Implementing Project-Based Learning in Writing Course: A Case Study in the ELT

Ayu Fatmawati

Faculty of Language and Arts Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

ayufatmawati@upi.edu

* Correspondence: ayufatmawati@upi.edu

Abstract: Project-based learning has an advantage in which its stages are flexibly modified in accordance with course needs and goals. Thus, the flexibility of project-based learning stages provides a wide opportunity for language teachers to determine and design their own teaching stages before implementing them in the classroom. This article aims to describe the design of project-based learning in writing courses for college students, especially in the English language teaching. The participants are the writing lecturer, writing students, and the researcher itself. The research utilized a qualitative approach in which a single case study was employed. Data were collected through classroom observation, interview, documentation, and analyzed using descriptive analysis. The findings showed that, in general, the project-based learning in writing course covers four stages e.g. planning, designing, monitoring, and evaluating. Hopefully, the result of this research can be used as a guidance for lecturers who want to teach writing courses using project-based learning.

Keywords: English language teaching, project-based learning, writing course

1. Introduction

Since it has lots of benefits, the project-based learning becomes an interesting topic to discuss among the educational practitioners. The project-based learning can facilitate learners' autonomy, improve their motivation, and improve the students' willingness to communicate (Farouck, 2016; Hafner & Miller, 2011; Harianto et al., 2020)[1]–[3]. Those skills are needed in the 21st century. Because there are no rules regarding the stages in implementing project-based learning, its stages can be modified in accordance with the needs as long as it still refers to its characteristics which make project-based learning applicable in various fields (Johnson & Cuevas, 2016); Bito et al., 2021; Herry Setyawan et al., 2019). The flexible stages make this method applicable to be implemented in various fields of studies, various learning conditions, and various learner conditions. Unfortunately, this condition encourages teachers to design their own learning according to the characteristics of project-based learning.

The project-based learning (hereafter PbL) comes from a philosophical thought of Dewey, (1974) who mentioned that learning begins with the curiosity of the learners in a spiral part of inquiry (Monk, 2013; Rifai et al., 2020; Shalahuddin et al., 2021). The idea gives a contribution to the emergence of constructivism, a philosophy of knowledge, which is known as cognitive constructivism theory and social constructivism theory. The difference between

these two theories are cognitive constructivism, proposed by Piaget, emphasizes and discusses constructivism of the learning process personally, while social constructivism, proposed by Vygotsky, develops constructivism of the learning process socially (Suparno, 2001; Vygotsky, 1997; Wardhani et al., 2022).

As there is no one specific existing definition of PbL, the definition of PbL is stressed on specific characteristics, principles, or motives. The characteristics of PbL involves: (1) the solution of a problem set by the students although it is not required; (2) the initiative by the student or group of students, and requires a variety of educational activities; (3) the result in an end product (e.g., thesis, report, design plans, computer program and model); (4) the condition which work often goes on for a considerable length of time; and (5) teaching staff in an advisory, rather than authoritarian and they role at any or all of the stages (Nurhidayati, 2017; Saptaria & Setyawan, 2021). The principle of project-based learning is the question or problem which is served to organize and drive activities. These activities culminated in a final product that addresses the driving question (Adderley, 1975). PbL is also defined as a learner-centered strategy grounded by a driving question or problem that requires the learner to conduct inquiry and creates objects as the representative of their learning (Blumenfeld et al., 1991). Although the goals of PbL are to create a final product, some activities such as questioning, problem-solving, designing projects, and working in groups cannot be overlooked.

To achieve the goals, teachers need to know the stages of PbL before implementing it. The stages or procedure of PbL can be modified in accordance with the needs as long as it still refers to its characteristics, so the implementation of PbL in every occasion may vary. The PbL activities consist of three stages: (1) planning – it consists of choosing topics, searching resources and organizing, (2) creating and implementing – covering the activities of developing thought and documentation then coordinating and blending, and (3) processing – conducting a reflection and follow-up (Han & Bhattacharya, 2001; Hastuti & Setyawan, 2021). During the implementation of those stages, the teacher takes a role as a facilitator who convinces that every student contributes actively in their group. The other sources describe PbL activities into three stages: preparation problems, integration, and evaluation. Basically, it is similar with the other model. Things that differentiate this model is due to the term of integration which consists of number activities with respect to the preparation and execution of a project steps, such as designing and setting up equipment for the project, determining the method, forming the members of group and project distribution, gathering information, and completing project (Budiman & Samani, 2021; Pearlman & Thomas, 2000). In this research, the project-based learning is implemented in the writing course. This course is known as a compulsory course in the English Education study program. In the higher education level, students focus on learning academic writing.

