

Students' Perspectives on the Effectiveness of Problem-Based Learning in Enhancing Explanatory Text Comprehension and Production

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Abstract: This study explores elementary students' perceptions of the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in explanatory text instruction. The research was conducted at SD Negeri 234 Palembang and involved 24 sixth-grade students selected through purposive sampling. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of students' learning experiences. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, methodological triangulation was applied. The findings demonstrate that students generally perceived the PBL approach positively. They reported that learning became more engaging, meaningful, and interactive compared with traditional teacher-centered instruction. The implementation of PBL encouraged active participation in discussions, increased students' confidence in expressing ideas, and strengthened collaboration among peers during problem-solving activities. Furthermore, the use of real-world problems helped students better understand explanatory text structures and identify cause-and-effect relationships within texts. The learning process also stimulated critical thinking and supported deeper comprehension of instructional content. Overall, the study concludes that PBL is an effective pedagogical approach for explanatory text learning at the elementary school level, fostering student engagement, collaborative learning, and improved conceptual understanding.

Keywords: *Problem Based Learning, explanatory text, students' perceptions, Indonesian language learning.*

A. Introduction

In the 21st century, education faces an increasingly difficult challenge with the rapid development of science, technology, and globalization. To adapt to the changing times, students must have 4C skills (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication) or critical thinking, creative, collaborative, and communicative, in order to be able to compete in local and global society. International organizations such as the OECD through *the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)* emphasize the importance of reading literacy as the foundation of 21st century skills. Understanding, interpreting, and

analyzing texts in a variety of contexts is part of reading literacy. However, the results of PISA 2022 show that Indonesia has a reading literacy score of around 371, far below the OECD average of 487 (PISA, 2022). This condition shows that Indonesian students still face great challenges in understanding texts, including explanatory texts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the global education situation. (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, 2024) UNESCO reports that more than 1.6 billion students worldwide are affected by school closures, including Indonesia. Loss of learning time leads to significant *learning loss*, especially in literacy skills. (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, 2024) confirms that *learning poverty* in Indonesia is increasing, with more than 70% of 10-year-olds unable to read and understand simple texts. This condition shows that reading literacy is a serious problem that must be overcome immediately.

In Indonesia, data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, shows that the literacy achievement of elementary school students is still low. (Nasrullah et al., 2024) The 2022 national reading literacy survey shows that only about 30% of elementary school students reach the "good" category in understanding explanatory texts. This is reinforced by a report (Noviana et al., 2025) which emphasizes that Indonesian language learning in elementary schools is still dominated by lecture and memorization methods, so that students are less actively involved. In addition, according to the Central Statistics Agency in 2026, the number of elementary school students in Indonesia will reach more than 28 million by 2026. This figure shows how big the impact will be if the quality of learning is not improved. Low reading literacy will have implications for the low competitiveness of the nation in the global era.

Previous studies have generally focused on the effectiveness of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in improving students' learning outcomes, critical thinking skills, and motivation. However, limited studies have specifically explored elementary school students' perceptions of the implementation of PBL in explanatory text learning. Understanding students' perceptions is important because positive perceptions can influence engagement, participation, and learning success. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining how Grade VI students perceive the implementation of PBL in explanatory text learning at SD Negeri 234 Palembang.

One of the most important types of texts for students to learn when learning Indonesian is explanatory texts. Explanatory texts can be used to explain natural, social, or cultural phenomena with logical cause-and-effect relationships. However, many peseta didiks face difficulties in understanding and writing explanatory texts because these texts require deep reasoning, analysis, and understanding of the situation. Conventional learning, which is still used by most teachers, cannot provide a significant learning experience for students.

To solve this problem, innovative and effective learning models are needed that increase learner engagement. Problem Based Learning (PBL) is a model that has proven to be effective because it emphasizes real problem-solving, teamwork, and the active involvement of learners during the learning process. (April & Handican, 2023)

In line with global research, PBL can improve learners' motivation, critical thinking skills, and learning outcomes (Communications, 2026). PBL is useful for learning Indonesian, especially explanatory texts, because this text requires the ability to analyze, reason, and understand cause and effect. Students learn to identify phenomena, formulate problems, find information, and compile explanations through PBL. This is in line with the 21st century learning objectives.

However, PBL does not always run smoothly in elementary schools. Limited time, lack of learning resources, and unmotivated students are some of the challenges that teachers often face when implementing PBL. In addition, previous research focused more on students' learning activities and outcomes than their views on learning models. In fact, student perception is essential to understand how students receive PBL and to know how effective PBL is. Negative perceptions can hinder learning success, while positive perceptions will encourage active engagement and improve learning outcomes.

