**Using Project based Learning to Develop ESP Students’ Writing Skill**

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Abstract: The study explore the use of project based learning (PBL) in a state University, in Indonesia where students are instructed to publish their writing produts in mini exhibation. It aims to link theory to practice and to help language teacher maximize the full potential of project based learning for genuin communication and give real meaning in to writing activities. The experimental research design was utilized with a quasi-experimental design of pre-test and post test, consisting of an experimental group and a control group. Seventy English for Specific Purpose (ESP) students participated in this study. The data was collected by means of students’ writing products. By utilizing the t-test for independent sample, the results of this study indicated that PBL had a great impact on improving ESP students’ writing skill.

**INTRODUCTION**

The teaching of English for Specific Purpose (ESP) for the non English manjor is not that easy since the students got difficulties in relating the theories into practice. Teaching materials in ESP should cover both theoretical and practical so that the students can achieve better in understanding the materials. One alternative can be applied in ESP course is project-based learning (PBL). This method of teaching can be beneficial for the students in comprehending both theory and practice of ESP materials. Thomas (2000) said that project-based learning (PBL) is a model that organizes learning around projects. The projects are complex tasks based on challenging questions or problems that involve students in design, problem-solving, decision-making, and/or investigative activities, that give students opportunities to work relatively autonomously over extended periods of time, and culminate in realistic products or presentations (Jones, Rasmussen, & Moffitt, 1997; Thomas, Mergendoller, & Michaelson, 1999 in Thomas, 2000

The 21st century demands people to be more creative, active, and flexible in doing their jobs. Because of this fact, the changes in teaching and learning methods have to be accomplished to equip students with the skills they need in the future. Project-based learning is one of them, this method allows students to always be active and creative in the learning process since class projects that engage their thinking and by accomplishing the project will bring real-world learning to them. In line with this, Petersen (2004) was carried out to reflect on the use of project work and the importance of students' needs. Petersen analyzed teachers' and students' perspectives and the use of project-based learning (PBL) at two ESL schools with diverse student populations. Petersen stated that "teachers must first consider the backgrounds and needs of the students in order to have lessons and activities which suit them and their daily language learning needs" (p. 116).

Project-based learning is a flexible approach that allows multiple language skills to be strengthened in one integrated manner. As mentioned by Beckett (2002) that project is a long-term activity in which instructional method could promote language acquisition, contents, and skills simultaneously. Woro (2015) also mentioned that project-based learning is a student's centered approach that makes them apply knowledge in a real-life situation. This learning method seems suitable to overcome problems in Indonesia when the students are only taught the materials and not how to use it in a real-world situation. In 2017, Astawa, Artini, and Nitiasih conducted a study to examine the effect of PBL on students’ productive skills in English among 28 students. The results revealed a significant effect of PBL on students’ productive skills in English. Indeed, they found that implementation of PBL activities in EFL classes, enhance students’ ability to write in English.

Collier (2017) in her thesis entitled “Using a Project-Based Language Learning Approach in the High School Spanish Classroom: Perceived Challenges and Benefits” explored on how project-based language learning affected writing performance. The results showed that project-based language learning approach was unaffected on students’ writing performance. Moreover, similar to Astawa et al. (2017), Artini et al. (2018) have investigated the impact of PBL on learners’ English productive skills. They collected data through classroom observation, interview, and a questionnaire. The results of the study revealed that PjBL had an impact on learners’ positive attitudes toward foreign language learning; also, the findings indicated that PBL activities improved EFL learners’ communication skills, particularly in writing. Finally, Praba̕ et al. (2018) conducted a study to investigate the effect of PjBL on EFL learners’ writing skill. They used interview, observation, and writing test for data collection. The findings showed that PBL has significant effect on EFL learners’ writing skill. In addition, they came to conclusion that PBL significantly promote writing skill in EFL context. In light of the review of related literature, the present study addresses the following research question and hypothesis:

RQ: Does project-based learning have a significant effect on the non EFL learners’ writing

skill?

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Project-based learning is focusing on the core principles and concepts of the discipline in meaningful tasks and students centered learning to produce a tangible product (Santysa, 2006)A project can be defined as a problem encountered by students with complex task-based stages, that should be done within a certain amount of time, and should result in a culminated product (Thomas, 2000). Project-based learning is focusing on the core principles and concepts of the discipline in meaningful tasks and students centered learning to produce a tangible product (Santysa, 2006)

From the statements above, it is clear to say that project-based learning purposes are to shift teacher-centered learning to student-centered. This process can be done because project-based learning accommodates students to work on abilities they have in contextual learning by presenting them with problem-solving tasks. This activity is meant to improve students' motivation, research skills, problem-solving ability, sense of collaborations, communications, and language awareness that would beneficial to their life experiences (Lam, 2011)

According to Bell (2010), project-based learning has four stages when implemented in the classroom. 1) Providing students with topics. This stage is meant so the students can choose whatever topic they want for their project. The teacher also gives real-life examples of the project that they will be doing. 2) Designing the project activity. In this stage, the teacher organizes project activities structures including group formation, role assigning, methodology decision, source of information, etc. On the other hand, the students take the project designer role, establishing a discussion forum, and gather much background information for their design.

