



The Implementation of Problem-Based Learning for Students' English-Speaking Ability

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Abstract

This research explores the perceptions of English teachers at SMPN 21 Kota Serang regarding implementing problem-based learning in their classes. The PBL model is used to teach speaking in class VIII D at SMPN 21 Kota Serang. The lack of motivation is the most significant reason for EFL students' English-speaking proficiency. A PBL model teaching approach can increase students' motivation to learn English. Implementing the PBL model can help students feel involved and challenged to solve problems to increase their motivation to learn. This research uses a qualitative case study as its research methodology to gain an in-depth understanding of emerging problems. English teachers in class VIII D were observed and interviewed about implementing problem-based learning. The findings of this research reveal that teachers who implement problem-based learning have succeeded in providing significant changes to students' English-speaking abilities and have motivation to speak English. Therefore, the researcher found that implementing problem-based learning in English language learning was successful in helping motivate students.

Keywords: problem-based learning, speaking ability

Introduction

Information and communication have developed rapidly, making learning more accessible for students. Thus, the quality of educators who are qualified and professional is needed. An educator not only acts as a motivator and facilitator but must also evaluate and provide conclusions at the end of learning activities (Uliyandari, 2021). Many educators have implemented various learning models for students. One of the learning models implemented is problem-based learning, which uses projects or activities as media. By implementing this method, students are required to be active Afni (2020). The PBL method has been developed as a reaction to memorization or

rote learning and to teacher-centered approaches that focus only on transmitting knowledge from teachers to students. PBL, the focus of the present study, is suitable for current EFL settings because students, through this approach, find an opportunity to communicate, work together, and collaborate to solve complicated and authentic problems. This approach has been proven to motivate students' learning process and facilitate the acquisition of language skills (Li, 2013). Moreover, it is claimed that the PBL approach has the potential to help students with poor language skills, as it has been a practical teaching approach used for enhancing productive skills in challenging situations (Lian, 2013).



The main objectives of the PBL approach are to structure new knowledge by creating an environment in which students can employ their previous knowledge with the one acquired during their problem-solving sessions (Barrell, 2007), to develop flexible and extensive knowledge, to foster the acquisition of problem-solving and reasoning skills (Uden & Beaumont, 2006), and to support autonomy and self-directed learners who rely on their intrinsic motivation (Hmelo et al., 1994). In other words, in the PBL approach, real learning takes place when learners practice problem-solving skills and develop their language skills. The PBL approach was first introduced at McMaster University as an experiment model to evaluate whether learning acquired in school was relevant to future careers (Barrows, 1986). With the Implementation of the PBL approach, students were required first to identify problems and then attempt to resolve them through inquiry and exploration. This necessitated that they learn key concepts and strategies necessary for resolving issues.

It has been observed that students in class VIII D of SMPN 21 Kota Serang have difficulties such as poor speaking skills, reluctance to participate in conversations, fear of making mistakes, lack of self-confidence, and lack of English-speaking friends or social circles, which can help them hone their speaking potential. They part from that most students are passive recipients of

data because they need to take the initiative to participate in activities, such as English clubs aimed at improving their speaking skills. Another aspect of this problem is that EFL students need more motivation to learn English (Alfawzan, 2012). Based on previous research (Wang, 2008; Murphy & Alexander, 2000; Dornyei, 2008; Li, 2013) agrees that the disadvantage of EFL students is a lack of motivation to learn English caused by traditional teaching approaches and learning that is more test-oriented than cognitive. In teaching, teachers only focus on grammar rules, rote learning, or text translation to facilitate the teaching of skills courses without caring about students' motivation to learn English. Students' low motivation also harms their academic achievement on the speaking test (AlKaabi, 2016).

Based on the problems mentioned above, there must be particular changes to teaching in speaking classes. Therefore, researchers believe the Problem-Based Learning approach is more relevant than the traditional lecture-based approach to solving these problems. Based on the explanation above, it is essential to conduct this present research.

