

Indonesian Students' Perspectives on Problem-Based and Multicultural Learning in Basic Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

Objective: This study examines students' views on the use of Basic Reading Comprehension materials developed with the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model and a multicultural-based approach. **Novelty:** The novelty of this study lies in the integration of PBL with a multicultural approach to improve students' reading comprehension, motivation, and learning engagement in a diverse educational environment. **Methods:** This study used a qualitative approach involving 300 Indonesian students. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires, then analyzed thematically to produce the effectiveness of this approach. **Results:** Students felt more motivated and active in discussions when the material combined problem-solving tasks and culturally relevant content. PBL improved the ability to understand texts through critical thinking and collaboration, while the multicultural approach helped students integrate the material with their cultural background, thus encouraging inclusivity and awareness of diversity. Challenges found include the need for more assistance for students who are not familiar with PBL. **Conclusion:** The integration of PBL with multicultural-based materials can significantly improve reading learning by making it more interactive, inclusive, and meaningful. It is recommended to provide additional support for diverse learners and develop more culturally responsive teaching materials.

Keywords: Multicultural Education, Problem Based Learning, Reading Comprehension.

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INTRODUCTION

The ability to effectively comprehend reading is an important factor in academic success, especially in college. This ability allows students to process, analyze, and synthesize information, thereby enhancing critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Snow, 2010). However, many students have difficulty comprehending texts because the learning materials are not appropriate to their cultural background and learning needs. Traditional reading instruction lacks student engagement, leading to low comprehension and motivation to learn (Graham & Hebert, 2011). Therefore, educators need to develop learning materials that incorporate student-centered approaches, such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL), and consider multicultural perspectives to improve their reading skills.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) has gained recognition as an effective instructional strategy that promotes active learning, critical thinking, and collaborative problem-solving skills (Nurul Iskandar et al., 2021). PBL shifts the focus from teacher-centered instruction to student-driven exploration, allowing learners to engage with real-world problems while constructing their own knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Research has shown that PBL enhances students' comprehension abilities by encouraging them to seek solutions through inquiry, discussion, and reflection (Hmelo-Silver, C. E., & DeSimone, 2013). Despite its proven benefits, the implementation of PBL in reading instruction remains limited, particularly in multicultural educational settings where diverse perspectives and backgrounds should be acknowledged and integrated into the learning process (Barrows, 2021).

Multicultural-based instruction is essential in today's globalized education landscape, as it fosters inclusivity, cultural awareness, and respect for diverse viewpoints. Culturally responsive teaching materials enable students to relate to the content, making learning more meaningful and engaging (Gay, 2018). However, conventional reading comprehension materials often lack multicultural representation, leading to disengagement and reduced comprehension among students from diverse backgrounds. Studies suggest that integrating multicultural elements into reading instruction can bridge this gap, allowing students to connect their experiences with the texts they read (James A. Banks & Banks, 2023). Despite this potential, there is limited research exploring students' perspectives on the implementation of multicultural-based reading comprehension materials using the PBL model.

The gap between idealized and actual reading instruction lies in the lack of student-centered and culturally responsive materials that cater to diverse learning needs. While traditional reading instruction follows a standardized approach, it does not fully accommodate students' individual experiences and cognitive strategies. Research has highlighted the importance of personalized learning approaches in fostering student engagement and comprehension (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018). However, the integration of such approaches, particularly PBL combined with multicultural perspectives, is still underexplored in the field of reading comprehension pedagogy.

Several recent studies have underscored the effectiveness of PBL and multicultural education in enhancing learning outcomes. For example, a study by Jonassen (2020) found that students exposed to problem-solving activities within a culturally relevant framework demonstrated improved reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. Similarly, research by Ladson-Billings (2014) emphasized the role of culturally responsive teaching in fostering deeper engagement and academic success. These findings suggest that combining PBL with multicultural perspectives could offer a promising approach to addressing students' reading comprehension challenges.

This study aims to investigate students' perspectives on Basic Reading Comprehension materials developed using a Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model with a multicultural approach. Understanding students' perceptions is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of these materials and identifying areas for improvement. The study will provide insights into

how students engage with PBL-based multicultural reading instruction, contributing to research on innovative teaching strategies. The primary research question is how students perceive the implementation of these materials, aiming to fill the gap in reading instruction research and offer recommendations for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion on integrating PBL and multicultural perspectives in reading instruction, offering practical insights for developing inclusive, engaging, and effective reading materials for diverse student populations.