The impact is quite significant if research on students' perceptions of PBL is not carried out. Students will not move and will not be interested in learning Bahasa Indonesia. Students will not have optimal critical thinking skills because they are not used to analyzing phenomena and composing explanations. In addition, teachers do not have an empirical basis for changing learning strategies to meet the actual needs of the classroom. As a result, the quality of learning Bahasa Indonesia, especially explanatory texts, will not improve.

Previous research studies have shown that PBL has many benefits. Research by (Husna et al., 2025) shows that PBL improves students' critical thinking skills. PBL is effective in increasing learning motivation in various educational contexts (Puji Cahyani & Ahmad, 2024) Research in Indonesia by Nurhalisa 2025 found that PBL improves the learning outcomes of Indonesian language in elementary school students (Nurhalisa et al., 2025). Another study by Sulaiman (2025) that PBL increases the learning activities of elementary school students in Bandung (Sulaiman et al., 2025) shows. However, these studies put more emphasis on students' learning outcomes and activities, rather than on their perception of PBL.

Therefore, there is a scarcity of research that must be met. Previous research has looked at how effective PBL is in improving learners' learning outcomes and explanatory text writing skills. However, the study did not pay attention to how elementary school students viewed the application of PBL in explanatory texts. However, understanding students' perceptions is essential to understanding how students receive, act, and assess PBL effectively in the classroom. The focus of this research is how students see the application of PBL in grade VI of SDN 234 Palembang.

This research is expected to contribute to the development of the theory and practice of Indonesian language learning in elementary schools. This research will theoretically enhance research on PBL by incorporating students' perspectives. Practically, this research will help teachers design and implement PBL better according to the needs and perceptions of students. Therefore, this research is highly relevant academically and practically. Based on the description of the background, the formulation of the problem in this study is how do students perceive the application of the Problem Based Learning

(PBL) learning model in explanatory text teaching materials?, What is the level of student involvement in the explanatory text learning process through the application of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) **model**?, How is the application of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) model? help students in understanding explanatory text material?.

The purpose of this study is to find out the perception of students towards the application of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) learning model in explanatory text teaching materials, To describe the level of involvement of students in the explanatory text learning process through the application of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) model, To find out how to apply the Problem Based Learning (PBL) model. Assist students in understanding explanatory text material.

B. Methods

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative design to explore students' perceptions of the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in explanatory text instruction. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to investigate participants' experiences, opinions, and interpretations within authentic educational settings. Through this approach, a comprehensive understanding of how students perceive and respond to PBL-based learning activities could be obtained.

Data were collected using three complementary techniques: classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted during the learning process to examine students' participation, interaction, and engagement in PBL activities. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with selected students to gain deeper insights into their experiences, attitudes, and challenges encountered during explanatory text learning. In addition, documentation, including students' assignments, learning records, and photographs of classroom activities, was utilized to support and enrich the research findings. The integration of these techniques enabled the collection of comprehensive and credible data regarding students' perceptions.

Data analysis followed the interactive framework proposed by Miles and Huberman (2016), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Relevant information was first selected and organized, then presented descriptively to identify emerging themes and patterns. Finally, conclusions were generated through systematic interpretation of the findings. This analytical process provided an in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of PBL in promoting meaningful learning experiences in Indonesian language education.

The participants consisted of 24 Grade VI students of SD Negeri 234 Palembang, comprising 10 male and 14 female students. The participants were selected through purposive sampling because they had directly experienced learning explanatory texts using the PBL model.

The data collection techniques in this study were carried out through observation, interviews, and questionnaires. Three instruments were used in this study:

1. Observation sheet to record students' participation and interaction during learning activities.

2. Semi-structured interview guide consisting of five main questions related to students' learning experiences.
 3. Student perception questionnaire containing five Likert-scale statements.
- Data credibility was ensured through source triangulation and technique triangulation by comparing findings obtained from observations, interviews, and questionnaires.

C. Results and Discussion

Provide Introduction to PBL Learning Model. The learning model is a student-centered model (Ardianti et al., 2022). PBL is also a learning model that can improve student learning outcomes (Yuliasari, 2023) In line with the results of Supiandi's research, the PBL model can solve learning problems and can improve students' learning outcomes (Supiandi & Julung, 2016) The PBL model can make student involvement more active (Yusita et al., 2021) In line with the results of research that states that PBL can have a positive influence and improve student learning outcomes (Syahrani & Purwono, 2024) Some of these studies show positive things in this PBL learning model. The steps of the PBL learning model are (1) Orientation of students to problems, (2) organizing students on problems, (3) guiding individual and group investigations, (4) developing and presenting the results of work, (5) analyzing and evaluating problem solving. (Asmorowati, 2021).

