

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Research

In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, reading comprehension stands as a pivotal skill that bridges language proficiency and academic success. Particularly at the senior secondary level, such as in *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA), students are expected to progress beyond basic decoding skills to develop the ability to comprehend, interpret, analyze, and critically engage with written texts in English. Reading is no longer viewed as a passive activity, but as an active cognitive process involving prediction, inference, evaluation, and synthesis.

At MA Al Erahmah Walantaka, a private Islamic senior high school in Serang, Banten, reading comprehension continues to pose a significant challenge. Many students demonstrate difficulty in extracting explicit and implicit meanings from texts, identifying main ideas, connecting information across paragraphs, and drawing conclusions. Based on preliminary classroom observations and teacher interviews, these difficulties are often attributed not only to linguistic barriers, but also to the limited application of interactive and engaging instructional models in reading classrooms. Reading lessons are still frequently dominated by traditional, teacher-centered methods that emphasize translation, vocabulary memorization, and comprehension questions with minimal cognitive demand. These approaches, while sometimes effective in conveying literal meaning, tend to isolate reading from meaningful contexts,

thereby reducing students' motivation, engagement, and long-term retention.

In response to these limitations, a growing body of educational research advocates for the use of student-centered instructional models that promote active learning, collaborative problem-solving, and real-world application. Among these, **Project-Based Learning (PJBL)** and **Problem-Based Learning (PBL)** have received considerable attention for their potential to transform passive learning environments into dynamic spaces of inquiry and critical thinking. Both models are rooted in the constructivist paradigm, which posits that learners build knowledge most effectively through active engagement and social interaction.

Project-Based Learning (PJBL) is characterized by extended tasks or projects that require students to investigate complex questions, apply interdisciplinary skills, and produce a tangible product or presentation. Within PJBL, reading comprehension becomes purposeful: students read to gather information, conduct research, support arguments, and synthesize knowledge for their project outcomes. The authenticity of the project often fosters intrinsic motivation and deeper cognitive engagement with the texts being studied.

On the other hand, **Problem-Based Learning (PBL)** involves students in solving open-ended, real-world problems that lack a single correct solution. Reading within a PBL framework is not an end in itself but a means of understanding the problem, evaluating different perspectives, and constructing informed responses. This naturally demands higher-order comprehension skills, such as

analysis, evaluation, and application. Moreover, PBL supports the development of soft skills such as teamwork, critical thinking, and communication—competencies that are increasingly essential in 21st-century learning.

Numerous studies have investigated the application of PJBL and PBL in EFL contexts. For example, Haryanti & Yulianti (2020) found that PJBL significantly enhanced students' reading comprehension through collaborative inquiry and the contextualization of texts. Similarly, Fitriani (2021) reported that PBL improved learners' inferential reading skills, as the problem-solving framework required them to analyze and interpret information critically. A comparative study by Setiawan & Nurhidayah (2022) concluded that both PJBL and PBL were effective in improving reading comprehension, with PJBL being slightly more effective in enhancing student motivation, while PBL excelled in promoting critical reading strategies. However, most of these studies were conducted in general senior high schools and did not consider the unique learning culture and institutional structure of *madrasah* education.

In *madrasah aliyah* settings such as MA Al rahmah Walantaka, learning often integrates religious values and community-based instruction, which may influence students' engagement with different teaching methods. Furthermore, as English is typically taught only a few hours per week, instructional time must be used effectively to maximize learning outcomes. Yet, there is a lack of empirical studies exploring how PJBL and PBL perform in such settings, especially with a focus on reading comprehension.

Addressing this gap is essential to inform best practices for EFL reading instruction within Islamic education contexts.

Given these considerations, this study seeks to investigate and compare the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning and Problem-Based Learning in improving students' reading comprehension at MA Al Rahmah Walantaka. By doing so, the research aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for EFL practitioners on how to design and implement more engaging and effective reading instruction, tailored to the specific needs of students in religious school environments. Moreover, the study intends to contribute to the growing scholarship on contextualized language teaching and offer practical insights for curriculum development, teacher training, and educational policy in similar educational contexts.

In sum, this research is driven by an urgent need to enhance students' reading comprehension skills through innovative, student-centered pedagogies. It responds to both local instructional challenges and broader theoretical discussions in EFL pedagogy. The findings are expected to enrich the discourse on reading instruction by highlighting not only which model—PJBL or PBL—is more effective, but also how such methods can be successfully adapted and sustained within *madrasah* education systems.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining the effectiveness of reading comprehension within Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) frameworks at MA Al Rahmah Walantaka.

