

# INQUIRY-BASED APPROACH TO DEVELOPING LANGUAGE SKILLS IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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**Annotation:** This article explores the effectiveness of an inquiry-based approach in developing language skills in English classrooms. An inquiry-based approach to developing language skills in the English classroom is a teaching method that focuses on engaging students in active learning through exploration, investigation, and critical thinking. This approach encourages students to ask questions, seek answers, and make connections between their prior knowledge and new information. By encouraging curiosity, critical thinking, and active engagement, inquiry-based learning empowers students to take ownership of their learning and develop proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Drawing on educational research and classroom practices, this article provides insights into the principles, strategies, and benefits of implementing inquiry-based instruction in language learning contexts.

**Key words:** Language learning, listening skills, feature movie clips in language learning, audio-visual materials

Inquiry-based learning emphasizes language learners' abilities to critically view, question, and explore various perspectives and concepts of the real world. It takes place when the teacher facilitates and scaffolds learning than gives facts and knowledge so that language learners engage in investigating, questioning, and explaining their world in a learner-centered learning environment. Inquiry-based learning is often assisted by a facilitator rather than a lecturer. The inquiry-based instruction is principally very closely related to the development and practice of thinking and problem solving skills. Some important characteristics of IBL are:

- It encourages the development of critical thinking.
- It allows an active participation of students in the acquisition of knowledge.
- It facilitates problem solving skills
- It guides students to form and express concepts through a series of questions
- It allows for a more meaningful use of digital technologies linking students to the local as well as the global community.

When language teachers use this model, the role of teachers is changed. They become more learner centered and use open ended questions to encourage research, participant observation and reasoning. They introduce different tools and strategies according to the content of the unit or topic and become mediators for language learners' learning. They do active teaching, proposing projects and problems to work on. They constantly become part of the group by walking around the class interacting with the learners, talking to them, asking questions and



making suggestions instead of just sitting down at their desks. Language acquisition is a multifaceted process that goes beyond memorization and rote learning. To truly master a language, students must engage with it actively, exploring its intricacies, nuances, and cultural dimensions. Inquiry-based learning offers a pedagogical framework that aligns with this philosophy by promoting student-centered, experiential, and collaborative learning experiences. In the context of English language education, inquiry-based approaches have gained traction for their ability to foster language skills while nurturing critical thinking and creativity.

**Language Proficiency:** Engaging in authentic language tasks and communication promotes proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills.

**Critical Thinking Skills:** Inquiry-based approaches cultivate critical thinking skills such as problem-solving, analysis, and evaluation, which are essential for effective language use.

**Creativity and Innovation:** By encouraging exploration and experimentation, inquiry-based learning fosters creativity and innovation in language learning and expression.

**Motivation and Engagement:** Students are more motivated and engaged when they have a sense of ownership and agency in their learning process, leading to deeper learning outcomes.

**Lifelong Learning Skills:** Inquiry-based approaches equip students with the skills and dispositions needed for lifelong learning, empowering them to continue developing their language proficiency beyond the classroom. While inquiry-based language learning offers many benefits, it also presents challenges and considerations for educators:

**Time Constraints:** Designing and implementing inquiry-based activities may require more time and resources than traditional instructional methods.

**Assessment Practices:** Assessing students' learning outcomes in inquiry-based contexts can be complex, requiring innovative assessment strategies that align with the inquiry process.

**Differentiated Instruction:** Meeting the diverse needs and abilities of students in inquiry-based classrooms requires careful differentiation and scaffolding.

**Teacher Preparation and Support:** Educators may require professional development and ongoing support to effectively implement inquiry-based language instruction. Several case studies and examples illustrate the application of inquiry-based approaches in English language classrooms:

**Literature Circles:** Students engage in collaborative reading and discussion of literary texts, exploring themes, characters, and language use.

**Project-Based Learning:** Students research and present on topics of interest, using language skills to communicate their findings and insights. Students take an active role in their learning process by posing questions, conducting research, and collaborating with peers. Teachers act as facilitators, guiding students through the inquiry process and providing support as needed. Inquiry-based learning encourages students to use language in real-world contexts, such as conducting interviews, writing research papers, and presenting findings. This helps students develop practical language skills that are relevant to their lives outside the classroom. Learning integrates the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in a meaningful way. Students engage in a variety of activities that require them to use all four skills simultaneously, helping them develop a holistic understanding of the English language.

**Socratic Seminars:** Students participate in structured discussions centered on open-ended questions, engaging in critical analysis and dialogue.

**Language Portfolios:** Students compile samples of their language work and reflections on their learning process, demonstrating growth and proficiency over time.



Using methods such as guided research, document analysis and question-and answer sessions, teacher can run inquiry activities in the form of:

- **Case studies**
- **Group projects**
- **Research projects**
- **Field work, especially for science lessons**

Overall, an inquiry-based approach to developing language skills in the English classroom promotes active learning, critical thinking, and authentic language use. By encouraging students to ask questions, investigate topics, and communicate their findings, teachers can help students develop the language skills they need to succeed academically and beyond. Inquiry-based learning holds promise for developing language skills in English classrooms by fostering curiosity, critical thinking, and active engagement. By providing opportunities for students to explore language in authentic contexts, collaborate with peers, and construct their own knowledge, inquiry-based approaches empower students to become lifelong learners and proficient language users.

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