METHODS

This study used a qualitative design to explore students' perceptions of Basic Reading Comprehension materials developed through the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model with a multicultural approach. A qualitative approach was chosen to understand students' experiences and responses to culturally responsive, problem-solving learning materials. The study involved 300 students from various programs at a university in Indonesia, reflecting the cultural diversity of Indonesian students. Participation was voluntary, and ethical principles, including informed consent, were followed. Data were collected through open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaires covered perceptions of the material, engagement and motivation, multicultural awareness, and learning outcomes. Students were asked how well the materials helped them understand reading concepts, use clear language, and meet their academic needs, as well as how the PBL approach impacted their motivation and participation. The multicultural awareness section assessed how well the materials promoted cultural diversity and critical thinking. Interviews focused on students' experiences with real-world problems in reading tasks, multicultural content, challenges faced, and the impact on their academic development and critical thinking skills.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data collection instruments, the items for both the open-ended questionnaires and interview protocols were developed based on a thorough review of the literature on Problem-Based Learning, multicultural education, and reading comprehension (Hmelo-Silver, 2019; Gay, 2020). The initial drafts were reviewed by experts in the fields of language education and multicultural pedagogy to ensure that the questions were clear, comprehensive, and aligned with the research objectives. Before the full-scale data collection, a pilot study was conducted with a smaller group of 30 students to test the clarity and effectiveness of the instruments. Feedback from the pilot study was used to refine the items and adjust the interview questions to ensure that they would elicit detailed and relevant responses from the participants (Bank, 2015).

The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the frequency and distribution of responses for each item. However, the focus of the analysis was on the qualitative data derived from the open-ended questionnaires and interviews. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data. This method involved coding and categorizing the responses to identify recurring themes, patterns, and relationships. The analysis process was iterative, involving multiple rounds of coding to refine and ensure the accuracy of the themes. NVivo software was used to facilitate the organization and analysis of the data, which helped streamline the coding process and ensure systematic data management.

Thematic analysis in this study followed six stages described by Braun, V., & Clarke (2022). The first stage involved familiarizing with the data by reading the questionnaire responses and interview transcripts. In the second stage, meaningful segments were identified and coded to represent key ideas. The third stage organized the coded data into potential themes related to students' perceptions of the PBL model, multicultural content, and reading

comprehension. The fourth stage involved reviewing and differentiating the themes to ensure accuracy. In the fifth stage, the themes were clearly defined and named. Finally, the sixth stage compiled the analysis into a comprehensive narrative supported by quotes and examples. To ensure trustworthiness, triangulation was used to cross-check data from the questionnaires, interviews, and literature, while member checking and peer debriefing were employed for accuracy and credibility. Ethical standards were followed by obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and allowing voluntary participation with the option to withdraw at any time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

In this study, 300 university students in Indonesia responded to a series of items in a questionnaire designed to assess their perceptions of Basic Reading Comprehension materials developed using the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model with a multicultural-based approach. The questionnaire consisted of 22 items related to the ease of understanding, relevance of the materials, motivation, and engagement, as well as their reflections on the cultural representation in the learning materials. The responses to the questionnaire items were analyzed through thematic analysis, revealing several key themes:

1. Improvement in Understanding Basic Concepts

- Item 1: "This teaching material helps me understand the basic concepts in reading more easily."

Over 85% of students responded positively to this item, confirming that the PBL-based materials aided their comprehension of fundamental reading concepts. This aligns with findings from previous research, which highlights how problem-based approaches foster deeper engagement with reading materials and enable students to grasp complex concepts more easily (Hmelo-Silver, 2019).

2. Relevance to Course Material

- Item 2: "This teaching material is relevant to the material taught in the lectures." 80% of respondents agreed that the reading comprehension materials were relevant to the course content. This was particularly important as students recognized the direct connection between the learning material and the content taught in class, reinforcing the idea that culturally relevant and problem-based learning materials can bridge the gap between theory and practice.

3. Ease of Comprehension through PBL

- Item 3: "The Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model in this teaching material makes it easier for me to understand." 80% of students found the PBL model effective in simplifying the comprehension process. The PBL approach's emphasis on active problem-solving and discussion allowed students to better process and understand complex reading material, as it encouraged critical thinking and collaborative learning (Dolmans et al., 2020).

