

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

The 21st century is a time when education prioritizes knowledge, making it very important in preparing students for their future lives. However, merely having knowledge is not enough to face the challenges of this rapid industrial revolution. That is why 21st-century education focuses on developing intelligences (Tan, 2003). The Ministry of Education and Culture, in the journal by Wijaya et al. (2016), states that 21st-century education paradigms emphasize more on student-centered learning, where education expects students to possess problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and collaboration skills. Education in this century is related to students' real-life situations in dealing with various problems they may face in the future (Tan, 2003). Furthermore, the 21st-century learning framework requires students to have skills in critical thinking and problem-solving, having the abilities to communicate and working in groups, as well as literacy in information and communication technology (Wijaya et al., 2016). Therefore, teachers play a crucial role in developing these skills. Tan (2003) emphasizes that to address the challenges of the 21st century, teachers need to enhance their professionalism in teaching, be able to develop multidisciplinary learning, promote independent learning, seek information, guide teamwork, and integrate communication skills into their curriculum. One significant aspect teachers should consider to support the learning process, achieve learning objectives, and realize 21st-century skills is the use of teaching strategies during the learning process.

Learning strategies encompass the procedures applied from the beginning to the end of a lesson. According to Oxford in Han & Lu (2018), learning strategies can be interpreted as

specific steps taken by learners to make the learning process simpler, quicker, more enjoyable, more autonomous, more impactful, and more adaptable to new situations. Meanwhile, Janner Simarmata et al. (2019) point out that a learning strategy is the main guide in implementing, measuring, and evaluating instructions (Simarmata et al., 2019). The instructions referred to by Janner include students, learning objectives, materials, learning context, conditions, techniques, and so on. From this, it can be concluded that instructional strategies provide learning directions according to students' needs and facilitate the achievement of expected learning objectives.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is a powerful instructional strategy for enhancing both critical thinking and communication skills. Research shows that PBL fosters students' ability to engage in problem-solving and decision-making, essential components of critical thinking. Through the process of identifying, analyzing, and resolving real-world problems, students are not only challenged to understand the content deeply but also encouraged to communicate their thoughts effectively and constructively (Ismail & Oktadela, 2021).

Studies using pre-test and post-test evaluations have demonstrated that students engaged in PBL display significantly higher post-test scores in critical thinking compared to those taught through traditional methods. (Darmawati & Mustadi, 2022) This increase is attributed to PBL's focus on applying knowledge practically and collaboratively, which enhances students' speaking abilities as they articulate ideas, justify solutions, and reflect on their learning.

At MTsN 09 Pesisir Selatan, the English teaching approach remains largely teacher-centered. Understanding student needs is a common practice consequently, there is a need to analyze students' intelligence requirements. Learning strategies must be aligned with the

educational needs of students. By the end of their education, students in junior high school are expected to communicate in English effectively in both formal and informal contexts, utilizing simple sentence structures and verbs (Sartika, 2021).

If teachers are expected to create a supportive learning environment, implement effective teaching strategies tailored to students, and if English education strives to produce a generation ready to engage with the world, this research seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in enhancing students' speaking skills in English Language Teaching. Problem Based Learning is known to positively impact students' speaking abilities, as highlighted by the Buck Institute for Education (Widiawati et al., 2017), which asserts that the 4Cs (communication, collaboration, critical thinking and problem-solving, and creativity and innovation) are crucial skills for the 21st century that can be cultivated through problem-based learning. It is believed that problem-based language learning will enhance students' speaking and writing skills, along with their oral communication capabilities (Novalinda et al., 2020).

Nowadays, education focuses not only on developing intellectual abilities but also on emotional management, emphasizing that students must demonstrate critical thinking and creative skills. This is necessary to build, use, and apply information about their surroundings to solve problems (Nugraha, 2018, as cited in Masrinah et al., 2019).

One effective learning approach for enhancing twenty-first-century skills, particularly critical thinking skills, is Problem-Based Learning (PBL). In PBL, there are instructional steps designed to stimulate students' thinking skills, especially in critical thinking. According to Wadani (2014), PBL is a teaching method that helps students develop higher-level skills like critical thinking and problem-solving by drawing from their real-life experiences and actively

engaging in their own learning. PBL emphasizes the learning process over mere outcomes, ensuring a more effective educational experience.

In PBL, students collaborate to solve complex and realistic problems, which enhances their knowledge, problem-solving abilities, reasoning, communication, and self assessment skills (Watson, 2001, as cited in Duch, Groh & Allen, 2001). This model encourages cooperative learning and the application of knowledge to real-world issues (Wiznia et al., 2012). PBL also supports broader educational goals, including self-directed learning, information literacy, teamwork, and reflective thinking (Tan, 2002). The approach is student-centered, allowing learners to explore topics of personal interest, manage their learning plans, lead class discussions, and evaluate both their work and that of their peers.

