Project-Based Learning as a Method to Strengthen Communication: Students' Insights in Business English Education

Erna Dwinata[1], Rosanita Tritias Utami[2]
[12]Universitas Bhinneka PGRI Tulungagung
Email: ernadwinata1@gmail.com, utami.rosanita@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines students' perceptions of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the "English for Business communication" course at Universitas Bhinneka. PBL, a student-centered approach, engages students in meaningful projects, promoting skills like collaboration, communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking. The course was divided into three phases: Product Identification and Presentation, Business Communication via Email, and Field Observation and Product Promotion. The study involved 30 second-semester Economics Education students, utilizing questionnaires to gather data. Findings indicate that students found PBL to be an effective and engaging teaching method. The activities helped them develop public speaking, formal writing, and professional communication skills. The hands-on nature of PBL allowed students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts, particularly in business scenarios. They appreciated the practical applications of their tasks and the opportunity to work collaboratively with peers, which enhanced their learning experience. While some challenges, such as the need for careful planning and adequate resources, were noted, students generally reported increased motivation and engagement. The study concludes that PBL is a valuable method for teaching English in a business context, providing practical and relevant learning experiences.

Keywords : Perception, Project, English

Introduction

The teaching of English as a foreign or second language has become a major focus in educational systems worldwide, including in Indonesia. With the growing demand for English proficiency in the era of globalization, various approaches and teaching methods have been developed to enhance learning effectiveness. One approach that has gained attention is Project-Based Learning (PBL) [1].

PBL is a student-centered learning method where students learn by engaging in relevant and meaningful projects. Project-Based Learning (PBL) originated in the 1960s and 1970s, evolving into various forms like Problem-Based Learning and Paper-Based Learning.[2] Because the learning experiences obtained by students during class are not complete and oriented towards achieving competency standards and basic competencies, PBL is believed to address

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[1] Jennifer Rudolph, "Globalizing Science and Engineering Through On-Site Project-Based Learning," *Teaching Asia Through Field Trips and Experiential Learning*, 2014.

[2] Muhamad Hugerat, "How Teaching Science Using Project-Based Learning Strategies Affects the Classroom Learning Environment," *Learning Environments Research* 19, no. 3 (2016), https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-016-9212-y.

these shortcomings. [3] This approach integrates various skills, such as collaboration, communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking. In the context of English language learning, PBL provides opportunities for students to use the language in real-world contexts, which can enhance their understanding of the target language and culture. Project-based learning is an educational model that involves students in hands-on, independent tasks, resulting in the creation of tangible products. [4] It begins by presenting students with real-life problems, followed by defining and pursuing learning objectives through group work and self-directed study, leading to independent and deeply meaningful learning experiences. [5]

The implementation of PBL in English language education offers several advantages [6]. First, it can make learning more engaging and relevant for students, as they can see the direct connection between the tasks they perform and real-world situations . Second, PBL encourages students to actively participate and take responsibility for their own learning, which can increase their motivation and engagement. Furthermore, PBL enhances the quality of student learning by fostering enthusiasm, boosting self-confidence, encouraging creativity, and promoting both self-directed and collaborative learning.[7]

However, there are also challenges in implementing PBL, particularly in terms of effective planning and execution. Although PBL positively impacts students, it also has its shortcomings. PBL primarily focuses on problem-solving, often neglecting the in-depth exploration of essential knowledge crucial for their development. [8]Teachers need to have a good understanding of PBL and how to integrate it with the existing curriculum. Additionally, the availability of resources and support is an important factor that can influence the success of PBL implementation. Also, to gain knowledge from experiences, individuals must intentionally reflect on them. Both self-reflection and group reflection are necessary to transform these experiences into meaningful insights.[9]

Another challenge is ensuring the correct implementation of PBL standards. Project-Based Learning (PBL) involves five key features: It starts with a driving question or real-world problem that needs to be addressed. Students then engage in authentic, contextualized inquiry, exploring the question and learning to apply key concepts within the discipline. Third, collaboration among students, teachers, and community members follows as they work

[3] Faradhillah Faradhillah and Syarifah Rita Zahara, "The Aplication of Learning Models of Project Based Learning to Improve Students' Learning Outcomes in Post-Legal Materials," *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Studies* 3, no. 3 (2021), https://doi.org/10.29103/ijevs.v3i3.4308.

