EFL Students' Perceptions of Learning Experiences Using the Inquiry Method: A Survey Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to find out how EFL students perceive their learning experience using the inquiry method at Lancang Kuning University. This quantitative study was survey-based in its design. The study employed convenience sampling as a technique of data collection. It was discovered that four elements reflected this survey: critical discourse, authentic investigation, experience-based hypothesis, and conclusion-based transfer. Students' perceptions are merely "Moderate" (Mean= 3.81 and SD=0.84) according to the study's findings on four different criteria. In conclusion, Inquiry-based learning encourages students to actively investigate and learn, leading to a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Students learn to analyze, evaluate, and draw conclusions from information, fostering critical thinking abilities. Students gain valuable skills like initiative, self-direction, and communication, applicable beyond the classroom

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the main milestone of a country. Equitable education will produce good graduates and contribute to the country's progress. Education can be obtained through formal and informal education. One example of formal education is in schools, the need for quality education increases from year to year, teachers cannot give the tools for success to their students, but teachers can only provide, teach practical needs in the classroom that encourage students to actively have critical thinking, collaboration and good communication. both in the scope of learning in the classroom. Learning is a process that humans go through from the beginning of their life to the end of their life. According to (Ariyanto & Purwaningrum, 2022; Wiradintana, 2018), learning is a complex and systematic process because all internal and external factors interact at the same time (Jamilisti, 2023; Josephine, 2020).

In learning theory, the most important factor is the learning process, not the results. Humans can understand the stages of development in accordance with a person's ability to perceive other people. This can be applied in the world of education to provide appropriate learning opportunities for students. Learning has developed into a major strategy for increasing students' growth and knowledge capacity. In the world of education there are also several strategies, one of which is inquiry, which is a teaching practice where students explore content, engage in it, and answer questions. According to (Caswell & LaBrie, 2017) this allows students to participate in class actively and communicatively. According to (Hubber et al., 2018)the inquiry learning approach involves students actively directly exploring and collecting a phenomenon.

This learning approach process uses media to form a learning community through teaching guided by the teacher to direct students to provide creative ideas in class. According to (Ernawati et al., 2022; Palupi & Subiyantoro, 2020), inquiry-based education encourages critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as collaborative and collaborative skills in all students. Education is adjusted to the curriculum used, and inquiry-based learning can be applied at several levels. Education is adjusted to the curriculum used.

According to (bin Ahmad et al., 2023), several benefits of inquiry-based learning include giving students the authority to grow associations about their knowledge, helping students complete assignments, and instilling knowledge about certain subjects and topics. It is impossible for students to understand: when students achieve good results in their studies. According to (Heindl, 2018, 2019), inquiry-based education produces students who can work independently and participate actively in discussions. According to (Sari & Muchlis, 2022), the benefits of inquiry-based education can make learning more effective and efficient, make students more active in their learning, inquiry-based learning determines student independence. This will improve students' critical thinking skills in analyzing a problem, increasing learning motivation to be active in learning.

This inquiry-based learning is in line with the curriculum used in English education at Universitas Lancang Kuning. Currently the curriculum used is the Merdeka Curriculum (Independent Campus). Independent Schools focus on students (Merdeka, 2020). This is in accordance with the learning objectives of the inquiry method, where students are the main source in learning. With this knowledge, students will be more interested in learning creatively, innovatively and independently. By adding inquiry-based learning, it is hoped that the quality of education can improve overall, especially in the production of English-language education.

According to (Palupi & Subiyantoro, 2020), entitled "The Effectiveness of Guided Inquiry Learning (GIL) and Problem Based Learning (PBL) for Explanatory Writing Skills" states that the inquiry learning paradigm is more effective than problem-based learning in expanding activities, this writing activity places more emphasis on problem solving and student skills. According to (Aksa, 2022; Gholam, 2019; Latifah & Suprihatiningrum, 2024), entitled "Inquiry Based Learning: Student Teacher Challenges and Perception" says that there are no factors that hinder or influence the success of inquiry-based learning in the classroom, whether delivered by teachers or students, this means that inquiry-based learning provides positive impact on students.

According to (Baldock & Murphrey, 2020), entitled "Secondary Students' Perceptions of Inquiry-based Learning in the Agriculture Classroom", students have a better response to learning at school because they can work independently and have more freedom in dealing with problems, and because they can be more critical in traditional classrooms. Students have the responsibility to be actively involved in every learning process in the classroom, but in reality, when students are given the freedom to explore themselves in the classroom, many students feel uninterested in expressing their opinions. Students in the English Education Study Program tend not to want to participate in learning, even when group work, which

should be fun and challenging, is often structured to solve problems that many students only solve alone, and ultimately leads to boredom.