Theoretical Review

Concept of Problem-Based Learning

Problem Learning is a student-centered approach; students take charge of their learning, whereas instructors assume the role of facilitators in an endeavor to (1) scaffold



students via modeling and active Implementation. Implementation of questioning strategies, (2) provide sufficient guidance to guarantee students' smooth progress in the different stages of PBL (3) monitor students' performance and exchange of their feedback; (4) encourage students' Implementation. Implementation of reasoning skills; and (5) decrease the amount of scaffolding when students display willingness to and competence in constructing their learning (Hmelo et al., 1994; Torp & Sage, 2002). However, teachers need help implementing PBL. First, there is difficulty with constructing the problems as they should meet several criteria, such as addressing students' interests, challenging students' thinking potentials, relating to students' real-life needs, and serving as a means for meaningful communication (Larsson, 2001). Second, the target language is used to discuss and solve problems. This means that students should have sufficient language proficiency. Otherwise, students will be frustrated and demotivated.

Using PBL to Improve Student's Motivation

Previous studies have shown that the PBL approach gives learners more choices, autonomy, and self-determination to motivate them (Mossuto, 2009; Li, 2013). For instance, Mossuto (2009), in his empirical study, found that using PBL in which learners studied in interactive groups and their learning depended on open-ended tasks

significantly triggered students' thinking throughout the learning process and kept them highly motivated. Razzak (2012) introduced the PBL approach in an educational psychology course in Bahrain to identify the factors that cause students' lack of motivation. Data were collected by monitoring students' performance in group presentations. Findings showed high satisfaction with PBL and improvement in the learning outcomes.

Similarly, Huang (2012) experimented with PBL in EFL classrooms to examine its feasibility in real situations. Four qualitative variables were investigated, including students' attitudes, satisfaction, motivation, and self-achievement. Findings revealed that students' attitudes toward learning were positive, and their motivation level was significantly higher than the traditional group.

Using PBL for Speaking Ability

In the EFL context, several studies were conducted to assess the effectiveness of the PBL approach in developing speaking skills (Ahlfeldt, 2003; Solana, 2013; Rohim, 2014). Ahlfeldt (2003), for instance, examined the use of the PBL approach in contrast with the traditional learning approach. The results of this study hinted that PBL was a more effective method of instruction as learners prepared better speeches than students who learned in conventional classrooms. It was also found that students in PBL were involved in text



and the course material that helped them to cope with their speaking anxiety, which was not the case in traditional classrooms. Rosalina (2013) implemented the PBL approach in an EFL university-speaking class in Indonesia. Her study revealed that using PBL improved students' speaking skills and positively affected the other relevant components, such as grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

Similarly, Rohim (2014) implemented the PBL approach to improve the speaking skills of a heterogeneous group comprising multiple nationalities. His research employed a mixed-method approach using action, observation, and reflection during the experiment. The findings revealed a significant improvement in the students' speaking skills. Finally, no study was conducted on implementing the PBL approach in EFL settings. This necessitates attempting this recommended teaching approach since much attention has been paid to students' active involvement in learning. This study, having taken into account the results of previous ones, aimed to fill the gap by exploring the possibility of implementing the PBL approach in the context of speaking skills.

Method

Research Design

This research was conducted using a case study approach. Sandelwoski (2022) states that case studies aim to develop a

comprehensive understanding by describing phenomena and characteristics in a more specific and detailed manner. The researcher used case studies because they are relevant to English teachers implementing the Problem-Based Learning approach in their classes. Researchers want to learn more about teachers' perceptions regarding implementing PBL in English classes, especially in speaking lessons. Qualitative is a suitable method for answering research questions. The aim is to know the teacher's perceptions. This is supported by Tabrani (2015), who states that qualitative research is a process of understanding human or social phenomena by creating a comprehensive and complex picture that can be presented in words. - words, reporting detailed views obtained from informant sources, and carried out in a natural setting

Place and Participants

This research was conducted at SMPN 21 Serang City. The researcher chose this school because there is a phenomenon of implementing the Project Based Learning Model in speaking learning in English classes. The researcher collected data through observation and interviews. Observations were conducted to observe the implementation of Problem-based Learning, and interviews were conducted to determine the teachers' perceptions. The researcher observed the teaching and learning process in class VIII D, classes selected based on the



teacher's assessment. The class consists of 30 students, including 15 women and 15 men.

Data Collection

First, the researcher contacted the teacher to schedule observations and interviews. As Yin (2014) stated, building good relationships and gaining trust is essential; therefore, I made it a casual conversation before discussing research. Then, the researcher clearly states the purpose of the study to be carried out, asks whether there is consent, and explains the observation and interview procedures. Observations were conducted in two meetings, November 27, 2023, until November 28, 2023. Then, the researcher used an observation sheet to know the teacher's Implementation of PBL. The researcher recorded the teacher's teaching activities from the introduction and main activities to the conclusion. The aim is to see whether students are more active in participating and motivated to take part in learning in speaking classes.