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[6] Chiho Toyoshima, Tsukasa Yamanaka, and Kohei Sugiyama, "To What Extent Are Japanese University Students Successful in Motivating Themselves to Learn English through Project-Based Language Education? An Assessment of Students after Two Years of PBL-Based English Language Education," *English Language Teaching*, 2023, https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v16n3p1.

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[8] Munawir Yusuf et al., "Implementation of PBL and IBL Models Assisted by Video Media to Improve Critical Thinking Skills," *Jurnal Ilmiah Sekolah Dasar* 6, no. 3 (2022), https://doi.org/10.23887/jisd.v6i3.47949.

[9] Bassam Hussein, "Addressing Collaboration Challenges in Project-Based Learning: The Student's Perspective," *Education Sciences* 11, no. 8 (2021), https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11080434.

together to find solutions to the problem, reflecting real-world problem-solving processes. Fourth, learning technologies are utilized to support students' skills and deepen their engagement in the inquiry process. Finally, students create tangible outputs that address the initial question and share these results publicly with stakeholders.[10]

Understanding students' perceptions of the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in teaching English [11], particularly in the English for Business communication course, is of great importance. Knowing how students perceive and experience PBL can provide valuable insights for instructors to tailor their approaches to better meet students' needs and expectations, ensuring more effective and meaningful learning experiences [12]. If students find PBL relevant and beneficial, they are likely to be more motivated and engaged in the learning process. Understanding their perceptions allows educators to identify aspects of PBL that students appreciate and areas that may require improvement [13].

In the context of English for Business communication, PBL offers practical experiences that mirror real-world business scenarios. Understanding how students perceive the relevance and application of these projects can help in designing more effective projects that develop both business and English language skills. Students' perceptions also serve as indicators of the success of PBL implementation, aiding educators in assessing whether the learning objectives are being met and whether the method is effective in developing the necessary skills for the business world.

Feedback from students on PBL can contribute to the development of a more responsive curriculum that aligns with market demands. This is particularly crucial in courses like English for Business communication, where practical skills and relevance to the job market are paramount. Ultimately, understanding students' perceptions helps educators enhance the quality of their teaching, including how they deliver content, provide guidance, and support students throughout the learning process. In the fields of philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science, perception is defined as the process by which individuals gain awareness or comprehension of sensory information. [14] The perception process involves three stages: selecting, organizing, and interpreting. [15] Overall, understanding students' perceptions of PBL in the English for Business communication course can offer numerous benefits, leading to the development of more effective and relevant teaching practices and enriching the students' overall learning experience.

Considering these benefits and challenges, this article will further explore the students` perception on the lecture`s implementasion of Project-Based Learning in English language

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[10] Nanxi Meng et al., "Tackle Implementation Challenges in Project-Based Learning: A Survey Study of PBL e-Learning Platforms," *Educational Technology Research and Development* 71, no. 3 (2023), https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-023-10202-7.

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[13] "Enhancing Students' Productive Skills in English Language Teaching through Project-Based Learning at Foreign Trade University – HCMC Campus," *Journal of Thu Dau Mot University*, 2022, https://doi.org/10.37550/tdmu.ejs/2022.04.364.

[14] O U Qiong, "A Brief Introduction to Perception," *Studies in Literature and Language* 15, no. 4 (2017), https://doi.org/10.3968/10055.

[15] Qiong.

teaching. The study will discuss students' perceptions of PBL, as well as its impact on students' language skills. It is hoped that this research will provide useful insights for the development of more effective and relevant teaching methods in the field of English language education.

