



The Effect of a Point-Based Strategy on the Learning Engagement of Ninth-Grade Students in Indonesian Language Learning

Sasi Karana^{1*}, Vivin Mutia Lestari², Tiara Elisabet Siagian³, Fatmawati⁴,
Raja Ira Novia Badar Putri⁵

¹²³⁴Program Studi Pendidikan Profesi Guru Bahasa Indonesia, Universitas Islam Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

⁵SMP Negeri 13 Pekanbaru, Riau, Indonesia

*Email : peserta.26689@ppg.belajar.id

ABSTRACT

Student learning activeness is a key indicator of successful learning, including in Indonesian Language instruction. Preliminary observation during the Teaching Practicum (PPL) in class IX.4 of SMP Negeri 13 Pekanbaru revealed that of 41 students, only four actively asked questions, answered, or expressed opinions during lessons, while the majority remained passive. This study aims to examine the effect of a point-giving strategy, applied as a form of positive reinforcement, on students' learning activeness in argumentative text material. The research was conducted in class IX.4 of SMP Negeri 13 Pekanbaru from April 1 to April 15, using a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design through repeated observations of a single group across four meetings. The research subjects were 41 students of class IX.4, determined through total sampling. Data were collected using a student-activeness observation sheet and analyzed descriptively using percentages. The results show a gradual increase in learning activeness: 9.76% in the first meeting, 34.15% in the second, 51.22% in the third, and 75.61% in the fourth. These findings indicate that the point-giving strategy effectively encouraged students to participate more actively in Indonesian Language learning, particularly within Project Based Learning, Discovery Learning, and discussion models. This study underscores the importance of designing consistent and measurable positive reinforcement systems as part of classroom management strategies for Indonesian Language teachers.

Keywords: point-based strategy, learning engagement, students, Indonesian language learning

INTRODUCTION

21st-century education demands a shift in learning orientation from the mere transfer of knowledge to the strengthening of students' critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity skills. The 21st-century skills framework emphasizes the need to prepare students for a rapidly changing world through active, contextual, and experience-based learning (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Consequently, active learning is not merely a supplement to the instructional process but a fundamental prerequisite for achieving 21st-century competencies. Instruction focused solely on the one-way delivery of information from teacher to student is considered inadequate for developing

learners capable of independent thought, logical argumentation, and active participation in their own learning processes.

learning entails students' physical, intellectual, and emotional engagement in the learning process, manifested through behaviors such as asking questions, providing answers, expressing opinions, and participating in discussions or group work (Hamalik, 2013). Sardiman (2018) asserts that learning is essentially an active process—"learning by doing"—meaning that without activity, the learning process cannot proceed effectively. Active learning plays a crucial role as it is directly linked to conceptual mastery, material retention,

Submitted
12/08/2026

Accepted
26/09/2026

Published
30/10/2026

Citation	Sasi, K., Lestari, V. M., Siagian, T. E., Fatmati, F., & Putri, R. I. N. B. (2026). The Effect of a Point-Based Strategy on the Learning Engagement of Ninth-Grade Students in Indonesian Language Learning. <i>Jurnal Pembelajaran Bahasa dan Sastra</i> , Volume 5, Nomor 5, September 2026, 4649-4656. DOI: https://doi.org/10.55909/jpbs.v5i5.1808
----------	--

Publisher
Raja Zulkarnain Education Foundation

and the development of independent learning attitudes. Active students tend to possess a deeper understanding than those who remain passive listeners, as active engagement facilitates the construction of knowledge rather than the mere reception of information (Dimiyati & Mudjiono, 2013).

In the context of Indonesian language instruction, active learning takes on a unique character because the subject requires productive language skills—such as speaking and writing—alongside receptive skills like listening and reading. The study of argumentative texts, for instance, requires students not only to comprehend text structures but also to confidently articulate claims, organize evidence, and defend their opinions, whether orally or in writing. Without active engagement, this competence is difficult to develop because argumentation skills are fundamentally honed through hands-on practice rather than mere theoretical explanation (Nakrowi et al., 2024). Previous studies have even found that Indonesian students' argumentative writing abilities are relatively low, a situation partly attributed to a lack of active student involvement in critical thinking processes during instruction (Nakrowi et al., 2024; Wolfe et al., 2009).

