

# Exploring Vocational High School EFL Teacher's Role in the Problem-based Learning: Emancipated Curriculum Context in Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

The shift to a PBL-oriented approach necessitates a reevaluation of the roles and identities of teachers. In the context of vocational high school English classrooms, where there may be diverse student backgrounds, aspirations, and career paths, exploring how English teachers adapt their roles as facilitators, mentors, and content experts can provide crucial insights. Additionally, understanding the factors that influence teachers' willingness and ability to embrace these roles within the context of an emancipated curriculum remains largely unexplored. Thus, this research aims to discover teachers' role in implementing problem-based learning in the Emancipated Curriculum. This qualitative case study employed an interview to one English honorarium teacher as the main instrument, which covered the questions regarding teacher's understanding and practice of the teacher's role in problem-based learning. Through thematic analysis, the study revealed that, in general, the teacher's role is in line with the previous related study, theory, and the goals of the Emancipated Curriculum in which the role of the teacher is: as the facilitator, evaluator, and guide. The findings provide practical implications for educational policymakers, school administrators, teacher educators, and English teachers seeking to enhance student engagement, motivation, and skill development in vocational education settings. Specifically, the findings allow teachers to learn and understand the teacher's role in the classroom to support students in achieving problem-based learning objectives.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

There is a growing need for practical, career-focused learning experiences in today's schools, and vocational education is becoming increasingly important. Vocational high schools are essential because they give students the real-world skills, knowledge, and abilities they need to achieve in their chosen careers, even as economies change and job needs change. To successfully meet these needs, incorporating problem-based learning (PBL) into the English curriculum of vocational high schools becomes very important, especially when the curriculum is freed up. Thus, looking into the part professional high school English teachers play in problem-based learning within the framework of an open curriculum is very important for meeting the needs of today's schools.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is a new way to teach and learn that focuses on the needs of each student. It is used in many schools and colleges worldwide (Yew & Goh, 2016; Shimizu et al., 2019).

However, problem-based learning is still more work for teachers and students (Chen, 2022; Othman et al., 2022). Many things make it hard to use problem-based learning, such as teachers needing more training or not being good at using problem-based learning techniques (Sullivan, 2019; Rezende et al., 2020). This obstacle could make it hard for teachers to understand how their jobs change and how they differ in problem-based learning compared to traditional learning (Baumann et al., 2016).

Conversely, the Indonesian government has introduced the Emancipated Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) in select schools. This initiative aims to address the learning setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare students for the demands of society 5.0 (Agung et al., 2022). The Emancipated Curriculum prioritizes the demands of students over those of teachers (Utami & Suswanto, 2022). Nevertheless, despite its reliance on student-centered learning and connection to problem-based learning (Purba, 2022), it is essential to acknowledge that teachers need more knowledge on effectively implementing problem-based learning within the existing curriculum. In addition, individuals often feel inundated when they transition their approach to teaching and learning (Qolbiyah et al., 2022).

Moreover, numerous studies conducted in the Indonesian setting highlight the beneficial impact of problem-based learning (Putri, 2022; Hidayati & Wagiran, 2020; Novalinda, 2020). However, there needs to be more data available on the quality of problem-based learning implementation, specifically regarding how teachers understand their role as tutors in problem-based learning. Moreover, the curriculum alteration in Indonesia impacts the teachers' efficacy during the teaching-learning process. A study by Yuhastina et al. (2020) revealed that teachers needed to be aware of using a pedagogical paradigm designed for youngsters when teaching high school pupils who had already reached adulthood. When they transitioned to the Emancipated Curriculum, they were unaware of the need to utilize the andragogy paradigm, an educational approach designed for adults. This discovery aligns with the study conducted by Wahyuni et al. (2020), which identified a disparity between the skills of vocational high school teachers and the desired standards.

Furthermore, in the context of the Emancipated Curriculum, vocational schoolteachers must have pedagogical expertise as they focus on facilitating students' learning through problem-based learning. This entails the expertise in designing educational programs that align with the industry's requirements and the ability to effectively create and manage learning environments that facilitate teaching, learning, and practical activities. These efforts aim to assist students in achieving their learning objectives per the industry's and society's demands (Wahyuni & Sugihartini, 2021).