(Margetson, as cited in Rusman, 2011) states that Problem Based Learning (PBL) is a teaching model that can help learners improve their lifelong learning skills within an open, reflective, critical mindset, and active learning, as well as facilitate better success in problem-solving, communication, teamwork, and interpersonal skills compared to other models.

(Tan, 2000, as cited in Rusman, 2011) defines problem-based learning as the use of various types of intelligence necessary to confront real-world challenges, as well as the ability to deal with new situations and existing complexities. This indicates that PBL can essentially serve as a mediator in developing students' critical thinking skills. To acquire information and develop scientific concepts, students learn how to construct problem frameworks, reflect, gather data, organize issues, compile facts, analyze data, and formulate arguments related to problem-solving. They then solve these problems both individually and in groups (Arends in Warsono and Hariyanto, 2012). All the complexities mentioned by Arends essentially manifest in the development of students' thinking processes. Simamora et al.,(2017:323) outlines the

steps of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model as follows: (1) Orienting students to the problem, (2) Organizing students for learning, (3) Guiding the research, (4) presenting final products, and (5) Analyzing and evaluating the result.

Oral communication refers to the process of conveying information through spoken language, which includes both speaking and listening skills (Brown, 2004:268). However, in this study, the term oral communication specifically refers to students' speaking ability, as the research aims to analyze their capacity to express ideas verbally in English. While oral communication involves both speaking and listening, this study focuses on speaking skills because they play a crucial role in students' ability to express their thoughts and participate in verbal interactions in English. Therefore, oral communication in this research is defined as students' proficiency in spoken English, including fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation. This research focuses on students' speaking skills as a part of oral communication. Listening comprehension is not included in the study, as the main objective is to assess students' ability to produce spoken language in English.

Speaking plays a significant role in English language learning, both as a second language and as a foreign language. However, in the practice of English language learning, it is often found that students experience fear in demonstrating their speaking abilities. This is caused by several factors, including low self-esteem, low motivation, and high anxiety (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). Therefore, it is hoped that educators can create a conducive learning environment and apply appropriate strategies in the teaching process to develop students' speaking skills and critical thinking skills.

VII Grade Of Islamic Junior High School students' 9 Pesisir Selatan, as a junior high school, shows several indications of problems in English Language Teaching (ELT) based on

the researcher's observations. These indications of problems refer to the learning strategies implemented, which are still oriented towards a teacher-centered learning model. Meanwhile, within the Merdeka Curriculum, learning is more emphasized on a student-centered approach (Kemendikbud, 2022). Therefore, the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) method was chosen based on an analysis of students' needs in English language learning for seventh-grade students at Islamic Junior High School students' 9 Pesisir Selatan. This assessment of students' needs aligns with the goals of English language learning at the junior level (D phase) in the Merdeka Curriculum, where the learning objectives now refer to 21st-century education. This study focuses on the teacher's strategy, namely the use of Problem-Based Learning to enhance students' speaking and critical thinking skills. Therefore, the researcher carried out the research entitled "The effect Of Problem Based learning (PBL) on Students' critical thinking and oral communication at VII Grade Of Islamic Junior High School students' 9 Pesisir Selatan .

B. Identification of the Problem

In accordance with what the author writes in the research background about the Effect of Problem Based Learning on Students' Critical Thinking and Oral Communication at VII Grade Islamic Junior High School 9 Pesisir Selatan.

Problem identification includes:

1. Students' critical thinking skills are still underdeveloped, as seen in their difficulty analyzing and evaluating information, providing logical explanations, and making reasoned decisions in discussions.
2. Many students struggle to speak English fluently and confidently due to limited vocabulary, lack of structured sentence formation, and fear of making mistakes.

3. The implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in English classes at VII Grade of Islamic Junior High School 9 Pesisir Selatan has not been widely explored, and its impact on students' critical thinking and speaking skills remains unclear.

C. Formulation of the Problem

The problem of this study is formulated as follow :

1. Does the use of Problem-Based Learning give significant effects to students' Critical Thinking skill at seventh grade of Islamic Junior High School 09 Ranah Ampek Hulu Tapan?
2. To what extent does Problem-Based Learning (PBL) affect students' speaking skill at seventh grade Islamic junior high school 09 Ranah Ampek Hulu Tapan?

D. Limitation of the Problem

This research is limited to investigate the effects of Problem-Based Learning to students' critical thinking as to effect their speaking skill in EFL teaching at seventh grade of Islamic Junior High School 9 Pesisir Selatan.

E. Purpose of the Research

Based on the limitation above, this study is directed to:

1. Find out the effects of Problem-Based Learning to students' critical thinking abilities.
2. Find out the extent of problem-Based Learning determine students' speaking skill.