Samples t-test was performed using SPSS version 27 to compare the mean scores of the two groups. The results indicated that the mean post-test score for the experimental group was 83.20, while the control group's mean post-test score was 72.60. The t-test yielded a t-value of 4.520 with a significance level of 0.000.

Thus, H_0 was rejected, and H_1 was accepted, as the significance value (0.000) was less than 0.025. This finding indicates that there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of students' learning achievement.

3.2. Discussion

The implementation of the inquiry learning model clearly supports the primary objective of this study, namely, improving junior high school students' achievement in Indonesian language learning. This is evident from the shift in the quality of the learning process, which moved from a teacher-centered approach to one that emphasizes student activity and engagement. The inquiry model provides students with opportunities to act as active learners, enabling them not only to receive information but also to be directly involved in the process of knowledge construction. Through activities such as questioning, investigating, and drawing conclusions, students can develop a deeper understanding of Indonesian language materials. Consequently, learning objectives are achieved not only through content mastery but also by fostering positive learning attitudes and higher-order thinking skills.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study are consistent with constructivist views, which emphasize that knowledge cannot be fully transferred from teachers to students but must be actively constructed through learning experiences (Valuvi et al., 2025). In inquiry-based learning, students are encouraged to connect prior knowledge with new information through continuous processes of exploration and reflection (Prasetyono, 2025). This process allows learners to construct personal and contextual meaning. Therefore, Indonesian language learning becomes more effective when students are given opportunities to think critically, engage in discussion, and relate learning materials to real-life experiences and contexts (Hatima, 2025).

From a practical standpoint, applying the inquiry learning model creates a more dynamic, interactive, and participatory classroom environment. Students no longer remain passive recipients waiting for teacher explanations but become actively involved in discussions, problem-solving activities, and the expression of ideas (Rustandi, 2023). Students' curiosity develops alongside their habit of asking questions and independently seeking answers (Waode, 2023). This condition has a positive impact on the quality of Indonesian language instruction, as lecture-based methods had previously dominated. Clearly, the inquiry learning model can serve as a strategic alternative for teachers to enhance student engagement and improve learning outcomes (Ambokari & Yermalinda, 2024).

Expert opinions further reinforce the findings of this study. Educational scholars argue that the inquiry-based learning model is effective in developing critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills (Sarifah & Nurita, 2023). Through the stages of inquiry learning, students are trained to identify problems, formulate hypotheses, collect information, and draw conclusions based on evidence (Fakhruddin & Apriani, 2024). Such a learning process enables students to gain authentic learning experiences, resulting in understanding that is not temporary but deeper and more enduring.

Compared with previous studies, this research's results align with findings indicating that the inquiry learning model has a positive effect on student learning outcomes. However, this study makes a distinctive contribution in its application context, namely, Indonesian language instruction at the junior high school level. Most previous studies have focused on science or mathematics subjects and were conducted at different educational levels. Therefore, this research contributes to broadening the application of the inquiry model to language learning, particularly Indonesian language education.

Another distinction lies in the instructional approach to Indonesian language learning adopted in this study. This research demonstrates that the inquiry learning model is not only relevant for experiment- or laboratory-based instruction but is also highly effective in language learning contexts that require critical, analytical, and communicative skills. Through inquiry-based learning, students are trained to comprehend texts, interpret meaning, and express ideas logically and systematically (Jawak et al., 2025). This finding indicates that the inquiry learning model is flexible and adaptable to various subject characteristics (Herung et al., 2025).

The strength of this study lies in its ability to demonstrate that improvements in student learning achievement are not solely determined by instructional content or evaluation systems. Instead, a key determining factor is how the learning process is designed and implemented. By emphasizing student engagement and meaningful learning processes, this study provides empirical evidence that student-centered learning can optimally and sustainably enhance learning outcomes.