Research Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive[16] approach to assess students' perceptions of the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the "English for Business communication" course. Qualitative descriptive research is research that aims to describe, summarize various conditions, as situations or various reality phenomena that exist in society which are the object of research and seeks to draw that reality to the surface as a characteristic, character, model, sign or description of the condition, situation or certain Phenomenon. The subjects of the study are second-semester students from the Department of Economics Education at Bhinneka PGRI University, totaling 30 students. The research method involves several key steps. First, the study encompasses all second-semester students enrolled in the English for Business communication course at Universitas Bhinneka PGRI. Given the small number of participants, the entire population was selected as the sample, known as census sampling. This approach ensures comprehensive and detailed data collection from all individuals in the study group.

The primary instrument used for data collection is a set of open-ended interview questions designed to elicit detailed responses from students. The questions focus on various aspects of PBL implementation, such as effectiveness, engagement, relevance to real-world situations, and challenges faced. This qualitative method allows for in-depth exploration of students' perspectives and experiences [17]. Data were collected through individual interviews with the students, during which each participant answered a series of nine open-ended questions related to their perceptions of PBL. These interviews were conducted in a structured format to ensure consistency and to gather rich, descriptive data.

The collected data were then analyzed using qualitative techniques to identify common themes and patterns in students' responses. This analysis involved coding the responses to categorize and interpret various aspects of students' perceptions. The goal was to provide a comprehensive understanding of how PBL impacts students' learning experiences and outcomes.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the "English for Business communication" course for Semester 2 of the Economics Education Program consists of 13 sessions, each lasting 90 minutes, across one semester. The PBL approach adopted by the lecturer emphasizes active students involvement in real-world projects relevant to the course material and the independent curriculum. In the context of the "English for Business communication" class, PBL is executed through a series of activities designed to enhance

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[16] Chloé Littzen-Brown et al., "Unbearable Suffering While Working as a Nurse during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Qualitative Descriptive Study," *International Journal of Nursing Studies Advances*, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnsa.2023.100127.

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students' English language skills within a business context. The implementation is divided into three main phases.

Phase One: Product Identification and Presentation

This phase is conducted over 3 sessions. Students are tasked with selecting a product to promote. They must present the benefits and advantages of the chosen product to the class. This activity aids in developing students' speaking and presentation skills in English, as well as their critical thinking abilities regarding the products they select.

Phase Two: Business Communication via Email

The second phase spans 5 sessions, where students engage in simulated business communication through email. Activities include drafting offer emails, responding to emails, receiving offer emails, confirming, following up on offers, and declining offers. All tasks are performed in English, aimed at enhancing students' formal and professional communication skillsin English.

Phase Three: Field Observation and Product Promotion

The final phase is completed over 5 sessions. Students are required to visit the field, survey vendors, and gather information related to profit, production, and sales. Additionally, they must create product pamphlets and offer brochures, which are then presented to the class. This phase involves not only English language skills but also data analysis and marketing skills.

The study on students' perceptions of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the "English for Business communication" course at Universitas Bhinneka reveals several key insights into the effectiveness and impact of this pedagogical approach. Students reported that the initiation of projects involved structured group discussions to divide tasks and develop a comprehensive work plan, which was essential for managing their time and ensuring that all aspects of the project were thoroughly addressed [18]. They highlighted the significance of planning and scheduling, as these strategies enabled them to stay organized and meet deadlines effectively. Additionally, students conducted preliminary research to gather relevant information before embarking on their tasks, which included exploring business-related topics and reviewing pertinent materials.

In terms of tools used for translation, editing, and design, students employed a range of resources to support their work. Google Translate and other translation applications were frequently used to overcome language barriers, allowing students to translate challenging words and phrases. Online dictionaries, such as those provided by Cambridge and Oxford, were also instrumental in clarifying word meanings and usage. For designing and editing, students utilized Canva and PowerPoint to create professional-looking promotional materials and presentations. These tools facilitated the production of high-quality project outputs, while additional translation and editing apps ensured accuracy and clarity in their work.

