



THE RELEVANCE OF INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING IN TEACHING WORLD ENGLISHES AT AN GIANG UNIVERSITYⁱ

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Abstract:

Various teaching methods today focus primarily on learners, aiming to develop their capacities and abilities. Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) is one of the most well-known approaches, widely adopted by schools, universities, and educators. This study explores the theoretical foundations and relevance of Inquiry-Based Learning in teaching the subject, World Englishes, as well as giving recommendations to enhance teachers' understanding and effective implementation of this approach in the classroom at An Giang University.

Keywords: inquiry-based learning (phương pháp học tập truy vấn), World Englishes (Tiếng Anh toàn cầu)

1. Introduction

World Englishes is an elective course offered in the final semester of the training program at An Giang University. This module provides final-year students with a comprehensive understanding of the formation, evolution, and development of Standard English and Global English across various regions, including Europe, America, Australia, Africa, and Asia. It also explores key debates surrounding these linguistic variations, enabling learners to distinguish the characteristics of Standard English and Global English. Additionally, the module fosters systematic thinking about global English and enhances learners' ability to communicate effectively in English across diverse cultural and professional contexts. Furthermore, it cultivates a multidimensional perspective, a sense of responsibility, and collaborative skills in learning activities while emphasizing the significance and influence of global English in improving professional efficiency.

ⁱ SỰ TƯƠNG THÍCH CỦA PHƯƠNG PHÁP HỌC TẬP TRUY VẤN TRONG VIỆC GIẢNG DẠY MÔN TIẾNG ANH TOÀN CẦU Ở TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC AN GIANG

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Therefore, Inquiry-based learning (IBL) is a pedagogical approach that emphasizes student engagement through exploration, questioning, and problem-solving, making it particularly relevant in teaching World Englishes. This approach aligns with the dynamic and diverse nature of World Englishes, which encompasses the global variations and uses of the English language. By fostering critical thinking, creativity, and active participation, IBL can enhance students' understanding and appreciation of the multifaceted nature of English as it is used worldwide.

2. Research content

2.1. Theoretical background

2.1.1. Definition of Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL)

Gholam, A. P. (2019) stated that Inquiry-based learning (IBL) is a student-centered approach driven by students' questions and their innate curiosity. Joseph, V., Sheikh, I., & Rajani, S. (2022) also summarized that IBL is an effective inductive teaching method that promotes deeper engagement beyond rote memorization (Smith, 2006). Rooted in Dewey's (1933) "learning by doing" philosophy, IBL encourages students to observe and analyze facts to solve real-world problems (Ma, Xiao, Wei, & Yang, 2011). It fosters a learner-centered approach, shifting the focus from content delivery to active participation (Kember, 1997, as cited in Smith, 2006). By integrating discussions, questioning, and problem-solving, IBL enhances self-directed learning skills (Prince & Felder, 2006; Khalaf & Zin, 2018). Its open-ended nature supports collaboration, critical thinking, and real-world connections, making students responsible for their learning (Eysink *et al.*, 2015).

2.1.2 Types of Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL)

Although inquiry-based learning (IBL) follows a structured framework, it also allows for flexibility in its implementation. Banchi and Bell (2008) categorized the four levels of inquiry such as: *confirmation inquiry*, *structured inquiry*, *guided inquiry*, and *open inquiry*—based on the degree of student autonomy and teacher guidance in the learning process. Their classification illustrates the progression from teacher-directed to student-directed learning, emphasizing how students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills through increasingly independent inquiry experiences.

In *confirmation inquiry*, students are provided with a predefined research question, a structured methodology, and a known outcome. This approach encourages students to replicate the investigative process, reinforcing their understanding by confirming established results. By following a structured framework with well-defined logical pathways, this method supports the development of analytical and investigative skills while strengthening foundational knowledge, making it particularly effective in higher education contexts.

Structured inquiry follows a similar framework to confirmation inquiry but does not provide a predetermined result. Students are given a research question and a defined methodology, leading them to derive a conclusion based on the available evidence. While

this approach maintains a high level of instructional guidance, it introduces a critical challenge by requiring students to independently analyze data and formulate their own conclusions. This method fosters analytical reasoning and problem-solving skills, making it a valuable pedagogical strategy in higher education.