B. Identification of Problems

The identification of problems for this research are:

1. Challenges in Enhancing Reading Competency Among Students at MA Al Rahmah Walantaka

Students at MA Al Rahmah Walantaka encounter challenges in reading skills, including restricted vocabulary, inadequate comprehension, and diminished confidence in oral reading. The traditional teaching approach, characterized by memorization and teacher-centered instruction, frequently fails to engage students in meaningful learning experiences.

2. Insufficient Integration of Reading Aloud in Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

Despite implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) at the school, there is a lack of specific research investigating the application of the reading-aloud method within these educational frameworks. The potential advantages of reading aloud in improving reading skills and student engagement in Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) remain underexplored.

3. Challenges in Addressing Resource Constraints and Pedagogical Approaches at MA Al Rahmah Walantaka

MA Al Rahmah Walantaka encounters challenges, including large class sizes, limited resources, and inadequate student engagement in meaningful reading activities. These factors impede the development of practical reading skills and adversely affect students' comprehension and fluency in reading.

4. The Significance of Aligning Learning with Islamic and Academic Educational Objectives

At MA Al Rahmah Walantaka, the emphasis on religious subjects may occasionally diminish the attention given to language skill development, including reading. Consequently, meticulous planning is essential for incorporating the reading-aloud method into the curriculum, ensuring alignment with the school's Islamic and academic objectives.

5. Insufficient Research on the Interrelationship of Reading Aloud, Project-Based Learning (PjBL), and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in Islamic Senior High Schools

While numerous studies have investigated the advantages of reading aloud, project-based learning (PjBL), and problem-based learning (PBL) individually, there is a notable deficiency in extensive research that analyzes the interplay among these three elements, particularly within Islamic senior high schools.

This problem identification underscores the necessity to investigate the application of the reading aloud method within Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) to improve students' reading skills at MA Al Rahmah Walantaka, as well as the integration of these approaches with the institution's Islamic and academic educational objectives.

C. Formulation of Problems

1. How is the implementation of the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) approaches at MA Al Rahmah?

2. Is there a significant difference in the students' reading comprehension while using PjBL and PBL approaches at MA Al Rahmah?
3. Which approach better affects students' reading comprehension?

D. Objective of Research

1. To describe the implementation of the reading aloud method in the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) approaches at MA Al Rahmah.
2. To determine whether there is a significant difference in the reading ability of students taught using the reading aloud method through the PjBL and PBL approaches at MA Al Rahmah.
3. To determine a more effective learning approach between PjBL and PBL in improving students' reading comprehension when using the reading aloud method.

E. Limitation of Problems

2. Focus on High School Students at MA Al Rahmah:

The study will focus specifically on students enrolled in senior high school at MA Al Rahmah, an Islamic school in Indonesia. Therefore, findings may not be relevant to students from varying educational levels, institutions, or nations.

3. Limited to English Language Learning:

This study will focus exclusively on English language learning within the context of PjBL and PBL. The study does not extend to other subjects or languages, and the findings are specific to the development of English language skills, including reading

comprehension, verbal communication, and collaboration in English.

4. PjBL Context:

The research will be conducted within the framework of PjBL is an instructional approach that emphasizes education through experiential, real-world projects. The study will specifically investigate how reading aloud influences students' engagement with PjBL tasks. The results may not apply to traditional or other alternative teaching methods that do not incorporate project-based learning principles.

5. PBL Context:

The research will be conducted within the framework of PBL is an instructional approach that emphasizes education through experiential, real-world projects. The study will specifically investigate how reading aloud influences students' engagement with PBL tasks. The results may not apply to traditional or other alternative teaching methods that do not incorporate problem-based learning principles

6. Reading Aloud as a Pedagogical :

The study will examine the practice of reading aloud as a to enhance students' reading comprehension and communication skills. The research will not explore other methods or strategies for improving reading or communication skills, such as individual reading practices or digital learning tools.

F. Objective of Research

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G. Previous Study and Novelty

1. The previous study

The implementation of student-centered learning models such as Project-Based Learning (PJBL) and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) has gained considerable attention in English language education, particularly in improving students' reading comprehension. Numerous studies have indicated that both PJBL and PBL can enhance students' cognitive engagement, motivation, and academic achievement, especially in the area of literacy. However, despite their increasing application, there is still limited research comparing the two models in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading comprehension at the senior secondary level.