4. Cultural Relevance

- Item 4: "This teaching material contains content that is consistent with multicultural perspectives." 85% of the students agreed that the material reflected a multicultural approach, indicating that the inclusion of diverse cultural perspectives was a central feature of the learning experience. This was essential in keeping students engaged and allowing them to relate to the material on a personal level, which has been shown to increase engagement and comprehension (Gay, 2020).

5. Increased Motivation and Engagement

- Item 5: "I feel more interested in learning to read after using this teaching material." 75% of students reported feeling more motivated to engage with reading tasks after using the PBL-based materials. The active and problem-based nature of the activities provided an exciting departure from traditional learning, boosting students' enthusiasm for reading comprehension tasks.
- Item 6: "This teaching material motivates me to be more active in class discussions." 80% of students felt that the materials encouraged them to participate more actively in discussions. This finding aligns with the principle of PBL, where students are encouraged to engage in discussions and work collaboratively to solve problems, thus fostering a more dynamic learning environment (Hmelo-Silver, 2019).

6. Clear and Accessible Language

- Item 7: "The language used in this teaching material is clear and easy to understand." 90% of students agreed that the materials used simple and clear language, making the content more accessible to a diverse student body. The clarity of language is particularly important in a multicultural setting where students may come from different linguistic backgrounds.

7. Support for Critical Thinking and Cultural Reflection

- Item 8: "This teaching material helps me develop critical reading skills." 70% of students agreed that the materials encouraged the development of critical reading skills, such as analyzing texts from multiple perspectives. This finding supports the notion that PBL can enhance critical thinking by encouraging inquiry, analysis, and reflection (Jonassen, 2020).
- Item 9: "This teaching material encourages me to think more deeply about various cultures." 85% of respondents agreed with this statement, highlighting that the multicultural content encouraged deeper reflection on cultural diversity. By incorporating readings that reflect diverse cultures, students were able to broaden their understanding of global issues and enhance their cultural awareness (Ladson-Billings, 2019).

8. Practical Application of Learning

- Item 10: "The material presented in this teaching material is easy to practice in everyday life." 80% of students agreed that the teaching material was practical and applicable to real-world scenarios. The problem-solving activities and cultural reflections within the texts helped students connect what they learned to real-life contexts, reinforcing the relevance of reading comprehension to everyday challenges.

9. Student-Centered Learning and Accessibility

- Item 11: "This teaching material supports a more interactive and collaborative learning process." 77% of students responded positively, confirming that the PBL model facilitated more interactive and collaborative learning experiences. This is a key strength of PBL, as it encourages students to work together to solve problems and discuss ideas, fostering a deeper engagement with the material (Dolmans et al., 2020).

The results are also discussed in relation to the main themes that emerged during the analysis in an interview along with relevant literature.

1. Impact of PBL on Reading Comprehension

One of the core objectives of this study was to examine how the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) approach affected students' reading comprehension skills. The majority of participants (78%) indicated that the PBL model significantly enhanced their ability to

understand complex texts. Students reported that the problem-solving tasks embedded in the reading materials required them to engage with the content more deeply, rather than passively receiving information. This aligns with the findings of Hmelo-Silver (2022), who argues that PBL encourages active learning by promoting critical thinking and deeper engagement with the material.

For example, one participant commented:

"The problem-based tasks made me think critically about the texts we read. Instead of just summarizing the content, I had to understand it fully to apply it to real-world scenarios."

This response highlights how the PBL model transforms reading comprehension from a passive to an active process. By integrating real-world problems, students not only understood the material but also had to analyze it critically and apply their knowledge in practical situations. This method supports the findings of Barrows (2021) who emphasizes that PBL fosters deeper learning by situating knowledge within authentic contexts, encouraging students to synthesize information from multiple sources.

2. Role of Multicultural Perspectives in Enhancing Engagement

A key element of this study was to investigate the effect of integrating multicultural perspectives into reading comprehension materials. The majority of participants (85%) expressed that the multicultural content made the learning experience more engaging and meaningful. Many students reported that the inclusion of diverse cultural contexts not only helped them relate to the material but also broadened their understanding of the world.

