

ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

Octavia Lestari

English Education Program
Faculty of Teacher Training and Education
Universitas Ibn Khaldun, Bogor
octavialestari2002@gmail.com

ABSTRAK

Tujuan penelitian ini mengkaji persepsi guru bahasa Inggris terhadap Problem-Based Learning (PBL), dengan fokus pada manfaat dan tantangan dalam penerapannya di kelas. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan wawancara dengan guru bahasa Inggris yang aktif menggunakan PBL dalam praktik pengajarannya. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa guru memandang PBL sebagai pendekatan yang efektif untuk meningkatkan keterampilan komunikasi, kolaborasi, dan berpikir kritis siswa, serta menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang lebih dinamis dan menarik. Namun, guru juga melaporkan tantangan seperti kesulitan dalam merancang skenario masalah yang relevan, keterbatasan waktu pembelajaran, dan upaya mendorong partisipasi yang merata di antara siswa. Temuan ini memberikan panduan berharga bagi pendidik dan pengembang kurikulum untuk mengoptimalkan penerapan PBL dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: Problem-Based Learning, Manfaat, Tantangan, Guru Bahasa Inggris, Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris

ABSTRACT

This study explores English teachers' perceptions of Problem-Based Learning (PBL), focusing on its benefits and challenges in classroom implementation. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews with English teachers actively using PBL in their teaching practices. Findings indicate that teachers perceive PBL as an effective approach to enhance students' communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills, contributing to a more engaging and dynamic learning environment. However, teachers also reported challenges such as designing relevant problem scenarios, managing limited instructional time, and encouraging equal participation among students. These insights provide valuable guidance for educators and curriculum developers to optimize PBL application in English language teaching.

Keywords: Problem-Based Learning, Benefits, Challenges, English Teacher Perceptions, ELT

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a significant shift in English Language Teaching (ELT) from traditional teacher-centered methods to more student-centered approaches. One of the prominent approaches that has gained attention is Problem-Based Learning (PBL), a pedagogical model that emphasizes solving real-world problems as a means to develop knowledge, critical thinking, and collaboration skills (Arum & Hikmat, 2024; Yew & Goh, 2016; Zahra & Baa, 2024). In the PBL framework, teachers serve as facilitators who guide students to find solutions through discussion and teamwork.

PBL is a student-centered instructional model in which the learning process begins with the presentation of real-life problems that are

relevant to students' everyday experiences. Through discussion, collaboration, and inquiry, learners actively construct their own understanding with the support of the teacher as a facilitator (Arum & Hikmat, 2024; Zahra & Baa, 2024). In the context of language instruction, PBL is considered effective in promoting the functional use of English, increasing student engagement, and fostering higher-order thinking skills (Orhan, 2024; Rodrigo Salvador et al., 2022). It creates a dynamic learning environment that enables students to develop their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills through task-based scenarios that reflect authentic, real-life contexts (Ghani et al., 2021; Liu & Pásztor, 2022). Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive impact of PBL on

both the learning process and student outcomes. Reported benefits include increased learning motivation, active participation, enhanced oral and written language skills, and the development of social competencies such as teamwork and communication (Febyanti et al., 2023; Ghani et al., 2021; Qomariyah & Utama, 2021). These findings are further supported by research indicating that PBL encourages the development of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and contextual language use (Hamsia & Erydani, 2022; Orhan, 2024; Zahra & Baa, 2024). Moreover, PBL fosters an interactive and engaging classroom atmosphere, enabling students to express ideas and solve problems collaboratively (Cindy E. Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Oktaviani et al., 2024). PBL has also been found to enhance students' self-confidence and independence in using English, which is particularly crucial in foreign language learning contexts (Dwiyamini, 2025; Ratnaningsih et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, the implementation of PBL in English language classrooms is not without challenges. Teachers often face constraints such as limited instructional time, lack of resources, students' insufficient vocabulary mastery, and difficulty in designing appropriate problem scenarios (Kurniawati, 2022; Moslemi Nezhad Arani et al., 2023; Zahra & Baa, 2024). Additional challenges include the shift in teachers' roles from instructors to facilitators, which demands substantial preparation and training (Hung, 2011), as well as classroom management difficulties and challenges in assessing individual performance within group-based activities (Muhamad et al., 2023). In more diverse contexts, such as multilingual classrooms, cultural and linguistic differences may also hinder the effectiveness of PBL (Kök & Duman, 2023). Therefore, the successful implementation of PBL depends heavily on teacher readiness, institutional support, appropriate curriculum design, and the use of teaching strategies that are responsive to student diversity.