Academic writing can be defined into three focuses: purposes, language features used, and users. Further, because of different definitions and competences of academic writing stated by some experts, the definition of academic writing is clearly required to state. The academic writing viewed from its purposes is defined as a kind of writing which is specifically used to document and communicate knowledge (Monippally & Pawar, 2008; Setyawan et al., 2018). The other purposes of academic writing are reporting the result of research, answering the questions in an academic setting, discussing an academic subject, and reviewing or giving critique previous studies (Bailey, 2014). Based on its language feature, academic writing is defined as a kind of writing which requires specific language features (Richards & Miller,

2006; Saptaria & Setyawan, 2021). Taking into account, students cannot write as freely as they want because there are some rules in every kind of text. Moreover, sentences used in academic writing tend to be more complex than other kinds of writing (Hartley, 2008; Hogue, 1996; Sari & Setiawan, 2021). Therefore, non-native speakers can easily understand the content of the text since it is organized systematically (Musa et al., 2011). In terms of users, academic writing is usually used to scholars and other knowledgeable readers who are familiar with knowledge (Andayani, 2020; Soeprajitno et al., 2019a, 2019b). It is usually used in the school environment especially in higher education. For tertiary education level, the academic writing targeted audiences are lecturers or students/ classmates (Praba et al., 2018). Academic writing is taught in higher education as long as writing a thesis becomes one of the final requirements for achieving a bachelor degree.

Referring from the aforementioned definition, it can be concluded that academic writing is writing which requires specific language features in order to deliver knowledge among the academic environment. To compose an academic writing, students should pay attention to some rules such as language features and organization. The rules are made to make the reader easy in understanding the content, so knowledge in the writing will be well-delivered.

Concerning the issues of project-based learning, there have been many studies in this area especially in ELT context. Among others, however, most of them (Farouck, 2016; Zaki & Rosa, 2014) only capture the effect of project-based learning without providing the clear implementation of it. Meanwhile, in terms of the study dealing with writing course, there is also a study (Fragoulis & Tsiplakides, 2009) have been conducted. Unfortunately, this study only focuses on the procedure text for senior high school students. From this description, there is no identified study aiming at describing the process of implementing project-based learning in writing courses for college students. Taking into consideration the background above, this article aims to describe the design of project-based learning in writing courses for college students, especially in the English language teaching. It presents the stages of project-based learning in writing courses which have been designed by lecture.

2. Methodology

Guided by the research aims, this study used qualitative research with a single case study. The method was employed based on a number of reasons. Firstly, it aimed at describing the natural phenomenon. This research captured the classroom activity during the implementation of project-based learning. Secondly, it also aimed at capturing the teacher's work in planning and designing the project-based learning activity. This research was undertaken at a writing course in the English education study program. The site was chosen because academic writing is the focus of higher education especially in Indonesia. The data was collected using observation, interview, and documentation. In the observation, there were some research instruments such as; video recorder, observational checklist, and researcher field note. The observation was conducted while the teacher implements project-based learning in the writing course. The observational guide was taken from the main characteristic of project-based learning; they are planning, designing, creating, and evaluating. The summary of each characteristic is displayed in Table 1.

Then, the interview is aimed to check some unclear information during the observation. For the interview, the researcher does not use any instrument because this is a semi-structured interview. The questions appeared based on the curiosity found during the observation. The semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to supplement other relevant questions to obtain more information, apart from the observation and document analysis. The interviews

were conducted in the lecturer's native language (i.e., Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Jawa) to avoid a language barrier in conveying a message. The documents needed in this research are syllabus and lesson plan. The researcher got those documents from the lecturer.