Prior research on the involvement of instructors in implementing problem-based learning has provided evidence supporting the current study. According to Galevska's (2022) research, when problem-based learning is being implemented, teachers need to play a role that guarantees students' academic success. Furthermore, the study conducted by Basirat and Taghizadeh (2022) corroborated the notion that teachers play a proactive role in utilizing problem-based learning approaches to cultivate students' ability to engage in self-directed learning. These positions entail posing inquiries, identifying students' educational requirements, and continuously evaluating student progress.

Traditional methods that focus on the teacher are slowly replaced by models that focus on the students and are based on questions. This change is reflected in emancipated curriculum designs, which put students at the center of the learning process. Looking into how vocational high school EFL teachers change their jobs in a PBL setting can help us understand how general teaching and educational practices are changing. Based on the other researcher's study results and further explanations, the teacher's role becomes essential in successfully implementing problem-based learning. However, not all teachers know their job is to help students learn, not just give them knowledge. Based on the above problems, the study's primary goal is to investigate how vocational high school EFL teachers put problem-based learning into the Emancipated Curriculum, using Utecht's (2003) theory as a base. Problem-based learning aims at what the students learn rather than what the teacher teaches. So, teachers should be aware that their job as tutors has changed and that they should play a more minor role in the teaching and learning process. Although teachers are not supposed to teach, their main job is to help, guide, and facilitate learning so that the students can be the ones who learn by using what

they already know and have done to answer problems. This study uses a qualitative case study to answer the question: How does a vocational high school EFL teacher's role align with the theory of problem-based learning in the Emancipated Curriculum?

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1. Research Design

The main goal of this study is to look at what part vocational high school EFL teachers play in putting problem-based learning into the Emancipated Curriculum. Because that was the point of the study, a qualitative case study method was used to answer the problem statement. The case brought up fits with this study because the goal was not to generalize about a group of people but to learn more about a specific case (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The interview data were used as the primary data for this study. The triangulation data were then used. So, the theory and results of the previous research will be used to connect and analyze the data from the interview. Using qualitative methods in a case study design makes the data gathering and analysis more flexible and grounded. Instead of being limited by rigid preconceived categories, the study can change and adapt based on new themes and insights found while collecting data. This gives teachers more freedom to explore their role in problem-based learning in a liberated curriculum setting more realistically. Also, qualitative methods let researchers directly record the words and thoughts of vocational high school EFL teachers. The study can learn about the teachers' real-life experiences and how they feel about problem-based learning and the liberated curriculum by talking to them. This participant-centered approach ensured that the teacher's voice was heard in the study.

The case study approach is applicable when the research addresses questions about the "how" and "why" aspects and where researchers cannot alter the behavior of the persons included in the study. Furthermore, case studies enable researchers to investigate a specific setting inside a confined geographical region or with a restricted number of persons as study participants. Case studies are valuable in research as they allow researchers to gather and analyze data at a detailed level. Furthermore, case studies serve as a viable and pragmatic approach when acquiring large sample populations is challenging. The case study approach serves the purpose of investigating and describing data in a real-life setting. Additionally, it aids in comprehending the intricacies of real-life scenarios that may not be adequately addressed by experimental or survey research (Zainal, 2017).

### 2.2. Participants

The current study involved a single individual who served as an English honorarium teacher in a state vocational high school. She obtained a bachelor's degree in English Language Education from a state university in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. With one year of teaching experience, she instructed English for Specific Purposes (ESP) that directly applied to the vocational emphasis. In addition, she needed to gain previous exposure to an emancipated curriculum, although she had already had training or seminars on problem-based learning. The sample technique employed in this study was non-probability sampling, namely purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a purposeful approach used in qualitative research to pick individuals with specific features and attributes relevant to the study. Purposive sampling is a deliberate and non-random method that focuses on selecting participants based on their expertise and willingness to contribute information. The quantity of participants is not the primary consideration; rather, the quality of their knowledge or experience is (Etikan, 2016; Arifin, 2019).