Moreover, the following week, December 04, 2023, interviews were conducted with face-to-face meetings with English teachers. Data transcription was carried out immediately after the interview was completed. This aims to avoid mixed data and helps the researcher in the transcription process. Interviews took between 30–45 minutes. With the teacher's approval, the interviews were audio recorded. Audio recordings exist to enhance the

transcription process (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Merriam, 1998). Some notes were taken to capture the teacher's essential points during the interview.

Data Analysis

The study used a standardized open-ended interview. Moreover, the researcher used open-ended questions and an indirect approach as a question format. The indirect question is a prevalent method. This is supported by the statement of Tuckman (2011) in Morrison, who mentioned that indirect approaches are essentially indirect or general forms of questioning. The researcher made ten questions and divided them into two sessions. The researcher used cell phone recorders, notes, and pens to write and record the answers from the interviewees. After collecting data from the interviewees, the researcher transcribed or wrote the interview conversations into written form. During the transcription process, thematic analysis was used to extract meaningful information between and within transcripts. Then, relevant themes were identified by coding each transcript. In other words, the data is broken down into parts and labeled. Therefore, the data has been organized, and the transcripts are more accessible than just listening to the recordings.

The next step is to read the sorted data again. Data is read interpretatively and reflectively. This is in line with Mason (2002), who stated the researcher's interpretation of their data is influenced by



how the researcher views the world or case (perspective ontology) and how the researcher thinks it can be known through the dimensions in which they are located can capture and relate the meaning (epistemological perspective). Furthermore, interpretive reading enhances the researcher's ability to construct and produce data according to what the researcher thinks is meaningful or representative data (Mason, 2002). At this point, it is essential to highlight the reading interpretive data, which means that the researcher interprets the data only partially. More correctly, it combines the interviewee's and the researcher's interpretations. In addition, reflexive reading complements interpretive reading by positioning the role and perspective of the researcher during data creation and interpretation (Mason, 2002). To focus on answering research questions, highlighting key points, and improving data analysis, interview transcripts were transformed into discussions of both interpretations and reflections. Next, the sorted data is interpreted further and explored to obtain the meaning of the phenomenon under study. Finally, the data is analyzed and linked to previous relevant literature coding data; researchers can also understand the data and build initial interpretations

Result

Based on the first observation on November 27, 2023, the researcher knew that

SMPN 21 Kota Serang had used the Merdeka Curriculum. In the curriculum, the English subject consists of two meetings lasting 2 x 45 minutes, while the subject matter taught at the first meeting in phase D is chapter two with the sub-topic "*Goodness Starts with Me.*" The teacher's Implementation of learning includes three stages: introduction, main activity, and closing. Researchers found that teachers carried out each stage of education based on the RPP that had been made previously. Meanwhile, at the first meeting, the students needed more motivation for learning. It can be seen that "*students do not pay attention to the teacher when the teacher explains the material, they are not active in class, and some students choose to chat with their classmates.*"

On the other hand, the teacher observation results can be seen "*the teacher did not allow the students to ask questions. Apart from that, researchers also found a lack of interaction between students and teachers. Teachers were still not good at guiding students to discuss in class.*" It can be interpreted that teachers still use traditional techniques, namely teacher-centered. The teacher's statement supports this statement "*Students are difficult to discuss with; they say that English is a difficult subject to learn. Hence, they lose motivation because of this.*"

Based on the observations obtained, students are still not used to using and speaking English; this happens because



English is not their main language, so when asked to use English to communicate, they still choose to use their regional language, namely Jaseng (Serang Java) and some of them choose Sundanese to communicate.

In addition, students found it difficult because they had to translate foreign languages into Indonesian, and secondly, they had to translate Indonesian into their local language. This activity was done to understand better the contents of the reading or something they heard. The second cause was that the teacher, as a learning facilitator, still uses Indonesian. The English teacher mentioned it, as was said in the interview *"It is more accessible and practical to use Indonesian, so students can easily understand the learning material."*

Referring to the results above, teachers must motivate students to have and state their opinions before learning activities begin, and teachers must help and direct students to be able to discuss and work together in learning activities. Based on the results of the first observation, Problem-Based Learning can be a solution to overcome problems. This is consistent with the arguments made by researchers that motivation is responsible for the acquisition and development of language skills in EFL more than a good curriculum and skilled and experienced instructors (Wang, 2008; Murphy & Alexander, 2000; Dornyei, 2008; Li, 2013).