Low levels of student engagement in Indonesian language lessons are not a new issue. Underlying factors include teaching methods that remain conventional and teacher-centered (Mulyaningtiyas et al., 2023), students' lack of confidence in speaking before the class (Utaminingsih et al., 2023), and a lack of reinforcement systems to encourage student participation. This situation aligns with the field findings of the current study—specifically in class IX.4 at SMP Negeri 13 Pekanbaru—where, out of 41 students, only four consistently took the initiative to ask questions, provide answers, or offer opinions, while the others tended to remain passive, waiting for their peers to respond first.

The research problem addressed in this study is: How does the point-awarding strategy influence the learning engagement of Grade IX students dur-

ing Indonesian language lessons on argumentative texts?

The study aims to analyze the impact of the point-awarding strategy on the learning engagement of Grade IX students studying argumentative texts in Indonesian language classes at SMP Negeri 13 Pekanbaru. From a practical teaching perspective, the study offers an alternative classroom management strategy that Indonesian language teachers can adopt to boost student participation, particularly in classes characterized by low initial engagement levels.

One relevant approach to addressing low learning engagement is the application of the positive reinforcement principle, developed within Skinner's behaviorist theory. Skinner (1953:65) explained that behaviors followed by pleasant consequences tend to be repeated and increase in frequency, whereas behaviors lacking positive consequences tend to diminish. This principle of operant conditioning serves as the theoretical foundation for the point-awarding strategy—specifically, granting rewards in the form of additional marks or points whenever students demonstrate active behaviors such as asking questions, providing answers, or expressing opinions. The accumulated points are then factored into the process-based assessment, thereby providing students with a tangible incentive to maintain their participation.

Positive reinforcement differs from material rewards due to its flexibility, ease of immediate administration, and lack of financial burden on teachers or schools. Awarding points—a form of verbal-administrative reinforcement—can be done spontaneously when students exhibit the desired learning behaviors; this ensures a more immediate link between behavior and consequence, which is a key condition for successful reinforcement according to behaviorist theory (Sulaiman, 2014:87).

Regarding learning motivation, positive reinforcement operates through an extrinsic motivation mechanism that, if designed appropriately, can foster intrinsic motivation over the long term.



Uno (2016:23) explains that learning motivation consists of internal and external drives that spur students to engage in learning activities, sustain those activities, and provide direction so that desired goals are achieved. However, Katz and Assor (2007) caution that the use of external reinforcement must take into account the context and students' psychological needs, as ill-conceived reinforcement can diminish intrinsic motivation (the overjustification effect). Therefore, point-based strategies should be designed to complement—rather than replace—efforts to foster students' intrinsic motivation for learning Indonesian.

Several previous studies have examined the impact of reinforcement, rewards, and point-based systems on student engagement and learning motivation across various educational levels and subjects. Kaligi (2018) found that the use of rewards positively influenced student engagement in elementary school mathematics. Sulaiman (2014) demonstrated that teacher-provided reinforcement increased the learning motivation of fourth-grade elementary students. Specifically within the context of Indonesian language instruction, Iskandar (2018) found that instructional strategies and logical thinking skills influenced the argumentative writing skills of high school students, while Pratiwi and Charlina (2025) showed that video-based instructional media for argumentative texts could enhance active participation and student confidence in expressing opinions.

These studies consistently indicate that reinforcement systems—whether in the form of rewards, praise, or interactive instructional media—contribute positively to student engagement and learning motivation. However, the majority of these studies were conducted at the elementary school level and focused on subjects other than Indonesian language. Research specifically examining point-based strategies as a form of direct administrative reinforcement in Indonesian language instruction at the junior high school level—particularly regarding argumentative text material—remains very limited; furthermore, there is a lack of documentation regarding patterns of

gradual improvement in engagement based on repeated observations across consecutive sessions. The novelty of this study lies in the implementation of a point-based strategy integrated with a combination of Project-Based Learning, Discovery Learning, and discussion models for argumentative text material, as well as the documentation of gradual improvements in engagement through four consecutive observations within the context of actual classroom teaching.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design utilizing repeated observations of a single group of subjects, without a comparison group. This design was selected because the research was conducted within the context of a Field Experience Program (PPL) involving a single, fixed class; consequently, the researcher focused on changes in students' learning engagement levels across successive sessions following the consistent implementation of a point-based strategy.

The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 13 Pekanbaru, Pekanbaru City, Riau Province, from April 1 to April 15, covering four Indonesian language lessons focused on argumentative texts. The research population consisted of all 41 students in class IX.4. A total sampling technique was employed—meaning the entire population served as the research subjects—given the relatively small population size and the fact that the researcher could access the group in its entirety.