To enlist individuals who can offer comprehensive and elaborate insights regarding the phenomenon being studied, the researcher chose a single participant based on two specific criteria: (1) being an active English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher at a vocational high school, and (2) implementing problem-based learning and the Emancipated Curriculum in their teaching practice. In addition, by the research's ethical code, the researcher ensured that the participants were willing to be

interviewed. This was done to reduce potential harm and risks, maximize maximize advantages, and uphold principles of human dignity, privacy, and autonomy.

### 2.3. Instruments

The data for this study were obtained via semi-structured interviews, regarded as a more authentic method of gathering information. As a result, this particular data collection instrument may contribute to a broader comprehension of the phenomenon under investigation (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Conversely, semi-structured interviews provide an equilibrium by incorporating both predetermined inquiries and unrestricted answers. The flexibility allowed the instructor to provide further explanations for her responses, offer distinctive viewpoints, and raise pertinent issues that the researcher may have yet to contemplate initially. Engaging responses can be pursued further by the interlocutor, facilitating an in-depth examination of crucial matters. In this instance, the investigators relied solely on a primary instrument whose validity had been established by Orabah (2022) and Patria (2015). The instrument comprised of queries deemed adequate for addressing the research inquiries. Data regarding the role of EFL instructors at vocational high schools in implementing problem-based learning as part of the Emancipated Curriculum were collected through semi-structured interviews.

The interview was conducted once on December 5, 2022, for approximately fifty-five minutes. The interview was conducted in person due to the geographical proximity of the participants and the researcher. The interview questions generally pertain to the following: (1) teachers' comprehension of problem-based learning as a whole, (2) teachers' awareness of the tutor's role in problem-based learning, and (3) teachers' experience implementing their responsibilities in problem-based learning classrooms. Eleven distinct questions were derived from the criteria above. In order to facilitate subsequent data analysis, the interview was the researcher transcribed recorded and critical points.

In qualitative case studies, interviews were typically conducted using a semi-structured methodology. The purposeful selection of participants was predicated on their pertinence to the study's objectives. Consent with knowledge was obtained before conducting the interviews. The interviewer employed an interview guide containing open-ended inquiries to delve into the viewpoints and experiences of the participants about the case being studied. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, creating a relaxed and candid atmosphere for the participants to divulge their perspectives. Thorough interviews were documented in writing, and participant assent was obtained prior to recording to guarantee the data analysis's integrity. Following this, significant insights were derived from the analysis of the transcribed data, which involved the identification of recurring themes and patterns for the final case study report.

### 2.4. Data Analysis Procedures

Thematic analysis (TA) was used to handle and interpret semi-structured interview data in this phase. Thematic analysis extracts insights and understanding from gathered data, allowing researchers to identify patterns in study participants' beliefs, emotions, and actions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The study utilized thematic analysis for its systematic and adaptable method of analyzing the interview data. The thematic analysis enabled the researcher to comprehend the studied event more deeply by discovering common themes and patterns in the participants' responses. This strategy facilitated the organization and interpretation of the qualitative data, allowing the researcher to extract significant insights, establish connections, and offer a thorough and cohesive account of the participants' experiences and viewpoints in the final case study report.

Based on the data gained from the semi-structured interview, the theme analysis was used to gain insight into vocational high school EFL teachers' role in implementing problem-based learning in the Emancipated Curriculum based on the data obtained through the semi-structured interview. The analysis steps refer to the process of detecting, analyzing, and reporting data patterns (themes) through the following processes: (1) familiarizing with the data. The researcher transcribed the data from the semi-structured interviews and reviewed it multiple times to properly comprehend the data, (2) generating initial codes. The researcher investigated and developed the initial codes associated with

the study question to facilitate the subsequent analysis phase, (3) searching for themes. The researcher collated the various codes and categorized them into research-relevant themes to analyze codes more easily, (4) reviewing themes. The researcher reexamined the themes derived from the coding findings multiple times to answer the study question and ensure the relevance of this theme, (5) naming themes. The researcher compiled the different codes and then grouped them into potential themes relevant to the research so that they could be easier to analyze, (6) producing the report. The researcher reports the study findings, including the outcomes of data analysis, in a manner that can persuade the reader of the analysis's validity. Based on the coding and topic creation steps discussed above, triangulation will be used to assess the research's data analysis outcomes further. Triangulation, or comparing the interpretation of research instruments with theory or field facts, is essential; triangulation strives to maintain and evaluate the data integrity in this qualitative study. The researcher described the data descriptively in the conclusion and discussion of the research.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study intends to investigate the role of vocational high school EFL teachers in implementing problem-based learning in the Emancipated Curriculum. The current study uncovered results about the research questions by conducting interviews and triangulating using theory and past research. Here is a description of the outcomes collected.