Guided inquiry increases the level of complexity by removing the predefined methodology, leaving students with only a research question as their starting point. This approach challenges students to design their own investigative methods, fostering independent problem-solving, critical thinking, and research skills. By actively engaging in the inquiry process, students develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter and enhance their ability to conduct autonomous investigations, making guided inquiry particularly effective in higher education settings.

Open inquiry empowers students to formulate their own research questions and determine the focus of their investigation. They are responsible for designing the methodology, analyzing data, and drawing conclusions based on their problem-solving abilities. This approach offers significant academic freedom, fostering creativity and deep engagement with the subject matter. However, the lack of direct guidance presents a rigorous challenge, requiring students to demonstrate strong critical thinking, research, and analytical skills. As a result, open inquiry serves as an advanced learning method that promotes independent inquiry and intellectual growth in higher education.

Despite these differences, all methodologies emphasize critical thinking and problem-solving as fundamental components of the learning process.

2.1.3 The relevance of Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) in teaching the subject -World Englishes at An Giang University

IBL has emerged as an effective pedagogical approach for fostering deeper engagement and understanding in language education, particularly in the study of World Englishes. By emphasizing active exploration and critical inquiry, IBL equips students with essential skills for navigating the complexities of global English varieties. This approach not only promotes analytical thinking and creativity but also enhances language proficiency, intercultural competence, and learner autonomy.

One significant advantages of IBL is its ability to enhance students' critical thinking and creativity by encouraging high-level questioning and exploration, which are essential for understanding the complexities of World Englishes. This approach fosters critical thinking by allowing students to formulate their own questions and construct knowledge about different English varieties and their cultural contexts (Qablan *et al.*, 2024; Setiyaningsih *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, the integration of IBL with technology, particularly through inquiry-based high-tech approaches, supports creative problem-solving and real-world applications, enabling students to explore the global landscape of English more effectively (Şenöz & Alpar, 2024).

In addition to fostering critical thinking, IBL plays a crucial role in enhancing language skills and intercultural competence. Research has demonstrated that IBL significantly improves students' writing proficiency, particularly in descriptive texts, by

fostering active engagement and language development (Putri & Novita, 2024; Huang *et al.*, 2024). Additionally, the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is a fundamental component of teaching World Englishes. Through structured thinking routines, IBL enhances students' metacognitive awareness and equips them with the necessary skills for meaningful communication and interaction in a globalized society (Mongyi, 2024).

Another relevance is that IBL fosters student engagement and autonomy, both of which are essential for developing a deeper understanding and appreciation of the diverse uses of English worldwide. By encouraging students to take ownership of their learning, IBL promotes active participation and critical inquiry, leading to more meaningful engagement with the subject matter (Thy & Nhan, 2023). Research findings, including surveys and interviews, indicate that students generally exhibit positive attitudes toward IBL, further demonstrating its effectiveness in enhancing learning outcomes and creating a more interactive and dynamic learning environment (Thy & Nhan, 2023).

Despite its advantages, the implementation of IBL in education presents both challenges and key considerations. While IBL offers significant pedagogical benefits, its effectiveness depends on comprehensive teacher training and the establishment of supportive learning environments. One major challenge is addressing the varying levels of student readiness for self-directed learning, which necessitates tailored instructional support to ensure equitable engagement (Sam, 2024). Additionally, integrating IBL into curricula requires the strategic use of technology to facilitate inquiry-based activities. Although technology can enhance the learning experience, its incorporation demands careful planning and execution to maximize its effectiveness in teaching World Englishes (Sam, 2024).

3. Recommendations

To maximize the effectiveness of IBL in teaching World Englishes, teachers must develop strategies that support student engagement, ensure fair assessment, and maintain classroom management. The following recommendations provide guidance on effective classroom implementation:

First of all, clear classroom management strategies should be established by setting expectations early, using structured inquiry as a transition, facilitating group work effectively and having time management techniques. Effective classroom management strategies are essential for fostering a structured and engaging learning environment, particularly when implementing IBL. Establishing clear expectations from the outset ensures that both students and instructors understand their roles in the inquiry process. To facilitate smooth transitions, structured inquiry should be used as an initial framework before gradually progressing to guided and open inquiry.