Based on the background above, the problem raised in this research is how EFL students' perception of learning experiences using the inquiry method at Universitas Lancang Kuning.

2. METHODS

The design of this quantitative investigation was survey-based. The purpose of the cross-sectional survey was to extrapolate findings from a sample to the entire population, the English Education Department, Faculty of Education and Teachers Training, one of the universities in Riau, this study was carried out starting in December 2023. Students' opinions of their experiences learning using the inquiry method in EFL classes served as the research variable. Convenience sampling was employed to collect the data for this study. A 12-statement questionnaire (adapted from served as the study's instrument. The questionnaire on students' perceptions of their learning experiences through the inquiry method covers four indicators: 1) students' perceptions of their learning experiences through critical discourse, 2) students' perceptions of their learning experiences through authentic exploration, 3) students' perceptions of their learning experiences through experience-based hypothesizing, and 4) students' perceptions of their learning experiences through conclusion-based transfer. Mean, Mode, Median and Standard Deviation, four descriptive statistics were employed to examine the answers from the students' perception questionnaires.

Following the researchers' use of descriptive statistics to assess the data, the researchers classified the means using the Katz and Kahn range Likert scale (1978) as follows: The Introduction ought to contain the study methodology. The methodology includes a description of the research approach, study subjects, methodology, materials and instrumentation used, and data collection and analysis procedures.

Table 1. Katz & Kahn's Likert Scale Range

No	Range	Category
1	1.00 – 2.49	Low
2	2.50 – 3.99	Moderate
3	4.00 – 5.49	High

Katz & Kahn's (1978) Likert Scale Range

The research method should be included in the Introduction. The method contains an explanation of the research approach, subjects of the study, the conduct of the research procedure, the use of materials and instruments, data collection, and analysis techniques.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Students' perception of the learning experiences critical discourse using inquiry method

Using the inquiry approach, this study has determined how students perceive their critical discourse learning experiences. The first indicator score, which reflects how students felt about the critical discourse learning process through the inquiry approach, is displayed in Table 2. Three claims serve as examples of critical discourse that makes use of the inquiry technique. There must be enough data to back up the findings of research. The answers to the questions or research hypotheses that were previously provided in the introduction must be the research results and findings.

Students' perceptions of the critical discourse learning experiences employing the inquiry method are shown in Table 3, where the values of (Mean=3.71, Mode=4.0, Median=4.0, and Standard Deviation=.9141) suggest a "Moderate" level of learning. The information demonstrates that there is enough positive agreement between the students'

perceptions in the first indicator. This result suggests that EFL students comprehend the value of critical discourse learning experiences using the inquiry method in EFL courses to a sufficient degree.

Table 2. Students' perception of the learning experiences critical discourse using inquiry method

No	Number and Statement	Mean	Mode	Median	SD
1	Many situation occurred where I was able to tell my ideas	3.53	4.00	4.00	.9732
2	I remember many interesting conversations during this learning activity (PPT presentation, classroom project, writing scientific article, group project, making learning media)	3.83	4.00	4.00	.83391
3	This learning activity (PPT presentation, classroom project, writing scientific article, group project, making learning media) activity was full of meaningful discussions	3.76	4.00	4.00	.93526

Note: Mean, Mode, Median and SD are calculated on likert scale (1-3) with options "Strongly Agree=5", "Agree=4", "Neutral=3", "Disagree=2" or "Strongly Disagree=1".

Table 3. Students' perception of the learning experiences critical discourse using inquiry method

Indicator 1 (N=30)	Mean	Mode	Median	SD
Students' perception of the learning experiences critical discourse using inquiry method	3.71	4.0	4.0	.9141

Note: N=30 Respondents, Mean, Mode, Median and Standard Deviation (SD) are calculated on a likert scale (1-3)

3.2 Students' perception of the learning experiences authentic exploration using inquiry method

The data for the second indicator, which consists of three assertions, is displayed in Table 4 and represents how students view real-world learning experiences that employ the inquiry approach.

Table 4 Students' perception of the learning experiences authentic exploration using inquiry method

	Number and Statement	Mean	Mode	Median	SD
1	This learning activity (PPT presentation, classroom project, writing scientific article, group project, making learning media) activity encouraged me to discover open questions	3.80	4.00	4.00	.80516
2	I gained exciting insights into the matter through exploration	3.90	4.00	4.00	.80301
3	During this learning activity, I found out new insights by myself	3.90	4.00	4.00	.80301

Note: Mean, Mode, Median and SD are calculated on likert scale (1-3) with options "Strongly Agree=5", "Agree=4", "Neutral=3", "Disagree=2" or "Strongly Disagree=1".

