IMPLEMENTING THE PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING (PBL) MODEL TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' READING AND WRITING SKILLS IN NARRATIVE TEXT LEARNING FOR GRADE IV AT SDN 2 JULI

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Article Info

Abstract

This study aims to improve students' reading and writing skills through the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model. The background of this research is based on the low level of students' reading and writing skills, which are indicated by students' lack of active participation in learning activities, difficulties in understanding reading texts, and limited ability to express ideas and thoughts in written form. This research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design conducted in two cycles. The research subjects consisted of 32 students. Each cycle included the stages of planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. Data were collected through observations of teacher and student activities, students' worksheets (LKPD), and tests of reading and writing skills. The data were analyzed using descriptive quantitative and qualitative techniques. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model led to a significant improvement in students' reading and writing skills. In the first meeting, only 10 students (31.25%) showed improvement in reading and writing skills. In the second meeting, the number of students who showed improvement increased to 15 students (46.88%). Furthermore, in the third meeting (Cycle II), the improvement became more significant, with 24 students (75%) demonstrating improved reading and writing skills. In addition, students' learning activities and the quality of teaching practices also improved in each cycle. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model is effective in improving students' reading and writing skills. This learning model enhances students' active participation, critical thinking skills, and accuracy in reading and writing activities.

Keywords: Problem based learning, reading skills, writing skills

INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, the Indonesian education system has undergone various transformations, notably in the continuous development and adjustment of the curriculum (Arain et al., 2025). These changes are a vital response to contemporary demands that necessitate updated learning approaches. Modern education is faced with the challenge of introducing innovation, given that the school learning process is heavily influenced by the variety of materials, media, and methods utilized (Salimi et al., 2021). Conventional learning approaches tend to cause boredom among students, particularly in thematic learning, which ideally should be implemented innovatively.

Based on these conditions, a learning strategy is needed that can attract students' interest, especially at the elementary school level. To support the creation of innovative learning, it is necessary to utilize attractive and relevant media and learning models that align with the topics being delivered (Yu et al., 2025). Education is also a crucial element in producing an intelligent and competent generation. At the elementary school level, the primary abilities that need improvement are reading and writing. Literacy serves as the foundation for students to understand various types of information, think critically, and express ideas in writing. However, the reality in the field shows that students' literacy skills remain a significant challenge to overcome.

Literacy skills, particularly in reading and writing, are basic competencies that every student must possess at the elementary level (Spaic et al., 2025). Literacy is not only the foundation for understanding various fields of study but also influences a student's success in facing daily life challenges. Literacy involves critical thinking, deep information comprehension, and the ability to solve problems in everyday life. It is an essential foundation for meaningful and contextual learning processes, especially in the face of rapid technological and information developments (Rohman et al., 2025). Strengthening literacy at the elementary school level is crucial for shaping students' mindsets from an early age, helping them understand subjects more deeply and encouraging active participation in learning, both individually and collaboratively.

Education plays a strategic role in ensuring the survival of a nation and state by improving and developing the quality of human resources. Achieving this goal requires a collective effort between society and the government. Improving human resource quality is a significant responsibility that necessitates a well-directed educational process. Teachers, as professionals, must be capable of applying effective and efficient learning methods, models, and strategies (Klehm et al., 2025). Furthermore, teachers need to involve students actively and create a conducive learning environment to achieve educational objectives. Mastery of language skills is not only intended for theoretical knowledge but must be mastered by students as part of the expected competency achievement.

Language skills play an important role in an individual's ability to use language effectively, both orally and in writing (Zane et al., 2025). The process of acquiring language skills begins in early childhood, where a child first learns to listen, then develops speaking skills, and eventually learns to read and write. These four skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—are interrelated and form the primary foundation for communication and learning. These skills must be mastered in an integrated manner to support effective communication and serve as a means of thinking and building understanding of the surrounding environment (Varman et al., 2025). Therefore, the development of language skills must be carried out systematically and continuously from early childhood through higher education.

