The Use of Project Based Learning (PBL) Strategies in Teaching English as Foreign Language Class in Indonesian Context: Case Study

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Abstract. This paper aims at reporting the undergraduate students' TEFL Class in Indonesia. The objectives of this research are to find out: (1) the students' reasons in joining TEFL class, and (2) the implication of incorporating PBL for students' learning process at Study Program of English. The data source of this study are microteaching video performances by 40 students' TEFL Class at Study Program of English after being introduced to project-based learning strategy. The researcher uses a rubric to check and evaluate the video as well as class observation and semi-structured interviews after students joining the whole semester. The results show that the students' mastery in English has increased, and the students' abilities in teaching English become more concise. Thus, the microteaching as the part of project-based learning strategy given by the lecturer plays a prominent role in dealing with the outcome of having TEFL class.

Keywords: PBL, TEFL, case study, microteaching

1. Introduction

Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the Indonesian tertiary context has emerged as a significant pedagogical approach for teaching English, particularly in enhancing language skills among students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The concept of PBL emphasizes active learning through real-world projects, which engage students in meaningful collaboration, problem-solving, and critical thinking, aligning well with the demands of the 21st century. Project-Based Learning presents a dynamic and effective framework for teaching English in Indonesian tertiary institutions. While it offers numerous benefits in language acquisition and soft skills development, ongoing support and targeted strategies will be essential to address the challenges encountered by students. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, embracing PBL could significantly enhance English learning outcomes and prepare students for future challenges in both local and global contexts. Then, the latest curriculum in Indonesia, Merdeka Curriculum, adapts and triggers student-centered learning in the classroom context. Specifically, one of teaching approaches promoted in this curriculum is Project-Based Learning (PBL). However,

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discussions regarding the extent to which teachers understand PBL have not been much studied.

Based on Syafriadin et al. (2024), Project-Based Learning (PBL) proposes a dynamic technique that integrates language skills into real-world contexts, fostering a learner-centered atmosphere. Kavlu (2017) highlights the prospective of PBL to upgrade EFL students' acquisition of skills within a simulated real-world context, thereby amplifying engagement and fostering a dynamic learning atmosphere. Eventually, the alliance between PBL and EFL learning gives authorization to students to bridge the gap between language knowledge and real-world application, providing them for future challenges and opportunities (Lam, 2011).

The PBL method has become a major focus in education due to its potential to increase student's involvement and practical in learning (Sa'adah, 2024). Project-based learning (PBL) is an educational strategy in which students learn by actively participating in real-world and personally meaningful projects. In a PBL setting, based on Halim et al. (2023), students frequently study complicated, open-ended problems or challenges in teams before using what they have studied to produce a final product or presentation that displays their understanding of the subject. Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an engaging and effective approach in education, particularly when teaching English as a foreign language. In other words, PBL is an instructional approach that goes beyond traditional textbook-centered methods. It immerses learners in real-world problems or tasks, encouraging them to collaborate, research, and create tangible products. In the context of language teaching, PBL involves learners working in fixed groups over a planned period to investigate a phenomenon or study a problem. The ultimate goal is to produce a meaningful "product" in the target language (such as English) as evidence of their inquiry.

PBL proposes many chances to promote language use and acquisition in real-life contexts because the basic premise of PBL is that learning begins with a problem presented in the same context as it will be encountered in real life (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). It means that what they learn is that the class can be directly applied to find solution towards real-life problems. The students will be more ready when facing real-world problems since they learned and practiced in their class. It provides the students more benefits than learning something that may not be encountered in real life (Poonpon, 2017). Actually, there are some benefits of PBL in English Language Teaching such as fostering a deeper understanding of the subject matter because it encourages students to explore real-world issues. Then, PBL emerges retention because the learners are more likely to retain knowledge gained through PBL compared to traditional methods. Next, PBL can improve confidence and self-direction, as students engage in team-based and independent work, they develop confidence and self-direction. Afterwards, PBL trigger student-centeredness because it shifts the focus from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered learning. Finally, PBL help students with life skills, it helps develop problem-solving abilities, research skills, collaboration, resource management, and communication skills.

Therefore, Project-Based Learning (PBL) strategies can be effectively employed in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes within the Indonesian context. in the vibrant landscape of Indonesian classrooms, where cultural diversity and linguistic richness abound, PBL emerges as a dynamic approach to language instruction. Firstly, Contextual Relevance in PBL bridges the gap between language learning and real-world application. By immersing students in authentic tasks, such as creating travel guides, conducting interviews, or designing multimedia presentations, PBL ensures that language skills are not abstract concepts but practical tools for communication. Then, PBL allows learners to explore topics relevant to their lives—be it tourism, business, or cross-cultural interactions in Indonesia where English serves as a global gateway. Secondly, PBL empowers learners to get student agency and engagement. They become active participants, co-creators, and problem-solvers. Rather than passively absorbing information, students collaborate, negotiate, and take ownership of their learning journey. Besides, Indonesian students, with their inherent curiosity and communal spirit, thrive in PBL environments. Whether investigating environmental issues or analyzing pop culture trends, they engage deeply and authentically.