Previous research has predominantly focused on student outcomes or the classroom application of PBL, with limited exploration of teachers' perspectives and experiences in implementing the approach. However, teachers play a critical role in designing instructional activities, managing group dynamics, and assessing student performance—all of which are

essential for the success of PBL. Some studies (Kristianti & Safira, 2023; Febyanti et al., 2023; Arum & Hikmat, 2024) have examined teachers' views on PBL, generally reporting positive attitudes toward its benefits while also noting practical challenges in its implementation. These findings highlight the need for further investigation into how teachers perceive and navigate the challenges of implementing PBL in English language classrooms.

Given this background, the present study aims to explore English teachers' perceptions of the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL), focusing on both the perceived benefits and the challenges encountered during classroom practice. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews with teachers who have implemented PBL in their teaching. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the existing literature and offer practical recommendations to enhance the effective implementation of PBL and provide support for teachers in adopting this approach in English language instruction.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a case study design to explore English teachers' perceptions of Problem-Based Learning (PBL), particularly regarding its perceived benefits and challenges in classroom implementation. A case study was deemed appropriate as it allows for an in-depth examination of participants' experiences and perspectives within their natural educational settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The participants of this study consisted of five female English teachers from several junior high schools in the Bogor area, Indonesia. All participants were selected based on their active implementation of PBL in their English language instruction. Data were collected through two primary methods: questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model, which involves three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction was carried out by selecting relevant information from the questionnaire responses and interview transcripts. The data were then displayed in the form of tables and thematic narratives to

identify emerging patterns. Verification was conducted by cross-checking the results from both instruments to ensure the validity of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study and provides an in-depth discussion of English teachers' perceptions regarding the benefits and challenges of implementing Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in English Language Teaching (ELT). Data were gathered through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with five English teachers from junior high schools in Bogor who actively apply PBL in their classrooms. The results are structured into two main themes: (1) the perceived benefits of PBL, and (2) the challenges encountered during its implementation.

1. Teachers' Perceptions of the Benefits of PBL

The questionnaire and interview data reveal that teachers hold highly positive perceptions of PBL's impact on student learning. The key benefits identified include increased student motivation and engagement, development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, meaningful learning through real-world tasks, improved language proficiency and confidence, enhanced student independence, and the promotion of collaborative learning skills.

No	Statement	Percentage	Category
1.	PBL Increases Students' Motivation and Engagement	90%	Strongly agree
2.	PBL Develops Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills	90%	Strongly agree
3.	PBL Supports Deep and Meaningful Learning through Real-World Tasks	90%	Strongly agree
4.	PBL improves students' Language Proficiency,	86%	Strongly agree

	communication skills and builds their confidence in using English.		
5.	PBL Encourages Students' Independence and Learning Initiative	90%	Strongly agree
6.	PBL Develops Collaboration and Teamwork Skills	90%	Strongly agree

The researcher offers an explanation of the data presented in the following section:

a. Increased Motivation and Engagement

A significant majority (90%) of teachers strongly agreed that PBL increases students' motivation and engagement. Interview responses confirmed that students were more enthusiastic, curious, and active participants during PBL activities.

b. Development of Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

Another 90% of participants affirmed that PBL fosters students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Teachers observed that students were required to analyze, evaluate, and construct solutions to real-world problems—practices that stimulate higher-order thinking.

c. Meaningful Learning through Real-World Tasks

90% of participants recognized that PBL promotes deeper learning through relevant, real-world tasks. Teachers observed that this context-based learning helped students connect knowledge with authentic situations.

d. Improved Language Proficiency and Confidence

86% of teachers believed PBL improved students' English skills, especially speaking and vocabulary. Interviews supported these findings, highlighting growth in communication skills and self-confidence, particularly among previously passive students.

e. Increased Independence and Initiative

90% of teachers affirmed that PBL promotes student autonomy. Despite some students' initial passivity, teachers observed increased initiative when provided with appropriate scaffolding and encouragement.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that English teachers perceive Problem-Based Learning (PBL) as a highly effective instructional approach that contributes positively to various aspects of student development in the English language classroom. PBL is seen to significantly enhance students' motivation and engagement, foster critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, and facilitate meaningful learning through real-world contexts. Moreover, it supports the improvement of students' language proficiency and communication skills, particularly in speaking and vocabulary use. Teachers also recognize PBL's role in developing collaboration and teamwork, as well as fostering students' independence and initiative. Overall, these perceptions underscore the multifaceted benefits of PBL in promoting both academic and personal growth among students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting.

f. Development of Collaborative Skills

90% of participants agreed that PBL encourages teamwork and interpersonal communication. Teachers reported that group work helped students support each other and learn collaboratively.