Students' perceptions of the authentic exploration learning experiences employing the inquiry method are displayed in Table 5, where they fall into the "Moderate" category (Mean=3.86, Mode=4.0, Median=4.0, and Standard Deviation=.8037). The information demonstrates that there is enough positive agreement between the students' perceptions in the first indicator. This result suggests that EFL students comprehend the value of authentic learning experiences that employ the inquiry approach in EFL courses to a sufficient degree.

Table 5. Students' perception of the learning experiences authentic exploration using inquiry method

Indicator 2 (N=30)	Mean	Mode	Median	SD
Students' perception of the learning experiences authentic exploration using inquiry method	3.86	4.0	4.0	.8037

Note: N=30 Respondents, Mean, Mode, Median and Standard Deviation (SD) are calculated on a likert scale (1-3)

3.3 Students' perception of the learning experiences experience-based hypothesizing using inquiry method

Table 6 show the data for the second indicator, which consists of three statements that represent how students perceive their learning experiences while utilizing the inquiry technique to generate hypotheses based on experience.

Table 6 Students' perception of the learning experiences experience-based hypothesizing using inquiry method

	Number and Statement	Mean	Mode	Median	SD
1	This learning activity (PPT presentation, classroom project, writing scientific article, group project, making learning media) led me to suppositions about possible solutions	3.90	4.00	4.00	.75886
2	At this learning activity (PPT presentation, classroom project, writing scientific article, group project, making learning media), many suppositions came to my mind	3.73	3.00	4.00	.98027
3	I thought about possible solutions	3.90	4.00	4.00	.71197

Note: Mean, Mode, Median and SD are calculated on likert scale (1-3) with options "Strongly Agree=5", "Agree=4", "Neutral=3", "Disagree=2" or "Strongly Disagree=1".

Table 7. Students' perception of the learning experiences experience-based hypothesizing using inquiry method

Indicator 3 (N=30)	Mean	Mode	Median	SD
Students' perception of the learning experiences experience-based hypothesizing using inquiry method	3.84	3.6	4.0	.817

Note: N=30 Respondents, Mean, Mode, Median and Standard Deviation (SD) are calculated on a likert scale (1-3)

Students' evaluations of the real inquiry-based learning experiences are shown in Table 7, where they fall into the "Moderate" category (Mean=3.84, Mode=3.6, Median=4.0, Standard Deviation=.817). The information demonstrates that there is enough positive agreement between the students' perceptions in the first indicator. This result suggests that EFL students comprehend the value of experience-based hypothesizing through inquiry-based learning in EFL classes to a sufficient degree.

3.4 Students' perception of the learning experiences conclusion-based transfer using inquiry method

Table 8 presents the findings for the second indicator, which consists of three statements that represent how students perceive their learning experiences when utilizing an inquiry-based approach to experience-based hypothesizing.

Students' evaluations of the real inquiry-based learning experiences are shown in Table 9, where they fall into the "Moderate" category (Mean=3.84, Mode=4.0, Median=4.0, and Standard Deviation=.839). The information demonstrates that there is enough positive agreement between the students' perceptions in the first indicator. This result suggests that

EFL students comprehend the significance of learning experiences that are conclusion-based and transferable through the use of the inquiry method in EFL courses to a sufficient degree.

Table 8 Students' perception of the learning experiences conclusion-based transfer using inquiry method

	Number and Statement	Mean	Mode	Median	SD
1	I definitely want to do more with the insights I have gained during this learning activity (PPT presentation, classroom project, writing scientific article, group project, making learning media)	3.93	3.00	4.00	.82768
2	I have many ideas about meaningful things I can do with the new insights	3.80	4.00	4.00	.80516
3	This learning activity (PPT presentation, classroom project, writing scientific article, group project, making learning media) gave me ideas for interesting further activity	3.80	4.00	4.00	.88668

Note: Mean, Mode, Median and SD are calculated on likert scale (1-3) with options "Strongly Agree=5", "Agree=4", "Neutral=3", "Disagree=2" or "Strongly Disagree=1".

Table 9. Students' perception of the learning experiences conclusion-based transfer using inquiry method

Indicator 4 (N=30)	Mean	Mode	Median	SD
Students' perception of the learning experiences conclusion-based transfer using inquiry method	3.84	4.0	4.0	.839

Note: N=30 Respondents, Mean, Mode, Median and Standard Deviation (SD) are calculated on a likert scale (1-3)

Overall, based on the four indicators in "EFL Students' Perception Of Learning Experiences Using The Inquiry Method At Universitas Lancang Kuning" can be seen in table 10

Table 10. EFL Students' Perception Of Learning Experiences Using The Inquiry Method At Universitas Lancang Kuning

Indicator	Mean	SD
Students' perception of the learning experiences critical discourse using inquiry method	3.71	.9141
Students' perception of the learning experiences authentic exploration using inquiry method	3.86	.8037
Students' perception of the learning experiences experience-based hypothesizing using inquiry method	3.84	.817
Students' perception of the learning experiences conclusion-based transfer using inquiry method	3.84	.839
Total	3.81	.84

Note: N=30 Respondents, Mean, Mode, Median and Standard Deviation (SD) are calculated on a likert scale (1-3)

Table 10 shows that the overall results of EFL Students' Perception of Learning Experiences Using the Inquiry Method at Lancang Kuning University' was in the "Moderate" level, with a Mean= 3.81 and SD= .84.