Next, PBL encourages language use beyond mere repetition to encourage language production and Interaction. Students communicate purposefully—writing proposals, debating solutions, and presenting findings. In Indonesia, where multilingualism is the norm, PBL accommodates translanguaging. Learners draw from Bahasa Indonesia, regional languages, and English to express ideas, negotiate meaning, and construct knowledge. Afterwards, PBL projects often delve into cultural aspects, especially to conduct cultural exploration. In this case, Indonesian students explore their own heritage while appreciating global diversity. Whether comparing folklore, examining traditional ceremonies, or analyzing contemporary art, PBL fosters intercultural competence. Finally, PBL shifts the paradigms of assessment because PBL represents evaluation beyond tests. Instead of relying solely on exams, lecturers examine process, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. Therefore, In Indonesia's diverse classrooms, where learners exhibit varied strengths, PBL assessments celebrate individual contributions while emphasizing collective achievement.

In this current research, the writer has two questions regarding with the use of PBL in tertiary level: (1) the students' reasons in joining TEFL class, and (2) the implication of incorporating PBL for students' learning process at Study Program of English. Hopefully, this research can give some contributions in analyzing the implementation of PBL as one of strategies used in the TEFL classroom in Indonesia.

2. Research Design

The researcher uses qualitative research method. She made student groups (three or four students) from two TEFL classes during one semester. Classroom observation, focus group student interviews, and artifact collection were used to collect the data. The observation

was conducted in four meetings for each class. Four aspects of the teaching and learning process were observed: teaching, learning process, students' participation, and students' achievement. The researcher conducted this observation, taking notes, and filling the questionnaires. Once the observation was done, she wrote the results to avoid data loss. Then, once she finished observing the classes in eight meetings (four meetings for each class), she analyzed the data using an interactive model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), including data collection, data condensation, data display, and concluding.

In this qualitative study, semi-structured interviews followed guidelines for an in-depth look at participants' experiences, issues, and viewpoints on synchronous virtual English language education meets (Karatsareas, 2022). Therefore, the researcher uses two instruments such as a rubric to evaluate video microteaching made by students as the PBL, and she make sure the success of PBL by giving questionnaire to know students' perception about the PBL.

3. Findings

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) courses equip students with essential teaching methodologies, lesson planning skills, classroom management techniques, and an understanding of linguistic nuances. These skills prepare future teachers to handle diverse classroom situations and adapt to the needs of their students. Some students choose to take a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) course for various reasons that align with both personal and professional aspirations. The students who took TEFL class use English teaching experience and adapt their methods to their future teaching techniques. The answers show the perceptions from the students who took TEFL class are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The reasons for joining TEFL Class (N= 40)

Students' Reasons	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
"TEFL class provide a practical guide about how to teach foreign language properly and efficiently"	12	30
"I am interested in teaching English in the future"	11	27.5
"I can learn teaching strategies based on Indonesian school standard"	9	22.5
"I want to improve my English language skills, and I have broader choice of career"	8	20
Total	40	100.00

Comparing multimedia-using courses to non-multimedia classes can quantify multimedia integration's effects. Then, the thematic analysis also shows what promotes

engagement and learning and what issues develop with this pedagogical technique. Table 2 presents a theme analysis of students' experiences joining TEFL Class by using PBL. Analysis of interview data indicates various themes and sub-themes.

Table 2. Thematic investigation findings on students' views and encounters with PBL incorporation in teaching learning process

Theme	**Sub-theme**	**Sample response (Excerpts of interview data)**	**Participant ID**
Benefits	Improved engagement	"PBL make me as a student more engaged participative, enhancing the learning experience." “PBL can increase self-efficacy and engagement in the class”	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P11, P15, P26, P34, P16, P17, P18
	Enhanced understanding	“PBL can improve soft-skills such as communicating, problem solving, critical thinking and analyzing” “PBL can make students become more active in the class”	P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P13, P14, P20, P21, P22, P40
Adaptation	Application of PBL in the class by the lecturer	“PBL can reduce the feeling of anxiety” “PBL help to work collaboratively or in team work”	P23, P19, P24, P25, P27, P28, P31, P32, P33, P35,
Challenge	Assessment Criteria Clarity for PBL	“Students need vivid guidelines for evaluating the product of PBL in the form of video microteaching.”	P29, P36, P37, P38, P39