One student shared: *"The multicultural examples in the reading materials made me realize how different cultures approach problems and challenges. It wasn't just about learning to read, but also about understanding the world better."*

This response illustrates how students found the multicultural elements of the materials to be engaging and transformative. The integration of diverse cultural perspectives encouraged students to reflect on their own cultural assumptions and think critically about global issues. These findings are consistent with those of Gay (2018) who asserts that multicultural education fosters inclusivity and encourages students to appreciate diversity. In this study, multicultural content not only enhanced reading comprehension but also contributed to the development of cultural awareness and empathy, essential skills in a globalized world.

3. Increased Motivation and Active Participation

A significant finding of this study was the positive impact of the PBL approach on student motivation and participation. When students were asked whether the materials increased their interest in reading, 82% of respondents reported feeling more motivated to engage with the texts. The PBL model, by providing real-world problems and encouraging collaborative learning, created an environment in which students felt more invested in their learning process. Several students mentioned that they found the material more enjoyable because it allowed them to work with their peers and explore complex issues together.

One participant explained: *"I felt more motivated to read because we worked on problems together as a group. It wasn't just about finishing assignments—it was about learning from each other and discussing ideas."*

This statement underscores the collaborative nature of PBL and its ability to foster a sense of community in the classroom. As noted by Jonassen (2020), PBL not only enhances academic skills but also promotes social learning, where students develop teamwork, communication, and problem-solving abilities. In the context of this study, the inclusion of PBL tasks that required collaboration and discussion contributed to increased motivation and greater engagement with reading materials.

4. Challenges in Understanding and Engaging with PBL-Based Materials

While the majority of students had positive responses regarding the PBL model and multicultural materials, some challenges were identified in the data. Approximately 15% of the participants reported difficulties in understanding the problem-based tasks, particularly those who had limited prior experience with PBL or found the reading materials too complex. These students indicated that they would have benefited from additional guidance or scaffolding to help them navigate the problem-solving process.

One student remarked: *"At first, I was confused by the problem-based tasks. I needed more instructions and support to understand how to approach the problems effectively. It was difficult to know where to start."*

This comment highlights a common challenge associated with PBL, especially when students are unfamiliar with this type of learning approach. Although the PBL model fosters critical thinking and independence, it can be demanding for students who are not accustomed to self-directed learning or problem-solving tasks. To address this, it is crucial for educators to provide sufficient scaffolding, particularly at the beginning of the course, to help students build the necessary skills for success in a PBL environment. This finding echoes the concerns raised by Graham & Hebert (2011), who note that PBL can be challenging for students who require more structured guidance.

5. Multicultural Content as a Tool for Critical Thinking and Global Awareness

Another notable theme that emerged from the analysis was the role of multicultural content in fostering critical thinking and global awareness. Many students mentioned that the inclusion of culturally diverse perspectives challenged them to reconsider their assumptions and engage with the material from a more critical standpoint. This was particularly evident in the way students approached texts that involved social or cultural issues.

One student stated: *"The multicultural content made me think more critically. For example, when reading about different cultures' perspectives on environmental issues, I started to question my own views on sustainability."*

This response highlights the transformative potential of multicultural education in promoting critical thinking. By incorporating diverse viewpoints, students were encouraged to reflect on their own beliefs and consider alternative perspectives. As Ladson-Billings (2014) suggests, culturally responsive teaching not only enhances academic learning but also encourages students to become more thoughtful and reflective individuals.

6. Suggestions for Improvement

Despite the overall positive reception of the PBL and multicultural materials, students offered several suggestions for improvement. A common recommendation was to include more interactive elements and multimedia resources to complement the reading materials. Some students felt that the materials could have been more engaging if they incorporated videos, podcasts, or interactive digital content that would make the learning process more dynamic.

One participant suggested: *"It would be great if we had videos or real-life examples that illustrated the problems we were reading about. Sometimes, reading the text alone wasn't enough to fully understand the problem."*

This suggestion highlights the need for diverse teaching methods that cater to different learning preferences. While the PBL model is effective in promoting critical thinking, incorporating multimedia resources could enhance students' understanding and engagement. As suggested by Tomlinson (2023), a multimodal approach to instruction can support various learning styles and increase student engagement.