#### 3.1. *Teacher's role in the problem-based learning*

With Indonesia's new curriculum, the Emancipated Curriculum, teachers must understand how their jobs have changed in the classroom. As part of the Emancipated Curriculum, teachers are encouraged to use project-based or problem-based learning to make learning more student-centered.

*“During Problem-Based Learning (PBL), the teacher assigns problems to students. Pupils may need help identifying their problems, fearing they will make a mistake. Therefore, the teacher should assign the problems to the pupils. For example, prompting a question, “How do you believe this problem can be resolved?” (Excerpt 1)*

The findings of this study indicated that the EFL teacher at a vocational high school comprehended the evolution of the role of the educator from that of a facilitator to one that focuses on problem-based learning within the framework of the Emancipated Curriculum. According to the instructor, problem-based learning prioritizes the active engagement of the students over that of the instructor. According to the instructor, problem-based learning requires an educator to initiate learning by presenting students with authentic challenges that necessitate collaborative problem-solving with peers or in groups. The instructor further contended that students may need help identifying the issue due to the potential for independent misinterpretation.

*“I am still perplexed about the distinction between PjBL and PBL; they appear closely interconnected. In my view, in Problem-Based Learning (PBL), students seek theoretical answers or knowledge of difficulties, while in Project-Based Learning (PjBL), students develop a project or product to address the issue.” (Excerpt 2)*

Nevertheless, the instructor needs further elucidation regarding the distinction between problem-based learning (PBL) and project-based learning (PjBL). The instructor hypothesized that problem-based learning and project-based learning might share some similarities. The instructor elaborated that the distinction between problem-based learning and project-based learning is predicated on the result of the instructional approach. In project-based learning, students may be expected to develop a product to solve the problem.

Conversely, problem-based learning entails students relying solely on their theoretical understanding to resolve the issue. According to the findings, the instructor was cognizant of the

recommended learning methodologies outlined in the Emancipated Curriculum, namely problem-based and project-oriented approaches. Nevertheless, as an educator adjusts to evolving curricula, these approaches perplex the instructor regarding the distinctions between the two. The instructor favored presenting students with problems instead of requiring them to solve them independently. This instructor's predilection may have resulted from prior knowledge of the student's English proficiency and deficiencies.

*"The pre-exam with a grammar test and two early sessions showed that their fundamental English needed to be stronger, making it impossible to include ESP (English for Specific Purposes) material in their major. They'll need help with ESP material with complex vocabulary. I present problem-based learning issues relating to their daily lives because it's hard to relate to their majors due to concerns that students will need help to grasp English."* (Excerpt 3)

In addition, the instructor asserted that the problem presented to the students as part of the problem-based learning needed to be more relevant to their vocational high school major. In the following order, the instructor instructed three distinct majors: The instructor utilized identical problems for all three courses—(1) Audio Video Engineering, (2) Industrial Automation Engineering, and (3) Electrical Installation Engineering—instructing the students. Based on the pre-test result and the first two meetings, the instructor concluded that incorporating English for Specific Purposes and material pertinent to the students' disciplines required considerable effort. This was because the pupils lacked the mental capacity and English proficiency necessary to comprehend advanced-level vocabulary. Moreover, the instructor asserted that suggesting problems associated with the students' disciplines could be laborious. Learning English could potentially cause students more confusion; thus, the instructor posed problems that applied to students' everyday lives rather than those of a more severe nature. She attempted to connect the English material and the students' disciplines. An instance of this would be when a professor tasked pupils with composing an exposition that pertained to the student's area of study.

Furthermore, the instructor was sure that by elucidating the correlation between the assignment and the student's major, students' motivation to learn English would be bolstered. This finding suggested that it might be more labor-intensive to propose problems in problem-based learning. The instructor needed to conduct classroom observations to identify students' English learning strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, the instructor considered the students' English proficiency level when formulating the pertinent problem in the classroom. Additionally, students' disciplines and the subject matter could be connected to foster a more conducive learning environment and comprehension.