The instrument used in this study was a student learning engagement observation sheet, developed based on engagement indicators that included: (1) asking questions related to the argumentative text material; (2) answering questions posed by the teacher or peers; (3) verbally expressing opinions or ideas; and (4) actively participating in discussions and group work or projects. Students demonstrating at least one of these indicators during a session were recorded as "active" and awarded points, which were accumulated on an engagement point tracking sheet.

The research procedure was carried out over four sessions, employing a combination of Project-Based Learning, Discovery Learning, and discussion methods focused on argumentative text material. At the start of each session, the teacher explained the point-awarding rules and subsequently recorded instances of active student behavior during the lesson using the observation sheet. Points earned by students were announced periodically to reinforce the incentive effect, and the accumulated points at the end of the sessions were submitted to the subject teacher as part of the assessment of engagement during the learning process.

Data collection was conducted through direct observation of student behavior in each session. Data regarding the number of active students per session were analyzed using quantitative descriptive analysis—specifically a percentage formula (number of active students divided by the total number of students, multiplied by 100%)—a standard practice in quantitative descriptive educational research (Sugiyono, 2019:148; Razak, 2017). The resulting percentages from each session were then compared narratively to identify patterns and trends in the increase of student learning engagement following the implementation of the point-awarding strategy.

RESULTS

The results of the observation regarding the learning engagement of class IX.4 students at SMP Negeri 13 Pekanbaru across the four sessions are presented in below.

First, meeting-1: the number of active students was 4 out of 41 (9.76%), very low category.

Second, meeting 2: the number of active students was 14 out of 41 (34.15%), very low category.

Third, meeting 3: the number of active students was 21 out of 41 (51.22%), midle category.

Four, meeting 4: the number of active students was 31 out of 41 (75.61%), very low category.

1. Increase in Learning Engagement from the First to the Second Meeting

The data in Table 1 shows that during the first meeting, only 4 out of 41 students (9.76%) demonstrated active behavior, aligning with findings from initial observations made prior to the implementation of the point-awarding strategy. Once the point-awarding strategy was introduced and consistently applied during the second meeting, the number of active students rose to 14 (34.15%)—an increase of 24.39 percentage points compared to the first meeting. This increase indicates that students responded quickly to the presence of a concrete, accumulative reward system.

2. Increase in Learning Engagement from the Third to the Fourth Meeting

By the third meeting, student engagement had risen to 21 students (51.22%), meaning that more than half the class demonstrated at least one indicator of active participation during the lesson. This increase coincided with the implementation of the Discovery Learning model, which required students to independently discover the structure and linguistic features of argumentative texts through exploration; consequently, students had greater opportunities to exhibit active behavior compared to lecture-dominated instruction.

The most significant increase occurred during the fourth meeting, with 31 students (75.61%) participating actively—a rise of 24.39 percentage points from the previous session. This meeting utilized the Project-Based Learning model, in which students worked in groups to develop argumentative writing projects; this gave nearly every student the opportunity and incentive to contribute and earn engagement points for themselves and their groups.

Overall, the data reveal a consistent and progressive upward trend in learning engagement across the sessions, with a total increase of 65.85 percentage points from the first to the fourth meeting. This consistent pattern of improvement suggests a link between the implementation of the



point-awarding strategy and increased student engagement during argumentative text lessons in class IX.4.

DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that the point-awarding strategy positively influenced the engagement of class IX.4 students during Indonesian language lessons on argumentative texts. The rise in engagement from 9.76% to 75.61% over four meetings demonstrates that consistent positive reinforcement can significantly alter student participation patterns within a relatively short period.

The Point-Awarding Strategy from the Perspective of Skinner's Reinforcement Theory

These findings align with the operant conditioning theory proposed by Skinner (1953:70), which posits that behaviors followed by pleasant consequences tend to be repeated. Awarding points whenever students demonstrate active behavior serves as a positive reinforcer, strengthening the recurrence of such behavior in subsequent sessions. The consistent pattern of increase across sessions indicates a process of "shaping"—the gradual formation of behavior through continuous reinforcement. This reinforces Sulaiman's (2014:90) findings, which show that consistent reinforcement by teachers boosts the learning motivation and participation of elementary school students; it also aligns with Kaligi's (2018) results, which demonstrate the positive impact of rewards on student engagement in other subjects.

However, it is important to note that the success of reinforcement in this study is inextricably linked to the immediacy with which the points were awarded. Points were given and announced immediately after students displayed active behavior, thereby making the connection between the behavior and the consequence clear to them. This principle of immediacy is a key requirement for effective reinforcement in behaviorist theory, as delayed reinforcement tends to weaken the association between the behavior and its consequence.