One of the primary focuses of this research is reading and writing skills. These skills are vital aspects of Indonesian language learning and serve as essential communication tools for every individual (Naseer et al., 2025). Reading and writing not only broaden horizons but also

provide relevant information in the era of globalization. Extensive reading and writing enrich vocabulary, increase knowledge, train articulation, and sharpen reasoning. The classroom learning process is an active interaction between students and teachers, aiming to provide knowledge and understanding so that predetermined learning goals are met. Teachers must understand student characteristics and are required to possess the skills, creativity, and activity necessary to improve the quality of student learning.

Effective learning is determined not only by the material taught but also by the teacher's ability to create a pleasant, communicative, and participatory atmosphere. Teachers must have pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies to improve learning quality (Figueroa-González et al., 2025). Teacher creativity in managing lessons plays a key role in encouraging active student involvement, ensuring they do not merely receive information passively but build knowledge through meaningful learning experiences. Consequently, students are expected to develop critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills.

Reading is the ability to understand, evaluate, and use information from texts effectively. It involves cognitive processes in comprehending text content, finding main ideas, and evaluating the information presented. Good reading skills allow students to obtain relevant information to support their studies and play a vital role in developing critical and reflective thinking. Reading also allows students to connect text information with personal experiences, creating a deeper understanding and serving as a primary means of increasing vocabulary and cross-disciplinary knowledge (Awati et al., 2025). Furthermore, reading skills must be trained from an early age through contextual approaches relevant to students' lives.

Based on data and observations at SD Negeri 2 Juli Bireuen, the reading and writing skills of fourth-grade students still require improvement, particularly in understanding narrative texts and writing ideas with proper structure (Morante-García et al., 2025). Observations indicate that most fourth-grade students have literacy skills below the expected standards. This is evident in their low ability to comprehend reading content and difficulties in writing with a clear structure according to linguistic rules. This condition is likely influenced by learning methods that are less varied and do not provide enough space for students to think actively and explore.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is a learning model that focuses on solving real-world problems as the initial step in the learning process. The goal is to create meaningful learning by involving students actively in understanding and solving problems, specifically in the context of reading and writing skills (Zhang et al., 2025). PBL places contextual problem-solving at the starting point of the learning process. This model is considered effective in language skills because it encourages students to think critically, evaluate information, and organize ideas systematically.

PBL helps students develop high-level thinking skills, metacognitive abilities, and collaboration skills through the exploration of open-ended problems. Implementing PBL significantly improves reading comprehension and writing skills because students are actively involved in searching for information and formulating ideas based on relevant data (Moreira et al., 2026). This process also involves presentations, providing opportunities for students to strengthen communication skills and sharpen their ability to present arguments clearly and coherently. One of the strengths of PBL is its ability to encourage students to develop interpersonal communication and active presentation skills in a collaborative context. Integration of presentation activities in PBL not only supports cognitive goals but also strengthens affective aspects and 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking and effective communication.

Elementary education holds a strategic role in shaping students' fundamental skills. However, the reality at SD Negeri 2 Juli shows that fourth-grade reading and writing skills still need improvement. Conventional and unvaried learning methods are often factors influencing low student motivation. To address this, an innovative learning model like PBL is required.

PBL emphasizes authentic and challenging learning experiences, training students to be critical, creative, and capable of problem-solving. This study aims to examine the implementation of the PBL model in improving students' reading and writing skills in narrative text materials for Grade IV at SD Negeri 2 Juli (Bolado et al., 2025). This research utilizes a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach to describe in-depth the learning process, the challenges faced, and the impact on students' literacy skills.

RESEARCH METHOD

The following sections detail the systematic approach used to enhance Indonesian language literacy through the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model.

Research Design

This study utilizes a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach. CAR was selected because this research aims to improve the quality of the process and outcomes of Indonesian language learning, specifically in reading and writing skills (Keck et al., 2025). The design focuses on solving practical classroom problems by implementing the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model as a strategic intervention. Unlike traditional descriptive research, this design is collaborative and interventionist, aiming for a direct positive change in student performance through a structured cyclical framework.

Research Target/Subject

The primary objective of this research is to improve the quality of the Indonesian language learning process and student outcomes in reading and writing (Stanley et al., 2025). Specifically, the study aims to evaluate how the Problem-Based Learning model can stimulate students' critical thinking and literacy skills. The research targets a measurable increase in student engagement and achievement scores, transitioning from traditional teacher-centered instruction to a more active, problem-solving pedagogical approach.