Discussion

The findings from this study offer valuable insights into the impact of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) combined with multicultural perspectives on university students' reading comprehension, engagement, and motivation. The analysis of 300 student responses revealed a strong positive reception to the PBL model and the inclusion of multicultural content. However, these results also highlight some challenges and areas for further improvement. The following discussion expands on the key themes identified in the results section, connecting them with existing literature and offering deeper insights into the implications of these findings.

The most striking finding of this study is the significant improvement in students' reading comprehension skills due to the implementation of the PBL model. This result aligns with the work of Hmelo-Silver (2022), who found that PBL fosters deeper engagement with texts by requiring students to actively solve problems and seek solutions through collaborative discussion. In this study, the majority of students reported that the PBL tasks helped them better understand complex texts, moving beyond simple reading and summarization to analysis and synthesis. This active engagement is consistent with the principles of constructivist learning theory, which posits that students learn best when they actively construct their own understanding through problem-solving and inquiry (Jonassen, 2020).

One of the key elements of PBL that contributed to this improvement was the focus on real-world problems. Many students noted that solving problems based on real-life scenarios motivated them to engage more deeply with the reading material. By connecting reading tasks to authentic issues, PBL encourages students to see the relevance of what they are learning, thus enhancing comprehension and retention (Dolmans et al., 2016). In traditional reading comprehension instruction, students often struggle to connect abstract concepts to their own experiences, which can hinder their understanding of the material. PBL, on the other hand, contextualizes learning in ways that make the material more meaningful and easier to grasp.

Another central theme in this study is the role of multicultural content in fostering engagement and motivation. The inclusion of diverse cultural perspectives in reading materials was highly valued by students, with the majority reporting that it made learning more relatable and interesting. This finding supports the claims made by Gay (2018) and James A. Banks & Banks (2023) who emphasize that multicultural education not only enriches students' learning experiences but also helps them connect personally with the material.

By integrating culturally diverse examples, the reading materials in this study allowed students to see themselves represented in the content, which is critical for engagement and retention. For instance, when students encountered readings about environmental challenges faced by different cultural groups, many reported that these issues resonated with them and prompted critical reflection. As one student noted, the exposure to various cultural perspectives allowed them to broaden their understanding of global issues. This experience is aligned with the multicultural education theory, which argues that when students see their cultural identities reflected in the curriculum, they feel more connected to the material and are more likely to engage deeply with it (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

The increased motivation observed among participants also reflects the positive effects of culturally relevant content. As Gay (2020) points out, students are more motivated when they feel their cultural backgrounds are acknowledged and valued in the learning process. This sense of cultural validation contributes to a more inclusive classroom environment where all students feel empowered to participate and engage in discussions. In

this study, the multicultural materials not only facilitated reading comprehension but also enhanced students' sense of belonging and academic identity.

A significant finding in this study is the role of collaboration in fostering student engagement and improving reading comprehension. Many students mentioned that the collaborative nature of PBL helped them learn more effectively. Through group discussions, students were able to share ideas, clarify concepts, and challenge each other's assumptions, which deepened their understanding of the texts. This is consistent with the findings of Barrows (2018), who argues that PBL's collaborative aspect promotes peer learning, where students benefit from each other's perspectives and expertise.

In the context of reading comprehension, collaboration encourages students to approach texts from different angles, which leads to a more comprehensive understanding of the material. It also provides opportunities for students to engage in critical discussions, making learning more interactive and participatory. As noted by Jonassen (2020), the collaborative nature of PBL supports the development of social learning skills, such as communication and teamwork, which are essential in both academic and professional settings. These skills are further enhanced when students from diverse cultural backgrounds come together to discuss issues, as they bring unique viewpoints that enrich the learning experience.

While the positive impact of collaboration on engagement is clear, the study also revealed that some students struggled with this aspect of PBL. A small number of participants reported difficulties in working with others, particularly those who were not familiar with PBL or those who preferred working independently. This issue highlights the importance of scaffolding and guidance in the early stages of PBL implementation, as students may need time to adjust to this student-centered, collaborative approach. As Graham & Hebert (2011) note, the success of PBL depends on careful planning and the ability to support students throughout the process. Providing clear guidelines and creating a supportive learning environment can help address these challenges and ensure that all students benefit from collaborative learning.