Microteaching is part of PBL that has a well-established function to provide students who took TEFL class with education preparation before their future teaching career by using simplified lesson plans and offering to a small group of learners to isolate and build specific skills for instruction through targeted instruction and constructive feedback. Therefore, the researcher use a rubric to evaluate the students’ microteaching videos. It can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. The Scoring Rubric for Video Microteaching

Criteria	Grade	Point
Picture/ Poster/ Video		
• **Creativity** Layout, design, graphic, and use of colors are very attractive, creative and appropriate.	10%	
• **Organization** Information are very organized. The picture/ poster/ video clearly communicates the message.	10%	
• **Content** The student is also visible in the picture/ poster/ video. No grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors.	10%	
Explanation		
• **Content** Explanation is related to the chosen topic. The main idea stands out and is supported by detailed information. The message is empowering and clearly explains the importance of seeking help.	40%	
• **Organization of Ideas** Ideas are very organized. Ideas can be easily understood by different types of readers.	20%	
Overall		
• **Topic** The chosen topic is clear. The topic is timely and relevant.	10%	
Total	**100%**	

4. Discussion

The study explained the Indonesia students' perceptions on the use of PBL in the TEFL classes. The first research questions discuss about the students' reasons in choosing TEFL as elective course in Study Program of English because they have background from literature and linguistics major in the Faculty of Cultural Studies. The findings in the table showed numerous answers from literature and linguistics students who take the TEFL course have intention to be a teacher as the future careers. Meanwhile, some literature and linguistics students stated that they want to improve their English language skills because the can learn English better through teaching.

Then, the second question about incorporating PBL for students' teaching skills at Study Program of English has benefits, adaptation and challenge. The current study shows that maintaining student engagement and participation in the TEFL classroom need some efforts to attract students' attraction and interest. In addition, some solutions proposed to cope with the students' difficulties in joining TEFL classrooms. Therefore, the researcher used three stages in conducting PBL method during teaching TEFL class.

4.1 Planning

This section discusses the data finding. Research how the implemented of project-based learning. According to Alpiani (2023), project-based learning is divided into three stages: preparation, implementation, and presentation. There are several activities in each step. Through project-based learning, students are exposed to a wide range of skills and competences such as project planning, cooperation, decision making, and time management during the planning stages (Blank, 1997). In this case, the students who wants to be future teachers or pre-service teachers are trained to make lesson plans and syllabus before making microteaching video. Students acquire self-reliance via goal-setting, planning, and organization; they build cooperation skills through social learning; and they become intrinsically driven by being encouraged to exercise choice while studying at their own level (Bell, 2010).

4.2 Implementing

This section discussion about implementing project-based learning. Students are in control of data collection, analysis, and interpretation throughout this 115 implementations stage, according to (Susanti, 2019). The implementation process is a sequence of learning processes designed to meet the teacher's goals. "Learning is a process by which a person's environment is intentionally managed to enable him to participate in certain behaviors under special conditions or produce responses to certain situations," writes Corey (in Priatna, 2012).

To achieve student learning success in completing the project, lecturers as facilitators need to provide services to facilitate students in the learning process activities. As explained by Mulyasa (2013) Teachers as facilitators must have a good attitude, understanding of students, and competence in addressing individual differences to facilitate student learning success. The lecturer's job is not only to teach, but also to guide students to improve understanding, both guidance outside the classroom and personal guidance. However, when implementing PBL, lecturers do not guide students in completing projects or in the learning process during group presentations.

4.3 Presentation

This section discussion about presentation. The development of the end output, the 'physical product' (Helle et al., 2006), which gives students with new insights, knowledge, and attitudes about what they are learning, is what distinguishes project-based learning. Express ideas with video. In line with this research, students who are given responsibility for assigned tasks must be able to think scientifically and rationally, access, use, and share information, communicate, use technology effectively and efficiently, renew themselves, adopt common human values, be creative, productive, and willing to work and study.

Therefore, teachers must be able to assure student engagement in each final presentation of student work, as well as structure learning experiences in such a way that it is taken seriously (Yilmaz, 2009). However, the teacher simply gave guidance about the results of student work throughout the presentation. In this research, students are assigned to present video microteaching in the class.

5. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the students feel enjoy when they learn TEFL using PBL. The students also indicate that PBL can enhance their enthusiasm, confidence, critical thinking, creativity, collaborative learning and self-directed ability. Learning TEFL by using PBL also reduces their anxiety when they speak English. However, based on lecturer's point of view, it can be said that the use of PBL can improve students-learning quality and motivate lecturer's motivation and satisfaction in teaching.

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