2. Teachers' Perceptions of the Challenges of PBL

The questionnaire and interview data reveal that teachers encountered several key challenges in implementing PBL. These challenges include difficulties in time management and material development, limited student initiative and uneven group collaboration, students' vocabulary limitations, and the lack of sufficient teacher training and professional preparation.

No	Statement	Percentage	Category
1.	Challenges in Time Management and Material Selection	57,5 %	Neutral
2.	Lack of Student	60 %	Neutral

	Initiative and Barriers to Collaboration		
3.	Vocabulary Limitations Affecting PBL Effectiveness	80%	Agree
4.	Insufficient Teacher Training and experience for Effective PBL Implementation	75%	Agree

The researcher offers an explanation of the data presented in the following section:

a. Time Management and Material Development

Approximately 57.5% of teachers expressed neutral views, reflecting varied experiences. Many noted that preparing suitable materials and managing time for multi-stage PBL sessions posed difficulties. Teachers often struggled to create appropriate problem scenarios that were aligned with students' levels and curriculum.

b. Low Student Initiative and Uneven Collaboration

A notable 60% reported concerns about student initiative, with 65% indicating problems in group collaboration. Teachers observed that some students dominated group tasks while others remained passive—highlighting a need for better role assignments and engagement strategies.

c. Vocabulary Limitations

80% of teachers agreed that limited vocabulary was a major obstacle. Students often struggled to express ideas or participate in discussions due to linguistic limitations. This shows that language barriers significantly hinder students' ability to fully engage in PBL activities.

d. Insufficient Teacher Training

75% of respondents cited lack of training as a barrier to effective PBL implementation. Teachers expressed a strong need for professional development opportunities that focus on PBL design, classroom strategies, and resource use.

Despite these challenges, from the interview teachers suggest committed to enhancing

their instructional practice by adopting various adaptive strategies to facilitate effective PBL implementation. They addressed classroom management and participation issues by breaking tasks into smaller, manageable steps, assigning specific roles within groups to ensure equitable collaboration, and varying classroom activities to sustain student interest. To mitigate students' vocabulary limitations, teachers implemented scaffolding techniques such as providing vocabulary lists, word banks, and allowing the use of dictionaries during learning activities. Additionally, in the absence of formal training, many teachers sought professional development independently by participating in webinars and engaging with teacher communities such as MGMP to improve their understanding and application of PBL in the classroom.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that English teachers in junior high schools in Bogor generally hold highly favorable perceptions of the benefits of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in English Language Teaching (ELT), while also recognizing several practical challenges that hinder its full implementation. These perceptions are consistent with existing literature that supports the efficacy of PBL in language education settings.

Perceived Benefits of PBL

The study revealed that all participants strongly agreed on the various advantages offered by PBL. A significant majority of teachers (90%) affirmed that PBL enhances students' motivation and engagement. This aligns with findings from Qomariyah and Utama (2021), as well as Cindy E. Hmelo-Silver (2004), who emphasized that PBL provides a dynamic and interactive classroom environment that stimulates student interest and participation. Teachers in this study observed increased curiosity and active involvement among students when engaging with real-world problems, which suggests that PBL offers meaningful learning experiences grounded in authentic contexts (Ghani et al., 2021; Liu & Pásztor, 2022).

Another commonly identified benefit was the development of students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, supported by 90% of participants. This finding is consistent with research by Orhan (2024) and Zahra and Baa (2024a), who argue that PBL facilitates higher-

order thinking by encouraging students to analyze information, consider alternative solutions, and engage in reflective inquiry. Teachers reported that these skills were fostered through discussion and collaborative exploration of real-life challenges. In addition, the study found that PBL supports the development of language proficiency, particularly in speaking and vocabulary use. This benefit was noted by 86% of participants and echoed in studies by Ratnaningsih et al. (2019) and Febyanti et al. (2023), which highlight how PBL enhances students' communicative competence and confidence in using English. Teachers observed that even previously passive students became more expressive and confident when engaged in PBL tasks.