3) Conducting the project. The students start to do the project they had planned and designed. They do it by gathering information, discussing with their group member, consulting problems they encounter with the teacher, and prepare to present their project in the form of presentation, publications, etc. 4) Evaluating the process and the result. Fragoulis (2009) states this stage is assessing students' performance toward the activities and discussing whether they achieve the goal or not. Students can reflect on the process and evaluate the projects based on the previous criteria that had been made.

**METHOD**

Data collection techniques used in case study mostly were observation, and interview. The data had been collected by observing the ESP course in the classroom to find appropriate information needed for obtaining the objectives of the study. While teaching, the writer observed the lesson, their comprehension of ESP course both theoretically and practically, their efforts while doing the project, and the students’ project at the end of the semester. Interview was used to gather data from people about opinions, beliefs, and feelings about situations in their own words (Ary, 2010). A personal interview was used to gather the additional information from students on the problems they have faced during the ESP class. This study uses qualitative and quantitative methods to collect and analyze the data obtained from various articles and research. The data obtained are then sorted and matched according to the needs of this study, namely about project-based learning. This study is meant to answer 1) what is project-based learning? 2) how can we implement this method in classroom activity? 3) how effective this method is?

**FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

As the purpose of this study is to prove whether project-based learning will improve students' achievements or not, we try to collect as many results from the previous studies. Aghayani and Hajmohammadi (2019) have proved that project-based learning improves students' writing ability by a significant margin. They also found that project-based learning complement and develop students to show their thought and work collaboratively.

A similar result also found by Sadeghi, Biniaz, and Soleimani (2016). After just sixteen weeks of implementing project-based learning, the EFL Iranian students gain significantly higher scores in their writing as they can do a peer review and revise their writing which they can gain a lot of knowledge from the process.

From our data, we also found a few suggestions on what projects that can be used in project-based learning English classroom. Here are some examples.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Skills** | **Projects** |
| Speaking | 1. Drama project based on an audio/video. 2. Speeches and presentations on audio/video. 3. News casting on audio/video. |
| Listening | 1. BBC/VOA news and transcripts. 2. Recorded audio file and transcripts. 3. Short movie and transcripts. |
| Reading | 1. Advertisements, announcement, newsletters. 2. Reading movies or books review. 3. Articles, journal, or scientific paper. |
| Writing | 1. Books or movies review. 2. Diaries. 3. Writing letters. |
| Language Components | 1. Board race project. 2. Chariot grammar project. |

In classroom practice, teachers can elaborate on the stages of project-based learning explicitly in a pedagogical implementation. Here is an example of the following scenario in classroom activities.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Skills  Description  Goal | Integrated Skills  Students are going to write a descriptive text based on the topic given and publish it in mini exhibition  Students are able to write a descriptive text and publish it in mini exhibition. |
| MEETING | **ACTIVITIES** |
| 1 | 1. Setting real-life project stages for students. They are going to write descriptive text and write it down in a cardboard paper. They can draw a picture that represents the object that will be described. 2. Designing project activities, referring to organizing the structure of project activities including group formation, appointing role, methodology discussion, source of information, etc. |
| 2 | 1. Conducting the project that had been planned and designed. 2. Doing the steps of writing descriptive text:   Planning: gathering information, generating ideas.  Drafting : starting to write, doing peer review to get feedback from friends or teachers.  Editing and Revising: revising based on the teacher’s feedback. After that, they can decorate their writing with pictures, drawings, etc. |
| 3 | 1. Publishing the project 2. Evaluation 3. Scoring rubric |

The following scenario above shows the project-based learning process, from engaging the students, planning and designing the project, drafting, editing, and revising, until the mini-exhibition to present the product they have made. Should a few students do not perform particularly well, the time should be adjusted to match their capabilities so they not left behind others. Besides, the students should be able to present their project with fluent, correct intonation, and grammar without the help of the teacher. The assessment can be done in the reflective discussion, the process of making the project, as well as the result by using a scoring rubric.

**CONCLUSION**

In this brief article, the author has presented various project-based learning definitions and its benefits in a student's development. It turns out that project-based learning has a few stages that have to be done in order to complete it. From all of those stages, students not only learn the materials but also learn how to present their material in front of the public. This makes project-based learning an effective way to improve their language skills as shown in the benefits section.

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