Connection to Theories of Active Learning and Motivation

The increase in active learning observed in this study can be explained through theories emphasizing that learning is fundamentally an active process; thus, direct student involvement is a prerequisite for successful learning (Sardiman, 2018:100; Hamalik, 2013:171). The point system creates an incentive structure that gives students a concrete reason to engage, which in turn fosters the confidence of previously passive students to begin asking questions and expressing opinions. From the perspective of learning motivation, the point-awarding strategy serves as a source of extrinsic motivation—which, as explained by Uno (2016:27), acts to drive, sustain, and direct student learning activities.

However, as noted by Katz and Assor (2007), external reinforcement must be carefully designed to complement, rather than replace, students' intrinsic motivation. In this study, combining the point system with meaningful learning models—such as Project-Based Learning and Discovery Learning—appears crucial to maintaining this balance. During the fourth session, which utilized Project-Based Learning, the most significant increase in active participation stemmed not merely from the point incentives, but also from students having genuine opportunities to contribute to group projects that held personal significance for them, thereby fostering a sense of ownership over the learning process.

Active Learning in the Context of Argumentative Text Instruction

Argumentative text material possesses unique characteristics requiring high-level cognitive engagement, as students must be able to articulate claims, provide evidence, and logically defend their opinions. Findings by Nakrowi et al. (2024) indicate that the argumentative writing skills of Indonesian students generally remain low, partly due to a lack of opportunities and confidence among students to actively practice presenting ar-

guments during the learning process. This study demonstrates that a point-based strategy can serve as a means to address this issue, as awarding points provides students with the initial encouragement to begin participating; this participation can subsequently act as a foundation for developing more complex argumentation skills, aligning with the view held by Wolfe, Britt, and Butler (2009) that argumentation skills evolve through practice and repeated active engagement.

These findings also reinforce the results of research by Pratiwi and Charlina (2025), which showed that interactive learning media and strategies regarding argumentative texts could enhance students' active participation and confidence in expressing their opinions. In the present study, combining a point-based strategy with an active learning model appeared to yield similar effects, displaying a pattern of improvement that could be documented incrementally from one session to the next.

Strengths, Limitations, and Practical Implications for Indonesian Language Teachers

The strength of this study lies in its longitudinal documentation of patterns in learning engagement across four consecutive observations, thereby providing a picture of the dynamics of student behavioral changes over time rather than merely a snapshot from a single point of observation. However, the study has a limitation in that it did not include a control group; consequently, the specific contribution of the point-based strategy cannot yet be fully disentangled from the potential influence of other variables, such as the novelty effect of the learning model implemented in each session.

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for Indonesian language teachers. First, the point-awarding strategy can be adopted as part of classroom management to encourage student participation, particularly in classes with initially low levels of engagement. Second, the strategy's effectiveness is maximized when combined with learning models that provide

genuine opportunities for student contribution—such as Project-Based Learning and Discovery Learning—rather than being applied solely to one-way instruction. Third, teachers must ensure immediacy and consistency in awarding points so that students fully experience the reinforcement effect. Fourth, teachers should gradually guide students from extrinsic motivation (points) toward intrinsic motivation for learning Indonesian—for instance, by offering meaningful verbal appreciation alongside the recording of points—thereby ensuring that active engagement persists even when the point system is not in use.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that the point-awarding strategy positively influences the learning engagement of Grade IX.4 students at SMP Negeri 13 Pekanbaru during Indonesian language lessons on argumentative texts. This is evidenced by a gradual and consistent increase in the percentage of active students: from 9.76% in the first session to 34.15% in the second, 51.22% in the third, and 75.61% in the fourth. This increase aligns with the principle of positive reinforcement found in Skinner's behaviorist theory, demonstrating that active student behavior followed by the consequence of earning points tends to be repeated and strengthened in subsequent sessions—especially when paired with learning models that facilitate genuine participation, such as Project-Based Learning and Discovery Learning. This study implies that Indonesian language teachers, particularly at the junior high school level, can utilize a point-based strategy as a classroom management tool to address low student engagement, while maintaining a balance between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation to ensure sustainable impact. Future research is encouraged to employ a design that includes a control group; this would allow for a more rigorous assessment of the point-based strategy's influence and help rule out confounding factors, such as the novelty effect

of the teaching model. Further studies should also examine the strategy's impact on the quality of learning outcomes—going beyond mere engagement levels—and investigate the durability of the reinforcement effect once the point system is no longer routinely applied.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author extends gratitude to the Teacher Professional Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Islamic University of Riau, for their support and facilitation during the conduct of this research. Appreciation is also expressed to the Principal of SMP Negeri 13 Pekanbaru and the Grade IX students of SMP Negeri 13 Pekanbaru for the permission, cooperation, and participation that enabled the successful completion of this study.