The implementation of PBL had a markedly positive effect on students' English language learning processes. Students reported that PBL significantly increased their engagement with course material by providing real-world context to their learning. This practical approach helped them understand how English is applied in business scenarios, leading to improved

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[18] M Nashoihul Ibad and Tasnim Saelaemae, "Strengthening Digital Literacy in Online Time Management Among" 3, no. 2 (2024): 105–15.

vocabulary and overall language proficiency. The hands-on nature of PBL also enhanced their reading skills, as students were required to read and review various English texts, such as pamphlets, brochures, and business emails. This constant exposure improved their comprehension and interpretation of complex texts, while expanding their vocabulary and understanding of business-related language.

PBL also had a substantial impact on students' writing skills. The frequent requirement to produce various written documents, including business emails and promotional materials, provided ample opportunities for writing practice. This consistent exercise in writing helped students refine their abilities and develop professional writing skills. Constructive feedback from peers and instructors further supported their improvement, allowing students to identify and correct errors, which contributed to higher-quality written work.

Moreover, PBL positively influenced students' speaking skills. The numerous opportunities for speaking practice, through presentations and group discussions, played a crucial role in developing their public speaking abilities and fluency. Students reported increased confidence in their ability to communicate effectively in English, which was bolstered by their regular practice and interactions with both peers and external stakeholders during field activities.

Students also noted a significant boost in motivation and enthusiasm due to PBL. The interactive and practical nature of the projects made learning more enjoyable and engaging compared to traditional lecture-based methods. The real-world applications of their work provided a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction, which further enhanced their motivation to participate actively in the course [19]. The preference for group work over individual tasks was evident, as students found collaboration to be more enjoyable and beneficial. Working in groups allowed for idea sharing, problem-solving, and mutual support, which enriched their learning experience and increased their confidence.

Lastly, students identified specific aspects of the tasks that were particularly motivating. Presentations provided an opportunity to showcase their work and receive feedback, which was both rewarding and stimulating. The creation of promotional materials, such as brochures and pamphlets, allowed for creative expression and practical application of their skills. Field activities, involving direct interaction with sellers and real-world business environments, offered valuable insights and made the learning process dynamic and engaging.

Overall, the study indicates that students have a positive perception of PBL in the "English for Business communication" course [20]. They reported notable improvements in their English language skills, increased motivation, and a more engaging learning experience. The combination of group work and practical tasks, such as presentations and material creation, proved to be effective in enhancing their educational outcomes and providing a meaningful learning experience [21].

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[19] M Nashoihul Ibad, "Pendampingan Literasi Digital Dan Pengembangan Potensi Diri ' Produktif d i Dunia Digital ,'" *AL MU'AZARAH: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 01, no. 02 (2024): 86–97.

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CONCLUSION

The study titled *"Project-Based Learning as a Method to Strengthen Communication: Students' Insights in Business English Education"* highlights the significant potential of Project-Based Learning (PBL) as an innovative approach to enhancing communication skills in an English for Business context. Through its structured phases—product identification, email-based communication, and field observation—PBL integrates practical, real-world applications into the learning process. This method not only fosters improvements in students' speaking, writing, and reading skills but also develops their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, making learning more meaningful and relevant to their future careers.

Moreover, the study reveals that PBL effectively increases students' engagement and motivation by encouraging collaboration [22], creativity, and active participation. Group-based tasks allow for mutual learning and the exchange of ideas, while the use of digital tools like Canva and PowerPoint equips students with practical, workplace-relevant skills. Students also reported greater confidence in their ability to communicate in English, driven by consistent practice and the real-world applications of the projects. These findings underline PBL's strength as a learner-centered approach that bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

Despite its numerous benefits, the study acknowledges challenges in PBL implementation, including the need for thorough planning, adequate resources, and teacher readiness. Addressing these challenges is crucial for maximizing the effectiveness of PBL in educational settings. Overall, this research provides valuable insights into how PBL can transform language learning into an engaging and impactful process, offering practical guidance for educators aiming to develop innovative, student-focused teaching strategies that align with global professional demands.

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