An Explanatory Text is a type of text that describes the process or reason for something to occur bias natural, social, and cultural events(Sumargo, 2022) Explanatory comes from the English Explanation which means to explain (Lawatri & Indihadi, 2021). Students' understanding of explanatory texts is still low (Irawan et al., 2024). In line with kinanti research, the understanding of explanatory texts is still low in elementary schools (Kinanti et al., 2024). The understanding of explanatory texts can be seen from students being able to answer questions with critical reasoning.(Nurmalasari, 2024). The delivery of explanatory texts should not use the lecture method (Melany et al., 2025).

Explanatory texts must be delivered by teachers with media that attracts more student activity (Kiftia & Rukmi, 2022). The structure of explanatory texts consists of general statements, explanatory and interpretive sets (Text et al., 1805). From the results of the field study, learning to write explanatory texts that are not conducive is caused by several things: (a) teachers do not like learning language knowledge, especially writing texts, (b) teachers lack or even have no experience in getting along with literary works, especially writing texts, and (c) the learning methods chosen and used by teachers are not or are not appropriate (Meidianasari, 2021).

The findings indicate that students actively participated in group discussions and problem-solving activities. This finding supports the constructivist view underlying PBL, which emphasizes student-centered learning through active knowledge construction (Ardianti et al., 2022). Students' active engagement observed in this study is also consistent with the findings of Sulaiman et al. (2025), who reported that PBL increased students' participation and learning activities in elementary schools.

Based on the results of observations carried out for 1 week, namely March 2-6, 2026, it was found that. Based on the results of observations during the learning process, the

results of observations during the explanatory text learning process using *the Problem Based Learning* (PBL) model, it can be seen that students show a high level of participation in learning activities. In the early stages of learning, the teacher presents a problem related to natural phenomena that are close to the students' lives, such as rain or floods.

The students were then divided into several groups to discuss the problem. During the discussion activity, most of the students were seen active in expressing opinions, asking questions, and working together with their group members to find solutions to the problems given. In addition, students also show good ability to read and analyze explanatory texts contained in teaching materials. They are able to identify explanatory text structures such as general statements, explanatory rows, and interpretations. The activeness and involvement of students in learning activities shows that the application of the PBL model is able to create a more interactive and interesting learning atmosphere.

Based on the results of the interviews, most of the students revealed that they did not know exactly about the term PBL (Problem Based Learning), but in the implementation of learning they knew that learning starts with problems, then group discussions, etc. Even so, he admitted that he was happy and excited in the learning process because of the bias of discussing, solving problems in groups. Interviews were conducted with several students who were randomly selected to find out their experiences and perceptions of the application of the PBL model in explanatory text learning.

Interviews were conducted with several students to obtain more in-depth information about their experiences while participating in learning with the PBL model. Some excerpts from the interview results include the following:

"I understand explanatory texts more easily because I can discuss with friends and find answers together." (Fakhry)

"Learning by means of discussions like this is more fun than just listening to the teacher's explanation." (Zafira)

"With this model, I became more courageous to ask questions and express my opinions in class." (Masya Students)

Based on the results of the interview, it can be seen that students find learning with the PBL model more interesting and help them understand the learning material better. In addition, this learning model also increases students' confidence in expressing opinions. The results of the interviews showed that most of the students gave a positive response to the learning model. Some students stated that learning with the PBL model made it easier for them to understand the content of the explanatory text because they could discuss the material with their group friends. Students also feel more active and courageous in expressing their opinions during the learning process.

In addition, students said that group discussion activities made learning more fun and not boring. They also feel more motivated to read explanatory texts because they have to find answers to problems given by teachers. The results of the interviews show that the application of the PBL model can increase students' interest in learning and involvement in the learning process.

In addition to giving positive responses, some students also said that the PBL learning model helped them practice their skills to work together and think critically. In group discussion activities, students are asked to exchange opinions, seek information and provide answers based on the problems given. This situation makes students more active in the learning process compared to conventional learning. Some students stated that they became easier to understand the structure and content of explanatory texts because learning was carried out through problem-solving activities related to daily life. This shows that the application of the PBL model can create a more active, interactive and meaningful learning atmosphere for students.

The results of the interviews also showed that students felt more enthusiastic and motivated to take part in learning Indonesian when using the PBL learning model. Students stated that learning does not only focus on the teacher's explanation but also involves the active participation of all group members. Through these activities, students feel that they have the opportunity to convey ideas, ask questions and provide responses to the opinions of friends and other groups (Januardi et al., 2023; Lestari et al., 2022). Thus, the application of the PBL model is not only able to increase students' understanding of explanatory text material, but also able to develop communication skills, trust and social skills of students during the learning process.