Discussion

The section above describes the findings of the inquiry method survey conducted with students at Lancang Kuning University. Four factors were found to be indicative of the survey: critical discourse, authentic exploration, experience-based hypothesizing, and conclusion-

based transfer. The researcher will go over all the information that can address the claims in the problem formulation based on the aforementioned study findings. Data analysis was done in line with the study goal, which was to find out how the inquiry technique in the English foreign language class affected students' impressions of their learning. The study's findings indicate that students' perceptions are merely "Moderate" across the four measures.

The results of this research are in line with the findings of (Shanmugavelu et al., 2020), which state that inquiry-based learning is a strategy that helps students expand their knowledge and understanding through investigations and learning activities. To conclude using inquiry techniques, a person must have advanced cognitive abilities and critical thinking skills based on pre-existing knowledge. (Baldock & Murphrey, 2020) Students believe that they are aware of opportunities to communicate ideas through inquiry-based learning to develop their critical thinking skills. According to (Caswell & LaBrie, 2017), the students reported increased involvement and passion, better critical thinking skills, and better memory of the material. Students believe that he was more dedicated to his studies and had a stronger conceptual understanding of the subject matter as a result of the inquiry-based learning experience (Abdi, 2014).

In this research, a large number of students concur that inquiry learning is when students are given freedom and independence to solve a problem or topic. This can help students be more creative in their solution of a problem set by the teacher and allow them to express their ideas in a way that aligns with the learning flow, which will help them develop their critical thinking abilities and discover fresh perspectives and answers to problems or topics, either on their own or in groups. The finding confirms to (bin Ahmad et al., 2023) the inquiry technique improves student learning results. More transferable skills, like initiative and self-direction, are now possessed by students. Students acquire the capacity to critically examine, perceive, assess, and draw conclusions regarding pertinent research issues. growth in creative thinking, participatory learning, and communication abilities. (Hyland et al., 2023) asserts that the guided inquiry teaching methodology, which prioritizes student engagement and active learning, is likewise focused on the students.

However, certain students are full of ideas but lack the confidence to voice them. At this point, for learning utilizing this inquiry approach to make all students active and participate during the learning process, strong motivation is required, which the teacher must provide to the students. These results support the notion (Shanmugavelu et al., 2020) that instructor or teacher are critical to the success of inquiry-based learning initiatives in enacting educational reforms, this will make instruction in the classroom engaging and focused. (Cheng et al., 2022; Ferreira et al., 2021; Scogin, 2014; Zhao et al., 2021) state that self-determination theory can be a helpful diagnostic tool during teaching development and that student motivation should be taken into consideration when using inquiry-based learning activities.

According to this study, in order to improve learning outcomes, it is critical to consider students' opinions about the inquiry method of teaching foreign languages in all facets of the classroom, with the teacher's assistance. According to (Baldock & Murphrey, 2020) by employing inquiry-based learning activities, teachers can assist students in moving away from the expectation that they be given all background information up front. As they grow more accustomed to the processes, students could start to see the benefits of doing their own learning. Therefore, the benefits of inquiry-based learning, according to, they include: enhancing cognitive capabilities, stimulating interest and engagement in the learning process, augmenting intellectual capacity for taking calculated risks, fostering the development of soft skills, and serving as catalysts for real-world problem-solving world issues and boost self-assurance.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examines EFL students' perceptions of their learning experiences at Lancang Kuning University using inquiry methods, drawing on the previously mentioned findings. The study's findings demonstrated that students' opinions on the inquiry approach fell into the "Moderate" category. Inquiry-based learning encourages students to actively investigate and learn, leading to a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Students learn to analyze, evaluate, and draw conclusions from information, fostering critical thinking abilities. Inquiry-based learning provides opportunities for students to be creative in their solutions and develop new perspectives. Students are more engaged and passionate in the learning process, leading to better memory retention. Students gain valuable skills like initiative, self-direction, and communication, applicable beyond the classroom. Future researchers should consider utilizing more qualitative research or conducting in-depth studies to optimize the application of inquiry methods in English language acquisition, as these approaches are critical in resolving this issue.

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