*"I need help with generating innovative issues for students. I often begin by inquiring with the kids about current trends, researching the internet, and presenting the problem to the students. Yesterday, I was still determining activities that could help improve thinking processes in the Chapter on Opinions. During the first meeting, I engaged in more conversation with the children."* (Excerpt 4)

The instructor recognized her strengths and limitations as the facilitator during the implementation of problem-based learning, as it was challenging to select applicable issues for students of various majors. Concerning problem-solving with students, the instructor acknowledged that she lacked originality. In order to circumvent this, the instructor surveyed the class before instruction regarding contemporary issues that were prevalent and then conducted an internet search for relevant data before presenting the issue at the subsequent meeting. The instructor required additional concepts when instructing opinion chapters. Consequently, during the initial stages of instruction, the instructor engaged in extensive dialogue with the pupils until she identified two issues pertinent to their everyday lives: "Is it acceptable to judge others based on their appearance?" and "Is it acceptable to lie for our

own benefit?" When the instructor recognized her vulnerabilities, she endeavored to compensate for them with her areas of strength. She was willing to learn more by researching and studying the trending topic.

*"Yes, I am driven by the problem-based learning approach in the autonomous curriculum, as it allows me to assess students' capacities. Several students were struggling with English in one of my classes despite it being a crucial need for their vocational school major. This inspired me to investigate the root reason for their difficulties." (Excerpt 5)*

Despite her flaws and strengths, the instructor was extraordinarily motivated to facilitate problem-based learning. According to her assertion, the ability to assess the student's English proficiency was facilitated by integrating problem-based learning into the Emancipated Curriculum. Using problem-based learning, she identified students with limited English proficiency who needed to be more actively engaged in her lessons. Consequently, her curiosity regarding the students' personal lives was piqued, which contributed to their challenges in acquiring proficiency in the English language. She believed that the students' knowledge background was crucial for acquiring English. This discovery established that the role of the teacher in problem-based learning extends beyond that of a facilitator to include guidance when students encounter learning difficulties through an examination of the root cause.

*"I utilize the lecture method for teaching grammar or theory content. After delivering the lesson, I handed it to the students for discussion." (Excerpt 6)*

*"Yes, some students still need to learn how important it is to write or summarize. Not after I was done explaining, but I told them to take notes while I was explaining. So that kids can take notes, I have to use a mix of Indonesian and English. When I speak full English, they don't understand." (Excerpt 7)*

Conversely, in problem-based learning, the instructor encourages greater student engagement than the instructor. As a result, the instructor conducted minimal lectures at the outset of the lesson, only when it was essential to cover grammar or theory. Despite this, most learning activities continued to require active student participation in groups or with peers. Moreover, the instructor encouraged students to summarize the lecture in their native tongue. In light of the teacher's observation that not all pupils understood the significance of writing or summarizing, she directed pupils to record the explanation immediately, not after the learning session or the lecture. This finding indicated that in problem-based learning, the role of the instructor is not solely to impart knowledge but also to cultivate students' inquisitiveness and drive to acquire English and achieve learning goals.

*"I tell my students to write thoughts about their friends' personal letters. They still couldn't do it, so I tried again with the explanation text. The exposition text is also the same. They still can't comment on their friends' work because they must fully understand English. Peer review is something that only a small number of students (about 5/36) can do." (Excerpt 8)*

*"I was more engaged than the pupils during the exposition due to my provision of comments. However, pupils were more engaged when utilizing the snakes and ladders game in groups, as stated in the materials. For pupils to advance, they must express their thoughts in English, which I evaluate individually." (Excerpt 9)*

*"I assign high-achieving students as peer tutors for their peers while awaiting my feedback. I prioritize high-achieving students who can assist their peers and support me. In expository writing, as students cannot conduct peer review independently, I guide them in making edits and offer feedback individually." (Excerpt 10)*

In addition, the instructor encouraged students to be more engaged in specific subject matter than themselves. For example, in the opinion chapter, the instructor presented students with authentic problems and required them to express their views. Additionally, the instructor directed pupils to provide feedback on and modify the work of their peers. Students encountered difficulties, however, in commenting on or revising their classmates' work due to the restricted English vocabulary. As a result, since students could not conduct their peer evaluations, the instructor assisted them in revising their work and provided feedback individually. The responsibility of providing feedback on the student's work shifted to the instructor. When there was inadequate time to provide feedback or revisions on students' work, the instructor delegated the task of commenting to the higher-achieving students. The instructor ultimately awarded additional points to the high-achieving pupils who assisted her. Although some students revised their work as many as three times, the instructor asserted that providing individual feedback significantly enhanced their comprehension of the assignment.

