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Students' Perceptions on The Implementation of Problem-Based Learning at SMKN 8 Medan

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ABSTRACT
This study is aimed to analyze students' perceptions on the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in writing procedural texts at Grade X Culinary Arts 5 at SMKN 8 Medan. Employing a qualitative approach, the data were obtained through questionnaire, classroom observation, and semi-structured interview. Thirty-five students from X Culinary Arts 5 served as the source of the data. The questionnaire consisted of eight closed-ended statements adapted from Zahra and Baa (2021), which measured students' perceptions based on key indicators such as curiosity and independent learning, organization and writing process, collaboration and communication, and vocabulary and writing skills development. Classroom observations documented real-time engagement and interactions during PBL activities, while semi-structured interview captured students' experiences and thoughts on PBL implementation. The findings revealed that students generally perceived PBL positively, noting its effectiveness in enhancing writing skills, particularly in structuring procedural texts and expanding vocabulary. This study highlights that PBL is more effective when students possess a practical orientation and a collaborative mindset, as seen in Culinary Arts students who connected procedural texts with real-world applications. Although some students faced challenges in adapting to problem-solving tasks, PBL fostered collaboration, encouraged independent learning, and increased motivation, making it a highly interactive and beneficial approach to learning procedural texts in a vocational education.

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INTRODUCTION

In the evolving education landscape, student-centered learning models have gained

Increasing recognition for their ability to foster critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills, essential competencies in preparing learners for real-world challenges. As highlighted by Darling-Hammond et al. (2008), a student-centered learning environment promotes academic growth and cultivates lifelong learning skills by encouraging learners to become active, independent thinkers.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) has emerged as a widely adopted pedagogical model among various student-centered approaches. As defined by Arends (2012), PBL involves students in solving authentic, real-world problems, promoting self-directed learning, teamwork, and meaningful knowledge application. The PBL model follows a structured process: orienting students to the problem, organizing group work, supporting investigations, developing and presenting findings, and evaluating the learning experience. This approach empowers students to take ownership of their learning journey. Building upon this, Tan (2003) emphasized the role of collaboration and exploration within PBL, especially in vocational education settings, where practical and teamwork skills are integral to future career success.

However, despite its potential, implementing PBL in vocational education particularly in Culinary Arts programs, poses unique challenges. Vocational students are required to integrate theoretical knowledge with hands-on practice. One key aspect of this integration is procedural writing, which involves creating structured, step-by-step instructions for completing specific tasks, such as recipes or kitchen operations. As Knapp and Watkins (2005) described, procedure texts aim to guide readers through clearly organized actions. Integrating PBL into the teaching of procedural writing provides opportunities for students to bridge the gap between theory and practice by engaging with real culinary problems. Nonetheless, transitioning from a traditional, teacher-centered model to a student-driven PBL approach requires significant teacher and student adaptation.

A preliminary interview was conducted with a Culinary Arts teacher at SMKN 8 Medan on December 21, 2024, to gain deeper insight into this transition. The interview revealed that students often face difficulties adjusting to the independence and collaboration demanded by PBL. Accustomed to structured, teacher-led instruction, many students struggle with self- direction and expressing their ideas during group activities due to limited vocabulary. To mitigate this, the teacher frequently switches to

Indonesian to facilitate communication and integrates activities to improve student's vocabulary and collaborative skills. Despite initial resistance, the teacher observed positive developments in student engagement and responsibility toward learning.

Additionally, classroom observations by the researcher supported these findings. Students initially appeared hesitant and disengaged, unfamiliar with the PBL model, and unsure how to participate effectively. However, curiosity about PBL activities gradually emerged, and with consistent teacher support, students began to show increased participation and collaboration, even though vocabulary limitations remained a challenge. These early observations highlight the importance of understanding students' perceptions in successfully implementing PBL.

Goldstein (2010) stated that perception involves organizing and interpreting sensory input to create environmental meaning. Students' perceptions of a learning model can significantly influence their engagement, motivation, and academic achievement in educational contexts. Irwanto (2002) notes that positive perceptions of PBL often lead to heightened motivation and deeper involvement, while negative perceptions can result in disinterest and disengagement.

Previous studies, such as those by Aslam et al. (2021) and Zahra and Samsi (2022), have demonstrated the effectiveness of PBL in enhancing student learning outcomes and procedural writing abilities. However, these studies primarily focused on general education settings and did not explore students' perceptions in-depth, particularly within vocational contexts.

In response to this gap, the present study aims to investigate the perceptions of 10th-grade Culinary Arts students at SMKN 8 Medan regarding the implementation of Problem-Based Learning in procedural writing lessons. By focusing on students' perspectives, this research seeks to provide a richer understanding of the benefits and challenges of applying PBL in vocational education and to inform strategies for its more effective integration in the classroom.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method to explore students' perceptions of the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in writing procedural texts. A qualitative approach was considered suitable for this study because

it allows researchers to understand how individuals interpret and make meaning of a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). In this context, the phenomenon under investigation was how students in a vocational high school perceived using PBL in their writing classes. The research was conducted at SMKN 8 Medan, specifically involving Grade X Culinary Arts 5 students. The participants consisted of 35 students, selected as the entire class population. The research focused on exploring their perceptions after implementing Problem-Based Learning while teaching procedural text writing in English. The researcher used three instruments to collect data: a questionnaire, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews.