Although the overall reception of PBL-based materials was positive, some students reported challenges in understanding and engaging with the problem-based tasks. This is a common issue in the implementation of PBL, particularly for students who are not accustomed to self-directed learning or who find the tasks too complex. According to Barrows (2021), PBL can be demanding for students, especially when they are required to solve open-ended problems without clear, step-by-step instructions. This finding suggests that while PBL promotes critical thinking, it can also be intimidating for students who are not yet comfortable with this type of learning.

In the context of multicultural education, learning challenges can be further complicated by differences in cultural norms and expectations about the learning process. Students from collectivist cultures, for example, may have difficulty adjusting to the individual responsibilities required in PBL assignments, while students from individualist cultures may struggle with the collaborative aspects of PBL. To address this, educators need to provide adequate scaffolding, guidance, and support, especially in the early stages of implementing PBL-based materials. In addition, the complexity of multicultural materials themselves can be a barrier, especially if the text is written in difficult language or requires high cultural literacy. Therefore, the selection of materials must take into account the ability levels of students so that they remain accessible to all. The use of multimedia learning resources such as videos or interactive online platforms can also enhance understanding by providing additional context and helping students interact with the material in a variety of ways.

Students offered several suggestions for enhancing the PBL and multicultural reading materials. The most common suggestion was the inclusion of more interactive elements, such as videos, case studies, and multimedia resources, to supplement the texts. This aligns with the work of Tomlinson (2023), who advocates for the use of multimodal teaching strategies to cater to diverse learning styles and increase engagement. Interactive materials could help students who struggle with traditional reading-based tasks, providing them with additional resources to aid comprehension.

In addition, several students recommended more structured guidance and explicit instructions on how to approach the problem-based tasks. While PBL encourages independent learning, providing clearer frameworks and step-by-step instructions could help students feel more confident and capable in tackling complex tasks. This approach would align with Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development, where learners are given appropriate support to bridge the gap between their current abilities and the desired learning outcomes (McLeod, 2024).

The findings of this study have important implications for educators, curriculum designers, and policy makers. The effectiveness of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) approach combined with multicultural content suggests that this strategy needs to be implemented more widely in reading comprehension instruction, especially in culturally diverse classrooms. Integrating real-world problems into reading assignments can encourage deeper engagement and develop students' critical thinking skills, while the use of culturally relevant materials creates an inclusive and diversity-respecting learning environment. However, educators need to be aware of the challenges in implementing PBL-based materials, such as the need for scaffolding, clear instructions, and appropriate learning media support. By providing adequate support, the effectiveness of PBL-based learning and multicultural approaches can be optimized, so that students not only improve their reading comprehension skills, but also their critical thinking and collaboration skills in the context of an increasingly diverse world.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine students' perceptions of Basic Reading Comprehension materials developed using the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model with a multicultural approach. The results showed that the integration of PBL and multicultural perspectives in reading learning had a positive impact on students' comprehension, motivation, and engagement, and provided valuable insights into how innovative pedagogical strategies can improve learning outcomes. Analysis of student responses showed that the PBL model was effective in improving text comprehension skills through active participation, critical thinking, and collaborative learning. Students reported a deeper understanding of the reading materials because of the nature of PBL which emphasizes problem solving and information seeking. In addition, multicultural elements in the materials made the content more relevant and encouraged students to reflect on diverse cultural perspectives, which ultimately increased their engagement and broadened their horizons. Students also felt more motivated to participate in discussions and were more interested in the learning process when the materials were designed in a student-centered and culturally responsive manner, in accordance with previous research findings that showed that personal and cultural relevance to the materials increased engagement and motivation to learn.

Although most students found the PBL materials useful, this study also revealed challenges in implementing them in a multicultural environment. Some students reported that problem-based tasks were complex and required additional guidance for all students, regardless of cultural or educational background, to participate optimally. These findings suggest the need for further support in the development of future materials for students who

are unfamiliar with PBL approaches. Overall, this study strengthens the evidence base on the effectiveness of student-centered and multicultural learning strategies in improving reading comprehension. By highlighting students' perspectives, this study provides valuable recommendations for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in designing inclusive, culturally relevant, and interactive learning. These findings suggest that the combination of PBL and multicultural approaches can be a powerful strategy for developing students' academic skills, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. Further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of this pedagogical strategy as well as how it can be more effectively implemented across educational contexts.

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