The subjects of this research are the students and the teacher in an Indonesian language classroom. These subjects were selected because they directly encounter the literacy challenges addressed by this study. As is standard in CAR, the entire class functions as the research subject to ensure that the intervention benefits the collective group. The teacher acts as both an instructor and a researcher-observer to monitor the dynamics of the PBL implementation in real-time.

Research Procedure

The research is carried out through a cyclical process consisting of four primary stages per cycle (Jimenez et al., 2025). First is planning, where the lesson plans and PBL instruments are developed. This is followed by acting, where the Indonesian language material is taught using the PBL model. Simultaneously, the observing stage takes place to document student activities and obstacles. Finally, the reflecting stage involves analyzing the collected data to determine if the criteria for success have been met or if a subsequent cycle with revised strategies is necessary.

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study utilizes a variety of tools to capture a holistic view of the classroom. These include observation sheets to record student and teacher activity during the PBL process, field notes for qualitative nuances, and reading and writing assessment rubrics to measure student performance (McKinlay & Kearns, 2025). Additionally, questionnaires or interviews may be used to gauge student responses to the new learning model. These instruments ensure that every phase of the CAR cycle is documented with evidence-based data.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis in this study employs both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive overview of the improvement in students' skills. Quantitative data, such as literacy test scores, are analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean scores and percentage of mastery) to track improvement across cycles (Lucena et al., 2025). Qualitative data, derived from observations and reflections, are analyzed using thematic reduction and interpretation to understand why certain improvements occurred and how the PBL model effectively addressed classroom challenges.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that the gradual implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model successfully enhances students' reading and writing skills (Mastour et al., 2025). This finding aligns with PBL theory, which emphasizes learning based on real-world problems to encourage students to think critically, engage in active discussion, and develop literacy skills (Hmelo-Silver, 2020; Savery, 2015). PBL positions students as active subjects of learning through the presentation of contextual problems that stimulate reading activities, discussions, and the systematic writing of ideas and solutions. Research by Hmelo-Silver et al. (2020) shows that PBL can improve students' literacy skills when accompanied by adequate scaffolding or teacher guidance (Khera et al., 2025). The teacher plays a vital role in directing the problem-solving process, helping students understand reading texts, and guiding them in organizing ideas into written form (Nik Najhannor et al., 2025). This is consistent with the results of this study, particularly in Cycle II, where the teacher provided more intensive assistance, leading to a significant improvement in students' literacy skills.

Table 1. Observation Percentages of Student Reading and Writing Skill Improvement (Cycles 1 and 2, Sessions 1 to 3)

No	Session	Number of Students Showing Improvement	Percentage (%)	Number of Students Not Yet Improving	Percentage (%)
1	First Session	10 students	31.25%	22 students	68.75%
2	Second Session	15 students	46.88%	17 students	53.12%
3	Third Session	24 students	75.00%	8 students	25.00%
Total Students		32 students	100%	32 students	100%

Based on the results of the Classroom Action Research (CAR) conducted through the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model, it can be concluded that the PBL model is capable of improving students' reading and writing skills gradually and significantly. The results indicate that in the first meeting, students' literacy skills were still relatively low; out of 32 students, only 10 (31.25%) showed improvement, while 22 (68.75%) did not, as students were still adapting to the problem-based approach. By the second meeting, the number of students showing improvement increased to 15 (46.88%), indicating a growing understanding of the PBL flow and increased involvement in reading and group discussions.

In the third meeting (Cycle II), the improvement became significantly more pronounced, with 24 students (75%) showing enhanced reading and writing skills. At this stage, the majority of students were able to read texts effectively, identify core problems, and express ideas in writing more systematically. Observation results also showed an improvement in the quality of the learning process, with the teacher providing more focused guidance and students demonstrating higher levels of activity, courage in expressing opinions, and precision in writing. Therefore, the PBL model is proven effective not only in improving learning outcomes