Secondly, when incorporating group work, it is crucial to assign specific roles—such as researcher, presenter, or data analyst—to promote active participation,

accountability, and collaboration. Clearly defined responsibilities help students stay engaged and contribute meaningfully to the learning process. Additionally, employing time management techniques, such as setting checkpoints, using progress-tracking tools, and establishing deadlines, can help students remain focused and on task throughout the inquiry process. Regular feedback and check-ins further support student progress and ensure that learning objectives are met effectively.

Thirdly, teachers should collaboratively establish clear assessment criteria for students' participation and attendance in class activities, group presentation, questions and reflection and final exam. For example, with students' participation and attendance in class activities, the assessment framework includes a weighted grading system: attendance (40%), punctuality (10%), preparedness (20%), and engagement (30%). Students are evaluated on a four-point scale, ranging from exemplary (4) to needs improvement (1). The final grade classification follows a standard scale: A (90-100%) for exemplary participation, B (80-89%) for proficiency, C (70-79%) for developing skills, D (60-69%) for areas needing improvement, and F (below 60%) for unsatisfactory participation. Then, teachers should build clear assessment criteria for students' group presentations, ensuring consistency and fairness in evaluation. A structured rubric with weighted criteria—delivery (40%), content (40%), and teamwork (20%)—should be used to assess key aspects such as clarity, preparedness, subject knowledge, citation accuracy, and collaboration. The evaluation follows a rating scale: A (90-100%) for excellent mastery, B (80-89%) for strong performance, C (70-79%) for satisfactory work, D (60-69%) for areas needing improvement, and F (below 60%) for unsatisfactory performance. This structured approach ensures a transparent and comprehensive assessment, encouraging students to refine their presentation skills, critical thinking, and teamwork. Similarly, the rubric for questions and reflection should assess key areas to ensure a structured and fair evaluation, including content knowledge (40%), critical thinking and argumentation (30%), clarity and articulation (20%), and engagement and impact (10%). Students will be evaluated on a rating scale: A (90-100%) for exemplary performance, demonstrating deep understanding, strong critical thinking, and the ability to inspire discussion; B (80-89%) for proficient performance, showing solid comprehension and engagement; C (70-79%) for developing performance, indicating basic understanding but areas for improvement; D (60-69%) for needs improvement, where questions lack depth, clarity, or relevance; and F (below 60%) for unsatisfactory performance, reflecting a lack of preparation or understanding. This structured evaluation fosters meaningful inquiry, encourages problem-solving, critical reflection, and enhances students' engagement with World Englishes.

A detailed rubric-based evaluation should be developed to assess key aspects such as content mastery (demonstrated understanding of World Englishes concepts), critical thinking and analysis (ability to connect ideas and propose solutions), presentation clarity and organization, as well as collaboration and participation in group discussions. Additionally, peer and self-assessment should be incorporated, encouraging students to evaluate their peers' presentations using structured feedback forms. This approach

fosters reflection and deeper engagement in the learning process. By integrating these strategies, educators can create a well-structured, engaging, and fair learning environment that fosters the competence, autonomy, critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving skills and self-directed learning—key elements of successful inquiry-based learning.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, IBL shifts the conventional role of teachers from simply delivering knowledge to actively facilitating the learning process in learning World Englishes. Instead of passively receiving information, students are encouraged to investigate, ask questions, and construct their own understanding of various concepts. This student-centered approach fosters curiosity and critical thinking, allowing learners to engage in meaningful exploration. In this dynamic learning environment, IBL is very suitable in the process of teaching and learning World Englishes at An Giang University today, and teachers play a crucial role in guiding students by providing direction, encouragement, and intellectual challenges. Their support helps students refine their inquiries, analyze information more effectively, and develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter while maintaining active engagement in the learning process.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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