REFERENCES

- Amielia, S. D., Suciati, S., & Maridi, M. (2018). Enhancing Students' Argumentation Skill Using an Argument Driven Inquiry-Based Module. *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)*, 12(3), 459–467. <https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v12i3.8042>
- Bandura, A. (1976). *Social Learning Theory*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Dimiyati, D., & Mudjiono, M. (2013). *Belajar dan Pembelajaran*. Rineka Cipta.
- Hamalik, O. (2013). *Proses Belajar Mengajar*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.
- Hosnan, M. (2014). *Pendekatan Saintifik dan Kontekstual Dalam Pembelajaran Abad 21*. Jakarta: Ghalia Indonesia.
- Iskandar, Z. (2018). Pengaruh Strategi Pembelajaran dan Kemampuan Berpikir Logis Terhadap Keterampilan Menulis Argumentasi (Studi Eksperimen pada Siswa Kelas XI SMA Negeri 1 Lengayang). *ESTETIK: Jurnal Bahasa Indonesia*, 1(1), 1–12.
- Kaligi, A. (2018). Pengaruh Pemberian Reward Terhadap Keaktifan Belajar Siswa pada Mata Pelajaran Matematika Kelas IV SD Negeri Jatisarano dan SD Negeri 1 Nanggulan. *Basic Education*, 7(36), 3599–3606.
- Katz, I., & Assor, A. (2007). *When Choice Motivates and When It Does Not*. *Educational Psychology Review*, 19(4), 429–442. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-006-9027-y>
- Khofifa, I. N. T., Adisel, & Latipah, N. (2022). Bentuk-Bentuk Hadiah (Reward) dan Penerapannya dalam Kegiatan Belajar Siswa di SD Negeri 1 Kota Bengkulu. *JPT: Jurnal Pendidikan Tematik*, 3(2), 41–47.
- Mulyaningtiyas, T., Utaminingsih, Sulasih, Puspita, Sumartiningsih, & Habibi, H. (2023). Problematika Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia Kelas III di Sekolah Dasar. *Research and Development Journal of Education*, 9(2), 860–870.
- Nakrowi, Z. S., Ansori, D. S., Mulyati, Y., & Setyaningsih, Y. (2024). Kemampuan Menulis Argumentasi Siswa: Analisis Profil dan Problematika Pembelajaran. *Jurnal Onoma: Pendidikan, Bahasa dan Sastra*, 10(1), 508–518. <https://doi.org/10.30605/onoma.v10i1.3107>
- Pratiwi, E. S., & Charlina, C. (2025). Eksplorasi Media Pembelajaran Teks Argumentasi Berbasis Video untuk Meningkatkan Motivasi Belajar Siswa Kelas XI SMAN 4 Tualang. *ESTETIK: Jurnal Bahasa Indonesia*, 8(2).
- Razak, A. (2017). *Metode Riset: Menggapai Mixed Methods Bidang Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia*. Pekanbaru: Ababil Press.

- Sardiman, A. M. (2018). *Interaksi dan Motivasi Belajar Mengajar*. Jakarta: Rajawali Pers.
- Shao, X., & Purpur, G. (2016). Effects of Information Literacy Skills on Student Writing and Course Performance. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 42(6), 670–678. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2016.08.006>
- Skinner, B. F. (1953). *Science and Human Behavior*. London: Macmillan.
- Sugiyono, S. (2019). *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan: Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Sulaiman, S. (2014). Pengaruh Pemberian Penguatan (Reinforcement) oleh Guru terhadap Motivasi Belajar Siswa di Kelas IV SD Nunggul Lampeuneurut Aceh Besar. *Jurnal Pesona Dasar*, 2(3), 85–93.
- Thomas, J. W. (2000). *A Review of Research on Project-Based Learning*. The Autodesk Foundation. San Francisco: Autodesk Foundation.
- Trilling, B., & Fadel, C. (2009). *21st Century Skills: Learning for Life in Our Times*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Uno, H. B. (2016). *Teori Motivasi dan Pengukurannya: Analisis di Bidang Pendidikan*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.
- Wolfe, C. R., Britt, M. A., & Butler, J. A. (2009). *Argumentation Schema and The Myside Bias in Written Argumentation*. *Written Communication*, 26(2), 183–209. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088309333019>