but also in fostering active engagement, critical thinking, and student confidence in the learning process.
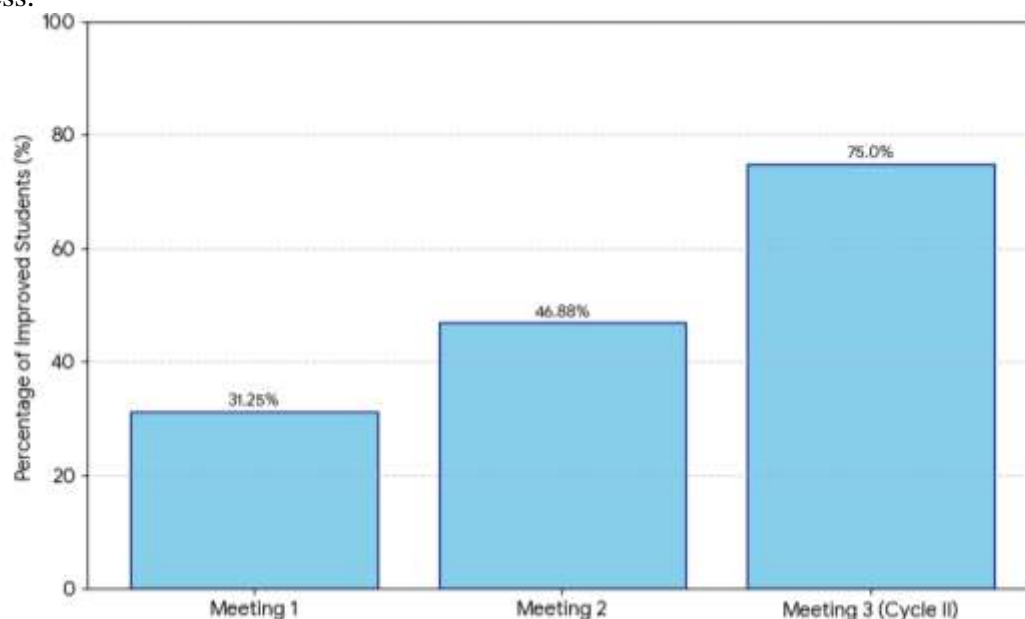

Figure 1. Student Reading and Writing Improvement Trend Using PBL Model

Furthermore, research by Savery (2021) confirms that problem-based learning can increase students' cognitive engagement in reading and writing because they are required to understand problems deeply before formulating solutions. This process encourages students to read texts critically and write ideas more structurally, as observed in this study where students began to identify main ideas and compose text summaries more coherently in subsequent meetings. Similarly, Yew and Goh (2020) state that the success of PBL in improving literacy is highly influenced by the quality of group discussions and peer interactions. Directed group discussions allow students to exchange understandings of reading content and correct writing errors, supporting the findings of this study where improvements occurred alongside the increased quality of group discussions in Cycle II.

Additionally, research in primary education by Rahmawati and Suyanto (2022) demonstrates that applying PBL based on contextual reading texts significantly improves students' reading comprehension and writing skills. Their study emphasizes the importance of selecting texts related to students' daily lives to make it easier for them to understand problems and translate ideas into writing, which aligns with the strategy used in this study. Recent research by Putri et al. (2023) also concludes that the PBL model effectively improves writing skills by encouraging students to think critically, construct arguments, and organize ideas systematically. This improvement is optimized when teachers provide writing samples and continuous feedback, reinforcing the results seen in Cycle II, Meeting 3, when the teacher provided intensive feedback and summary samples. Overall, the findings show that PBL not only improves reading and writing skills but also enhances learning activity, critical thinking, and student confidence.

CONCLUSION

Based on the Classroom Action Research (CAR) findings, the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model has proven to be highly effective in enhancing students' reading and writing skills. The improvement occurred progressively across two cycles. Initially, only 31.25% of students showed progress as they were still adapting to the problem-based approach. However, by the second meeting, this figure rose to 46.88%, reflecting better engagement in group discussions. The most significant breakthrough occurred in Cycle II,

where 75% of the class—24 out of 32 students—demonstrated substantial mastery in literacy. At this stage, students could effectively analyze texts, identify core issues, and express ideas systematically in writing. Beyond academic scores, the PBL model fostered a more dynamic learning environment. It successfully increased student activity, critical thinking, and confidence in expressing opinions. In conclusion, PBL is a powerful instructional tool that not only improves learning outcomes but also builds essential soft skills through active participation.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.
Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.
Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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