Students reported that learning became more enjoyable and easier to understand through discussion activities. This finding aligns with Aprilita and Handican (2023), who found that PBL promotes positive learning experiences by encouraging collaboration and active participation.

A questionnaire was given to all 24 students to find out their perception of the application of *the Problem Based Learning model* in explanatory text teaching materials. The questionnaire is prepared in the form of a Likert scale which consists of several statements about the learning experience of students while participating in learning with the PBL model. The results of the questionnaire analysis showed that most of the students responded positively to the application of the PBL model. Of the 24 students, as many as **74.2% of students stated that they strongly agreed, 15.8% of students said they agreed, and 10% of students stated that they agreed** that the PBL model makes learning more interesting and easy to understand table 1. Results of Student Perception Questionnaire on the Application of the PBL Model;

Table 1: The students responded positively to the application of the PBL model

Yes	Assessment Indicators	Very Agree	Agree	Simply Agree	Percentage Positive
1	Learning with PBL makes learning more engaging and easy to understand	19 Students (79%)	3 Students (13%)	2 Students (8%)	92%
2	The PBL model helps understand explanatory text	17 Students (71%)	4 Students (16%)	3 Students (13%)	87%
3	Group discussions help understand the material	16 students (67%)	7 Students (29%)	1 Students (4%)	96%
4	PBL makes students more active in learning	17 Students (71%)	3 Students (13%)	4 Students (16%)	83%
5	PBL enhances cooperation between students	20 Students (83%)	2 Students (8%)	2 Students (8%)	91%

Total	74,2%	15,8%	10%	90%
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In addition, most students also stated that the PBL model helps them understand the content of explanatory texts better, especially in identifying the causal relationship of a phenomenon. Students also feel that group discussion activities help them to exchange opinions and increase cooperation in learning. In general, the results of the questionnaire show that students have a positive perception of the application of the PBL model in explanatory text learning.

Based on the results of the research obtained through observations, interviews, and questionnaires, it can be seen that the application of *the Problem Based Learning* (PBL) model in explanatory text teaching materials has a positive impact on the learning process in grade VI of SD Negeri 234 Palembang. The results of observations show that students become more active in participating in learning activities. The activeness of students can be seen from their participation in group discussions, their ability to express opinions, and their involvement in solving problems given by teachers. This shows that the PBL model is able to create *student-centered learning*.

The results of the interviews also showed that students found learning with the PBL model more interesting and fun. Through discussion and problem-solving activities, students can more easily understand the explanatory text material and develop critical thinking skills. Meanwhile, the results of the questionnaire showed that most of the students gave a positive response to the application of the PBL model. Students feel that this learning model helps them understand the learning material better and improves cooperation with their peers. Thus, the application of *the Problem Based Learning* model in explanatory text teaching materials can increase students' involvement in the learning process and help them understand the learning material more deeply. This learning model can also be an alternative to an effective learning strategy in learning Indonesian in elementary school.

D. Conclusions

Based on the results of the research on students' perception of the application of *the Problem Based Learning* (PBL) model in explanatory text teaching materials in grade VI of SD Negeri 234 Palembang, it can be concluded as follows:

1. Students' perception of the PBL model is positive. Most students feel that learning becomes more interesting, fun, and easy to understand through the application of the PBL model. The results of the questionnaire showed that 74.2% of students stated that they strongly agreed, 15.8% agreed, and 10% moderately agreed that the PBL model helped them understand explanatory text material.
2. The level of student involvement increased. Observations and interviews show that students become more active in learning activities, especially in group discussions, asking questions, and solving problems. This indicates that the PBL model has succeeded in creating *student-centered learning*.
3. Students' understanding of explanatory text material increases. The application of PBL helps learners understand the structure of the text, identify important information, and analyze the cause-and-effect relationships in explanatory texts in

more depth. In addition, this model also improves critical thinking skills, collaboration, and cooperation between students.

4. Implications for Indonesian language learning. The PBL model has proven to be an effective learning strategy to improve the quality of explanatory text learning in elementary schools. The results of this research can be a reference for teachers to develop learning that is more creative, interactive, and in accordance with the needs of students.

Based on the findings, students generally demonstrated positive perceptions toward the implementation of the PBL model in explanatory text learning. The model encouraged active participation, collaboration, and confidence in expressing opinions. Students also reported that PBL helped them better understand explanatory text structures and cause-and-effect relationships. Therefore, PBL can be considered an effective learning approach for explanatory text learning in elementary schools.

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