In the second observation conducted on November 28, 2023, researchers found

that the teacher was good at motivating students and providing opportunities to ask questions. The teacher was also quite good at guiding students in their discussions. The teacher also used English in the lesson. The second observation found that students' learning activities using Problem-Based Learning had shown better results. Students already seem used to learning in groups and solving problems in their groups. According to the observations, students were enthusiastic about participating in learning, finding good issues, arguing, and answering questions quite well. Students have started learning to use English in the classroom. This result was in line with Eggen & Kauchak (2012), who reported that PBL can encourage students to think critically and engage in active participation in the classroom since thinking and learning go hand in hand as learning requires thinking. This can be seen when the teacher divides students into groups. All students follow the teaching with attention and seriousness; when the teacher allows reading English stories, all groups are enthusiastic and compete to read in class, and no one refuses to read. This is because each group looks compact in discussion; some students are good enough to respect the opinions of their group friends and are not shy about expressing statements or questions to the teacher or other group friends. Students appeared independent when working on tasks with their groups.



The Implementation of problem-based learning has resulted in significant changes in students' English learning. Students can solve problems and cooperate between groups. The most important result is that students can pronounce words in English, especially students whose mother tongue is Jaseng and Sundanese, and the most significant part is that students dare to speak in English. In addition, students actively ask questions, respect opinions, and participate in group work. These results align with previous research by Ariyanto (2020), which found that teacher motivation in teaching is very influential in motivating students to learn.

Based on the results of interviews conducted with teachers, the researcher found that the Problem-Based Learning model helps students to work together and makes students more confident in speaking English. This is supported by the teacher, who says, *"problem-based Learning helps students to learn together so that students dare to express opinions because this learning model is centered on students, not teacher."*

This statement aligns with research by Arifin (2020), which states that students must find solutions to their problems. By doing this, students will continue to think about how to find the answer. Therefore, Problem-based Learning can increase student motivation and cooperation between students in group work, develop learning strategies, and improve students' speaking skills. It also aligns with Hmelo & Simone (2013), who

emphasize that PBL is an emerging educational approach because it emphasizes independent learning, lifelong learning, collaboration, and conceptual and pedagogical subject knowledge development. The results align with the teacher's statement *"by using PBL, students can be more active in discussing, speaking, and developing problem-solving abilities, and students can enjoy the learning process more so that there is no compulsion in learning."*

However, with the various advantages students gain from using the PBL method in their English learning activities, there are also disadvantages to this method. One of the areas for improvement is that it cannot be used for every learning material; there are some active roles for teachers in presenting the material. This is supported by Ribeiro (2011), who stated that implementing PBL can increase vulnerability, demand more work from teachers, and limit teachers' power to decide what topics will be discussed in class. Referring to the teacher's statement *"PBL requires me as a teacher to encourage students' extra motivation, but sometimes the required resources are not fully available."*

Based on the results of this research, Problem-Based Learning (PBL) has significantly improved English learning for students, allowing them to solve problems, work together, and create active classes because students are more able to convey their ideas. This helps students in speaking English, especially for Jaseng and Sundanese



speakers. This model encourages active questions, respect for opinions, and group work. Problem-based Learning motivates students to learn English, creating an active classroom environment that allows students to express their views freely. This encourages students to practice speaking English (Kadek, 2021).

Conclusion

This research reveals several interesting facts about the Project Based Learning approach. First, based on the results of observations and interviews, the PBL approach makes students actively participate in English-speaking classes. This can be useful for readers, teachers and future researchers that PBL has proven to be a good approach as a new teaching approach. Second, in the problem-based approach, students need preparation to tackle problems, motivating them. The problem may be presented to them as complex, highly unstructured, challenging, and pragmatic. However, students can discuss and analyze problems to determine and find resources to solve them. In doing so, they develop their skills independently and self-directedly, individually or in groups. Finally, students create a sense of responsibility for their learning, and they work independently of each other. Researchers concluded that the Project Based Learning approach was proven to increase EFL students' speaking proficiency and motivation effectively.

This research also has limitations. First, the generalization of the findings may only apply to some because this research was conducted only on speaking skills at SMPN 21 Serang City. It would be more credible if research were carried out at the university level because age, educational background, and level of language understanding can influence research results beyond the scope of his investigation but can be investigated and explored in further research.

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