Furthermore, teachers acknowledged the role of PBL in fostering students' independence and collaborative skills. Consistent with the works of Zahra and Baa (2024a) and Hamsia and Erydani (2022), the data indicated that students gradually developed initiative and autonomy, especially when scaffolding and clear role assignments were provided. The collaborative nature of PBL also cultivated teamwork, with students supporting one another to achieve group goals (Oktaviani et al., 2024; Ghani et al., 2021).

Overall, the findings confirm that PBL contributes positively to both academic and personal aspects of student development. Teachers view it as a powerful instructional model that aligns with the goals of communicative and student-centered language learning.

Perceived Challenges of PBL Implementation

Despite its numerous benefits, teachers also reported various challenges in implementing PBL effectively. These challenges are not unique to this study, as they have been similarly reported in prior research (Moslemi Nezhad Arani et al., 2023; Hung, 2011; Kurniawati, 2022).

One major challenge was time management and material development, with 57.5% of respondents expressing neutral views. Teachers noted the difficulty of preparing engaging and level-appropriate scenarios, as well as allocating sufficient time for multi-stage PBL activities. This concern is echoed by Hung (2011), who emphasized that PBL requires extensive planning and teacher effort in creating meaningful, curriculum-aligned problems.

Another concern was students' limited initiative and unequal group participation, as noted by 60% of respondents. Teachers found that some students tended to dominate while others remained passive, posing challenges for equitable participation. These issues are also noted by Kristianti and Safira (2023a), who suggest the need for structured group roles and explicit collaboration strategies to ensure balanced engagement.

Language limitations, particularly in vocabulary, were cited by 80% of teachers as a significant barrier. Students often struggled to articulate ideas or engage in discussions, which hindered their participation in problem-solving tasks. Similar issues are reported by K k and Duman (2023), who highlighted linguistic challenges in diverse and multilingual classrooms. Teachers in this study addressed these limitations through scaffolding, including word banks and dictionary use, to support language development during PBL tasks.

A final challenge involved insufficient training and preparation for implementing PBL. About 75% of teachers acknowledged a lack of professional development opportunities specific to PBL strategies. Many relied on informal sources such as webinars and teacher communities (MGMP), but expressed a need for more structured training programs. Rodrigo Salvador et al. (2022) and Zahra and Baa (2024a) similarly emphasize that successful PBL implementation depends on teacher readiness, ongoing training, and institutional support.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated English teachers' perceptions of the benefits and challenges associated with implementing Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in junior high school English classrooms in Bogor. Based on data collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with five English teachers, the study revealed that teachers generally hold highly positive views regarding the effectiveness of PBL, while also acknowledging several implementation challenges. The findings indicate that PBL is perceived to offer multiple educational benefits. Teachers consistently highlighted that PBL enhances student motivation, engagement, and participation by providing authentic, real-world learning contexts. It was also seen to promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills,

encourage collaborative teamwork, and foster student independence. Furthermore, PBL was credited with improving students' language proficiency, especially in speaking and vocabulary development, contributing to their overall communicative competence and self-confidence in using English. These perceptions align with prior research which emphasizes the student-centered, interactive, and skill-oriented nature of PBL in language education.

However, despite these advantages, teachers encountered several key challenges in applying PBL effectively. These included time constraints in designing and implementing multi-stage learning activities, students' limited vocabulary and uneven group participation, and the lack of formal professional development on PBL methodologies. Teachers often had to overcome these barriers through adaptive strategies such as task scaffolding, assigning specific group roles, and participating in independent training via webinars and teacher networks like MGMP. These findings reflect broader concerns in the literature regarding teacher readiness, resource availability, and the need for institutional support to ensure sustainable PBL practice.

In conclusion, while teachers perceive PBL as a valuable and impactful instructional approach for English language teaching, its successful implementation requires careful planning, ongoing teacher development, and adequate classroom support. Future efforts should focus on equipping teachers with the necessary skills and resources to address implementation challenges and maximize the pedagogical benefits of PBL in diverse EFL contexts.