1. Questionnaire

   The first instrument used was a closed-ended questionnaire designed to assess students' perceptions of PBL implementation, particularly about procedural text writing. Based on Sugiyono (2013), a questionnaire is a data collection tool in which participants are given a series of statements or questions to respond to. The questionnaire used in this study consisted of eight statements, each evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). These statements were adapted from a previous study by Zahra and Baa (2021) and modified to focus specifically on procedural text writing. The modifications ensured that each item was contextualized to the classroom setting and learning objectives at SMKN 8 Medan. The questionnaire was administered in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure clarity and avoid misunderstanding, then translated into English for analysis and documentation.

2. Classroom Observation

   Classroom observations were conducted to gain firsthand insights into how students engaged with PBL activities during the procedural text-writing sessions. The researcher used observation checklists to record student behaviors, interactions, and engagement levels. As Creswell (2012) states, observations in qualitative research provide valuable data by capturing natural classroom settings and authentic behaviors. This method complemented the questionnaire and interview findings by documenting real-time student participation and the learning atmosphere during PBL implementation.

3. Interview

To gain deeper insights into students' perceptions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants, guided by three open-ended questions. These interviews allowed students to express their thoughts and experiences more freely, offering richer and more detailed responses beyond what was captured in the questionnaire. The interview questions were carefully developed based on key themes from the questionnaire findings. The interviews aimed to explore students' views on using PBL in the classroom, including its impact on their engagement, challenges, and the perceived benefits of writing procedural texts.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model of qualitative data analysis proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which consists of four steps: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

1. Data Collection

   The data were gathered from the questionnaire, classroom observation, and interviews. Questionnaire responses were collected from all 35 students, while observational data were recorded during classroom activities. Interview responses were obtained from all students to deepen the understanding of their perceptions.

2. Data Condensation

   In this phase, the researcher categorized and simplified the data to identify recurring themes. Questionnaire responses were grouped based on key indicators. Observation notes were reviewed to identify patterns of engagement and interaction. Interview transcripts were coded to extract significant insights about students' perceptions of PBL.

3. Data Display

   The data were organized and displayed in tables, graphics and narrative descriptions to present a clearer picture of the findings. Questionnaire results were summarized using percentages and averages, while observation and interview findings were described narratively.

4. Conclusion Drawing and Verification

   In the final step, the researcher interpreted the data to conclude the students' perceptions of PBL implementation. The conclusions aimed to answer the research questions and describe how students experienced PBL in writing procedural texts

based on the information gathered from the questionnaire, classroom observation, and interviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study were obtained from questionnaires and interviews conducted with 35 students of Class X Culinary Arts 5 at SMKN 8 Medan. The research aimed to explore students' perceptions of the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in writing procedural texts. The data were collected based on four key indicators: Curiosity and Independent Learning, Organization and Writing Process, Collaboration and Communication, and Vocabulary and Writing Skills Development.

1. Curiosity and Independent Learning

   The questionnaire results revealed that all students (100%) agreed that PBL increased their curiosity and encouraged independent learning. Students reported that solving problems related to real-life situations made them more eager to search for information and understand the material beyond the classroom. This aligns with Mulyadi et al. (2025), who highlighted that PBL fosters self-motivation and exploration among vocational students.

2. Organization and Writing Process

   Regarding the organization of ideas, 71.43% of students agreed that PBL helped them structure their writing more clearly. Students expressed that the step-by-step process in PBL guided them in organizing their thoughts, although some still struggled to arrange their ideas logically. This supports Aslam et al. (2021), who noted that while PBL supports idea development, teacher guidance is still essential for improving writing structure.

3. Collaboration and Communication

   Most students (94.28%) felt that PBL enhanced their ability to collaborate and communicate effectively with peers. They shared that group activities helped them exchange ideas and solve problems, contributing to a more engaging learning experience. These results are consistent with Zahra and Samsi (2022), who found that PBL promotes teamwork and active communication in the classroom.

4. Vocabulary and Writing Skills Development

   A high percentage of students (97.14%) agreed that PBL improved their vocabulary

and writing skills. Through discussion and real-life problem-solving, students learned to use more appropriate words in their procedural texts and became more motivated to write better. This finding echoes Zulkarnain et al. (2022), who emphasized that PBL activities help enhance language proficiency in writing.

Based on the questionnaire and interview data, it can be concluded that students showed positive perceptions toward using PBL in writing procedural texts. The average agreement across all four indicators was 90.21%, indicating strong overall support for the method. During interviews, students expressed that PBL helped them think critically, communicate in groups, and actively engage in class. Although a few students noted difficulties in organizing ideas or managing group work, they also stated that the teacher's support played an important role in overcoming these challenges.

These results reinforce the idea that PBL is a practical, student-centered approach that enhances engagement, promotes collaboration, and supports the development of writing skills. Irwanto (2002) stated that positive perception reflects students' acceptance and enthusiasm toward a learning model. Therefore, implementing PBL in the classroom not only improved students' academic performance but also built their confidence and motivation to participate actively in the learning process.

Moving forward, it is recommended that teachers continue to apply the PBL model while providing clear guidance and structured support, especially in helping students develop coherent writing to fully maximize the benefits of this approach in vocational education settings.

CONCLUSIONS

After conducting the research and analyzing the data related to students' perceptions of implementing Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in teaching procedural texts at SMKN 8 Medan, it was found that most students responded positively to using PBL. The questionnaire data from four indicators, Curiosity and Independent Learning, Collaboration and Communication, Organization and Writing Process, and Vocabulary and Writing Skill Development, showed that PBL helped students become more motivated, work better with peers, and improve their writing skills, especially in procedural texts. According to the interview results, students stated that PBL encouraged them to think critically, solve problems, and apply their knowledge in authentic contexts.

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