This discussion confirms that the inquiry learning model is a practical, relevant, and contextual approach for improving junior high school students' achievement in Indonesian language learning. The findings not only reinforce existing theories and previous research but also offer practical contributions for teachers and schools in designing innovative, active, and learner-centered instruction. Accordingly, the inquiry learning model deserves consideration as one of the primary instructional strategies in efforts to improve the quality of Indonesian language education.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

The implications of this study indicate that implementing the Inquiry Learning Model can significantly improve Indonesian language achievement among eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 5 Bengkulu City. The higher results in the experimental class compared to the control class demonstrate that this approach effectively enhances students' understanding and academic performance. Therefore, teachers can consider using the Inquiry Learning Model as an alternative teaching strategy to foster students' critical thinking skills and deepen their comprehension of the subject matter. This study also provides a strong foundation for the development of innovative teaching methods that can be applied in various educational contexts to achieve more optimal learning outcomes.

4.1 Research Contributions

This research makes an important contribution both practically and academically. In practice, the findings demonstrate that the Inquiry Learning Model is efficacious in improving student learning outcomes and comprehension in Indonesian language subjects, providing teachers with a reference for designing more active and participatory learning strategies. Academically, the study enriches the field of education by presenting empirical evidence of the effectiveness of inquiry-based approaches, particularly at the junior high school level, while also serving as a basis for the development of innovative teaching models that can be adapted across diverse educational contexts to enhance learning quality and students' critical thinking skills.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

5.1 Research Limitations

The limitations of this study lie in its small sample size and limited research context, as it involved only one school and a small number of eighth-grade students. Consequently, the findings may not fully represent a broader population. In addition, this study did not examine other factors that may influence the effectiveness of the Inquiry learning model, such as students' motivation, teachers' proficiency in implementing the model, and the level of support provided by the learning environment. Furthermore, the intervention's long-term impact was not assessed, making it difficult to assess the sustainability of improvements in students' learning outcomes and skills. Therefore, future studies employing larger samples, involving multiple schools, and incorporating long-term measurements are strongly recommended to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the Inquiry learning model.

5.1 Recommendation for Future Research Directions

For future research, it is recommended that subsequent studies involve a greater number of schools and larger samples to examine whether the implementation of the Inquiry learning model produces similar improvements across different educational contexts. Moreover, future research could investigate additional factors that may affect

the effectiveness of the Inquiry model, including student motivation, teachers' instructional competence in applying the model, and the support of the learning environment. Further studies may also incorporate longitudinal measurements to examine the sustained impact of the Inquiry learning model on students' Indonesian language skill development, as well as explore its potential application in teaching other subject areas

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined the effect of the Inquiry Learning Model on junior high school students' learning achievement in Indonesian language subjects. The findings demonstrate that the Inquiry Learning Model has a significant and positive effect on students' learning achievement compared to conventional instructional methods. Students taught using the inquiry-based approach achieved higher post-test scores, indicating that active involvement in questioning, investigating, and concluding contributes meaningfully to improved learning outcomes in Indonesian language instruction.

The results further indicate that the Inquiry Learning Model enhances not only students' mastery of the content but also the quality of the learning process. By shifting instruction from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered one, the inquiry model encourages active participation, critical thinking, and meaningful engagement with learning materials. This aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed by learners through experience and interaction rather than passively received from teachers.

This study provides empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of the Inquiry Learning Model in Indonesian language instruction at the junior high school level. The findings offer practical implications for teachers and schools by highlighting the importance of implementing innovative, student-centered learning strategies to improve academic achievement. Therefore, the Inquiry Learning Model can be considered a viable and effective instructional alternative for enhancing students' learning achievement in Indonesian language subjects.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the teachers and eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 5 Bengkulu City for their participation, support, and cooperation in the implementation of this study. Without their assistance and commitment, this research would not have been successfully conducted.

Author Contribution Statement

All authors discussed the research findings, contributed to the preparation of the final manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. Intan Anggriani: Conceptualization and Design, Methodology, Writing - Original Draft, Performed data collection and Analysis. Randi: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & Editing.

Declaration of Generative AI (GenAI) Usage in Scientific Writing

In preparing this manuscript, the authors used Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in a limited capacity as a tool for language editing and improving writing structure. All substantive content, analyses, data, and conclusions are entirely the authors' own work and responsibility, thereby ensuring the originality and academic integrity of the research. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the [JIPPG GenAI Tool Usage Policy](#), with the authors assuming full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Article Information

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First Publication Right:

Jurnal Indonesia Pendidikan Profesi Guru

Article info:

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64420/jippg.v3i1.463>

Word Count: 4794

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