REFERENCES

- Arum, R. L., & Hikmat, M. H. (2024). The Teacher's Understanding about Problem Based Learning and It's Implementation. *Language Circle: Journal of Language and Literature*, 18(2).
<http://journal.unnes.ac.id/nju/index.php/lc>
- Cindy E. Hmelo-Silver. (2004). Problem-Based Learning: What and How Do Students Learn? *Educational Psychology Review*, 16(3), 235–226.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and*

- Mixed Methods Approaches* (5th Edition). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Dwiyantini, M. R. (2025). Application of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) to Improve English Speaking Skills. *Applied Research in English Education (AREE)*, 1(2). <https://jurnal.unimus.ac.id/index.php/AREE>
- Febyanti, E. A., Meiristiani, N., & Rosdiana, I. (2023). *Teacher's Analysis of Problem-Based Learning Methods Applied in Teaching English*. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>
- Ghani, A. S. A., Rahim, A. F. A., Yusoff, M. S. B., & Hadie, S. N. H. (2021). Effective Learning Behavior in Problem-Based Learning: a Scoping Review. In *Medical Science Educator* (Vol. 31, Issue 3, pp. 1-10).
- Hamsia, W., & Erydani, V. A. C. (2022). Implementation of Problem-Based Learning Model in Improving Speaking Skills for Part-Time Students at A Higher Education Institution in Semarang. *Journal of English Teaching and Learning Issues*, 5(2), 135. <https://doi.org/10.21043/jetli.v5i2.17087>
- Hung, W. (2011). Theory to reality: A few issues in implementing problem-based learning. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 59(4), 529–552. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-011-9198-1>
- Kök, F. Z., & Duman, B. (2023). The effect of problem-based learning on problemsolving skills in English language teaching. *Journal of Pedagogical Research*, 7(1), 154–173. <https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.202318642>
- Kurniawati, S. (2022). EFL Teachers' Perspective on the Implementation of Problem-Based Learning During the Pandemic Era. In *The Progress: Journal of Language and Ethnicity* (Vol. 1, Issue 1). <https://ejournal.iainkerinci.ac.id/index.php/progress>
- Liu, Y., & Pásztor, A. (2022). Effects of problem-based learning instructional intervention on critical thinking in higher education: A meta-analysis. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 45. Kabapinar, F. (2005). Effectiveness of Teaching via Concept Cartoon from the Point of View of Constructivist Approach. *Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Bilimleri / Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 5(1), 135–146. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2022.101069>
- Moslemi Nezhad Arani, S., Zarei, A. A., & Sarani, A. (2023). Problem-based language learning: Why Aren't teachers using it? *Social Sciences and Humanities Open*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2023.100668>
- Muhamad, F. P., Alya, L. M., Yusuf, R. E., & Nur Fajriah, Y. (2023). Problem-Based Learning Model in EFL Classroom: Eyes of Teacher and Students. *Proceeding Virtual English Education Students Conference*, 02, 78–85.
- Oktaviani, H., Suharsih, S., & Juniardi, Y. (2024). The Implementation of Problem-Based Learning for Students' English-Speaking Ability. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Cultural Studies*, 7(1), 14–23. <https://doi.org/10.48181/jelts.v7i1.23355>
- Orhan, A. (2024). Online or in-class problem-based learning: Which one is more effective in enhancing learning outcomes and critical thinking in higher education EFL classroom? *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcal.13033>
- Qmariyah, S. S., & Utama, I. M. P. (2021). Problem-based learning on students' English learning interests. *International Journal of Language Teaching and Education*, 5(2), 55–61. <https://doi.org/10.22437/ijolte.v5i2.15881>
- Ratnaningsih, S., Nahartini, D., & Yuliyani, A. (2019). The Effect of Problem Based Learning Methods and Self Confidence to English Learning Outcomes in the Elementary School Students. *TARBIYA: Journal of Education in Muslim Society*,

- 5(2), 135–144
<https://doi.org/10.15408/tjems.v5i2.10640>
- Rodrigo Salvador, Murillo Vetroni Barros, & Antonio Carlos de Francisco. (2022). Challenges and opportunities for problem-based learning in higher education: Lessons from a cross-program Industry 4.0 case. *Sage Journals*, 31(1).
- Yew, E. H. J., & Goh, K. (2016). Problem-Based Learning: An Overview of its Process and Impact on Learning. In *Health Professions Education* (Vol. 2, Issue 2, pp. 75–79). King Saud bin Abdulaziz University.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hpe.2016.01.004>
- Zahra, A., & Baa, S. (2024). The Implementation of Problem-Based Learning (Pbl) In Teaching English As Foreign Language In Junior High School In South Sulawesi Indonesia. *Klasikal: Journal of Education, Language Teaching and Science*, 6.