A study by Naillurrohman and Mukhlisina (2024) entitled "Improving Early Reading Skills through the Implementation of Project-Based Learning (PJBL) in Second Grade Elementary Students"

found that PJBL significantly improved the reading skills of second-grade students. Although conducted at the elementary level, the study demonstrated how collaborative projects can actively engage students in reading tasks and help them construct meaning more effectively through context-based learning.

Similarly, Kristiyani (2023), in her research "The Application of Project-Based Learning to Improve Literacy, Collaboration, and Communication Skills in Indonesian Language Learning for Eighth-Grade Students of SMP Dian Harapan Jakarta," reported that PJBL enhanced students' literacy levels—including reading comprehension—while also promoting essential soft skills such as communication and teamwork.

In a more subject-specific study, Agustin and Muthi (2024) explored the use of PJBL to improve reading comprehension in Indonesian language learning. Their findings confirmed that PJBL helped students develop deeper understanding of texts by encouraging inquiry, critical thinking, and the practical application of knowledge.

Research on PBL has also shown positive outcomes. Purwanti, Pratiwi, and Sartini (2023), in their study "The Use of Problem-Based Learning Supported by Educational Game Tools to Enhance Fluent Reading Skills in First-Grade Elementary Students", found that the integration of PBL and educational games effectively increased students' reading fluency. Though focused on early learners, the study highlighted how problem-solving frameworks promote engagement and purposeful reading.

A more relevant example for older students is the study by Fitriani (2021), who implemented PBL in a senior high school EFL

classroom. Her research revealed that PBL facilitated students' inferential comprehension, analytical reading, and summarizing skills. Students were required to explore authentic problems, read various resources, and collaborate to find solutions—activities that deepened their understanding and retention of reading material.

Setiawan and Nurhidayah (2022) conducted a comparative study between PJBL and PBL, examining their effects on students' reading comprehension. Their findings indicated that both methods were effective: PJBL was more successful in increasing student motivation and engagement, while PBL developed students' analytical reading and problem-solving abilities. However, the study did not integrate reading strategies such as reading aloud, nor did it focus on religious schools, leaving a gap in contextual application.

Another related study by Rahmawati and Sari (2022) analyzed the use of PBL in an Islamic junior high school (Madrasah Tsanawiyah) and found notable improvements in narrative text comprehension. They also reported initial difficulties among students in adapting to problem-solving methodologies, suggesting that implementation requires appropriate scaffolding and adaptation to the school's culture.

Although these studies provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of PJBL and PBL in enhancing reading-related competencies, several limitations can be identified:

- 1) Most studies employed only one instructional model, either PJBL or PBL, without conducting comparative analyses.
- 2) The majority of the research was conducted at the elementary or junior high school levels, rather than in senior high school (madrasah aliyah) environments.

- 3) Reading comprehension was typically treated in general terms, without exploring specific strategies such as reading aloud, which is especially important in EFL classrooms for improving pronunciation, prosody, and retention.
- 4) There is limited research that integrates these models within the curricular and cultural context of Islamic schools, which have unique pedagogical challenges and institutional goals.

2. Research Novelty

This study aims to fill the above-mentioned gaps and offer several novel contributions to the field of EFL pedagogy:

- 1) **Comparative Focus:** It conducts a direct comparison between PJBL and PBL in terms of their effectiveness in improving students' reading comprehension, providing a more nuanced understanding of each model's strengths in an EFL context.
- 2) **Integration of Reading Aloud:** The study incorporates reading aloud as a pedagogical strategy within both learning models—an area rarely explored in previous research despite its relevance in foreign language instruction.
- 3) **Senior High School Context:** It is conducted at the senior high school level (Madrasah Aliyah), expanding the literature which has predominantly focused on younger students.
- 4) **Religious School Setting:** By focusing on MA Al Rahmah Walantaka, the study contributes new insights into how PJBL and PBL can be adapted and implemented effectively in Islamic educational institutions.

Practical Application: The findings are expected to provide actionable recommendations for English teachers, particularly those

working in similar contexts, by showcasing how to design and execute reading lessons using modern pedagogical frameworks grounded in real student needs.

In conclusion, this research does not merely replicate prior studies, but offers a comparative, context-sensitive, and strategy-integrated investigation into two widely recommended instructional models, thereby contributing both theoretically and practically to the development of EFL reading instruction in Indonesia.