Based on the finding, it can be concluded that the teacher recognized her role in problem-based learning as the facilitator, evaluator, and guide by (1) assisting students who face difficulties in learning English, (2) revising students' work, and (3) clarifying students' knowledge.

### 3.2 Discussion

Overall, the results of the study were consistent with the theoretical framework proposed by Wahyuni et al. (2020), Utecht (2003), and Sullivan (2019) concerning the function of the instructor in problem-based learning scenarios. The research results indicated that despite encountering difficulties in comprehending the present curriculum, the educator effectively navigated it. The teacher's position during the problem-based learning implementation was pertinent to the goals of the Kurikulum Merdeka, an educational initiative that prioritizes student-centeredness through the provision of problem-solving abilities, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills. Furthermore, the theories of Utecht (2003), Wahyuni et al. (2020), and Sullivan (2019) provide further support for these findings. In a student-centered classroom, problem-based learning involves the instructor assuming the role of a facilitator or guide, enabling students to uncover knowledge independently. An adjustment to the curriculum entails a corresponding transformation in the pedagogical function of the instructor. The teacher's role must be modified, particularly in problem-based learning. Teachers must acquire and improve their abilities to meet the requirements of students, particularly regarding assisting pupils in achieving their educational objectives.

In addition, the instructor in the current investigation shifted from conventional to more active learning. Despite having only been in the profession for one semester (approximately six months), the instructor tried to adapt to the evolving teaching approach within the classroom. Traditional learning emphasizes the active involvement of instructors in imparting information and knowledge to students. This contrasts with the current teaching-learning approach, which considers student participation essential. These results were consistent with Utecht's (2003) theory that instructors aid or facilitate problem-based learning by directing students to knowledge. The instructor in the current research demonstrated an understanding of the evolving responsibilities of educators in the student-centered classroom by adapting her instructional approach accordingly. Moreover, according to Hidayati and Wagiran (2020), many educators have expressed that problem-based learning (PBL) has altered their pedagogical perspectives and offers numerous professional benefits. In light of this, alterations to the curriculum and learning methodologies may compel instructors to remain current with the evolution of the teaching-learning process.

Conversely, Qolbiyah et al. (2022) found that educators often experience feelings of being inundated when implementing a new teaching-learning approach. The results of the current study indicated that further investigation was warranted by educators concerning the modification of their function at the outset of the teaching-learning process. To better herself, the instructor in the current study investigated the appropriate function of the educator in problem-based learning. Moreover, regarding presenting problems to students of various disciplines, the instructor faced obstacles due to

her lack of familiarity with the Emancipated Curriculum and problem-based learning. These results were consistent with an earlier study's conclusion that one challenge in problem-based learning implementation is that not all problems may be appropriate for the students (Baumann et al., 2016). In this study, the instructor presented the same problem to students from various disciplines; however, in an ideal situation, the instructor would have suggested distinct problems for each major. An illustration of this could be if students pursuing a degree in Audio Video Engineering were assigned problems or issues that pertain to their future careers, as the Kurikulum Merdeka anticipates that such outcomes will shape students' academic progress. According to the study, presenting students with pertinent issues related to their disciplines facilitates their English learning. In addition, the Emancipated Curriculum emphasizes learning that holds students accountable for their future-relevant competencies. The teacher may be obligated to delve deeper into the majors of the students in order to formulate majors-related problems for them, given the circumstances.

Unfortunately, teachers do not know how to use problem-based learning in the Emancipated Curriculum. However, the teacher already acted as a guide and helper for the students. She had students look over and change their classmates' work, and she learned that this helped them think more critically. Utecht (2003) says that the teacher's job in problem-based learning is to create an environment where the teacher guides students' questions and coaches their thinking, leading to deeper knowledge levels. This finding fits with our theory. Another thing is that problem-based learning not only lets students be involved in the learning process but also forces them to be involved by giving them essential tasks that make them think. So, the teacher has a part to play in planning a fun task for the class.

However, not all students can do so when the teacher encourages students to be more active than the teacher. When the teacher noticed that pupils could not assess or improve their peers' work, the teacher intervened by guiding them through the revision process using the teacher's input. The teacher's position in this study aligned with Utecht's (2003) theory, which posits that in problem-based learning (PBL), the instructor transitions from being seen as all-knowing to serving as a helper or guide. The teacher permitted the students to develop their understanding by writing an exposition text independently, with additional guidance from the teacher to ensure the knowledge acquired by the student was pertinent. Offering feedback on students' work can help them see their teacher's function as a mentor rather than someone who provides all the solutions. Research confirmed that teachers bear a significant responsibility as they are the initial point of contact with pupils and wield a substantial influence on their learning process. Teachers must comprehend their position in problem-based learning to create significant learning opportunities for pupils. Teachers' comprehension of classroom duties could impact students' motivation to learn English.

The study discovered that problem-based learning was implemented through student collaboration, as the teacher observed that students were more engaged when working on assignments in groups. The teacher individually checked each group member while they were working together. The teacher evaluated students' knowledge and determined if it aligned with the material as part of her role in problem-based learning. Novalinda (2020) did a study that contradicts this finding, showing that teachers favored managing the class by allocating pupils to work separately rather than in a group. The disparity in those results could be attributed to the varying circumstances of the kids. Utecht (2003) proposed that teachers should initially determine the results or standards they aim for their students to comprehend while developing problem-based learning. Teachers can create or select issues that motivate students to achieve the specified standards or targets.

The research discovered that the teacher enabled students to work at their own pace in alignment with the learning aims of the Emancipated Curriculum, which focuses on fostering independent learning experiences. Hence, the teaching-learning process took place without coercion. Rezende et al. (2020) corroborated these findings by describing a teaching approach where students could progress at their own pace. In addition, the teacher prioritized pupils' comprehension of English over completing all information from the book within a single semester. Teachers use many assessment techniques,

including evaluating students' speaking abilities using ladder games where students must express their opinions to solve an issue before progressing to the next one. The teacher conducted the assessment to encourage students to engage more actively in the learning process by limiting the teacher's lecture to clarifying or verifying students' knowledge during problem-solving.

Ultimately, the teacher was content with her involvement in problem-based learning as it allowed her to assess students' English skills, eagerness to learn English and perspective. The findings align with the goals of the Emancipated Curriculum by streamlining the teaching process for educators. Problem-based learning offers a fresh and valuable experience for the teacher. Servant-Miklos et al. (2019b) found that instructors who effectively adopt a student-centered classroom and PBL often find it fulfilling and exciting, making it difficult to revert to a traditional approach. Thus, despite the teacher's initial confusion with problem-based learning, they were able to adapt and become accustomed to this educational approach.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into how problem-based learning (PBL) can be understood and applied within the Emancipated Curriculum framework by vocational high school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Indonesia. Evidence from interviews, previous studies, and applicable theory shows that teacher understands her roles as facilitators, evaluators, and guides in the PBL method but need help to adjust to this pedagogical change. The study highlights the significance of continuous reflection and adjustment in the Emancipated Curriculum framework, focusing on the essential role of students in the learning process and the teacher's position as a facilitator. The study's limitations, such as having only one teacher as the sole research participant, raise concerns regarding the generalizability of the findings and potential biases. Future research should include a broader range of participants from different educational levels to provide a more thorough knowledge of instructors' involvement in implementing PBL. Teachers must stay updated on curricular changes and participate in ongoing professional development to improve their grasp and utilization of innovative teaching methods. In addition, future research could further explore students' perspectives on teachers' involvement in problem-based learning, offering valuable insights for self-reflective teaching methods and curriculum development. This research provides a basis for future investigation and advancement in implementing Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in the Emancipated Curriculum, with the potential to improve teaching and learning in vocational high schools in Indonesia.

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