3. Result and Discussion

Based on the result of observation, the teacher gave five projects but only the first project that is described in this article. The project is sharing knowledge with the classmates. Firstly, the result of observation showed that teacher divided the students into some group and distributed several learning topics to them. The selection of group member (how many groups in a class) can be varied dealing with the criteria or classroom condition and each group had one topic. But the way to select the group member did not written both in syllabus or lesson plan. Based on the interview, the lecturer did not write the detailed activities in the syllabus or lesson plan because the activities can be different in each class. Here, the teacher had a list of topics in the writing course and he had full authority to decide who worked with each topic. Actually, students could decide their own topic or teacher decided it for them but in this research, the teacher selected the topic for each group because of the condition did not support for students to choose their own topics. Then, the teacher asked each group to learn about the topic and create a summary in the form of power point presentation. According to the teacher's order, the job description was assigned to each group member and then they tried to find the supporting resources. In the project-based learning, the activities which consist of choosing topics, searching resources and organizing the job is called planning stage [8]. Concerning the aforementioned result, planning stage allows the lecturer to organized some activities based on the course's need. So, it is possible to have different activities in the same course with different classes.

Secondly, the students started to prepare everything (tools, sources, etc) which helped them complete the project while keeping in contact with the other members of the group. The coordination aimed to monitor the progress of the project, discuss the unclear part (if any), and allow the members to give other members a hand in order to finish the project. They did the activities with the members of their group out of the class. In this stage, the leader of the group played an important role in the success of the project-based learning activity. Additionally, the leader was responsible for ensuring each member of the group made an active contribution to the project. In this stage, the teacher did not monitor the activities intensively because it was done out of the classroom. Thus, the task distribution and timeline of the project were determined by the leader. However, it was carried out through group discussion. The activities of determining the roles and responsibility of each group member which previously have been explained were included in the designing stage. These activities need a high order thinking and an autonomous learner. Therefore, project-based learning is suitable for adults rather than for young learners.

Thirdly, the teacher monitored the progress of the project. The monitoring activity aimed to acknowledge students' difficulties and to ensure the accomplishment of each task due to the timeline. Through the monitoring activity, the teacher gave help to the students who needed it. This activity was done during the project creation. This stage ended a week before the presentation in which students had to collect their projects to the teacher for getting feedback. Based on the interview with the lecturer, monitoring is the hardest duty during the implementation of project-based learning. Students are often dishonest with the progress of their project. It is also not easy for a lecturer to monitor the students' activity during the online teaching. This is the reason why students' projects cannot finish on time.

Finally, students presented their project. The presentation was held in a small group. Before the presentation started, students sat with their own group and one member who was pointed as the presenter delivered his presentation about the project to each group. This activity was quite similar to sharing rather than presentation. Further, in this session they were able to talk with no worries because the teacher did not join them. It was undertaken purposefully to stimulate students to speak freely about their topic to their peers. It was held on campus for about thirty minutes. After that, the teacher repeats the presented topic in front of the class while checking students' understanding about the topic. The teacher opened a question-answer session to help students expand and strengthen their knowledge about the learning topic. As the final stage, reflection was done mainly related to the process of project-based learning to the group in general as well as the presenters.

4. Conclusion

Three points of conclusion are drawn from the results and discussions of the study. Firstly, the study confirmed that the project-based learning stages can be modified in accordance with the needs. Some activities in project-based learning are able to be flexibly modified. Secondly, the result showed that there were four main stages in the project-based learning, namely planning, designing, monitoring, and evaluating. Thirdly, the present study revealed that the project-based learning led the students to be an active learner. Unfortunately, this study has some limitations such as; (1) the present study only describes a single case, (2) there is no description of students' response, and (3) the study did not show the effectiveness of project-based learning in teaching writing courses. Therefore, it is suggested to the next researcher to fill up the gap.

5. Authors' Contributions

AF was responsible for the concept, design, and overall result of the research.

6. References

Adderley, K. (1975). *Project methods in higher education*. Society for Research into Higher Education,. http://eduq.info/xmlui/handle/11515/10688

Andayani, R. D. (2020). The Application of Coconut Water at Various Levels of Robustness for Improving The Physiological Quality of Onion True Shallot Seed. *Gontor AGROTECH Science Journal*, *6*(1), 75–95. https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.21111/agrotech.v6i1.3439

Bailey, S. (2014). *Academic writing: A handbook for international students*. Routledge.

Bito, G. S., Fredy, F., & Setyawan, W. H. (2021). Ethnomathematics: Design of Sabuk Tradisional (Keru) Bajawa as A Learning Media For Elementary School. *ELEMENTARY: Islamic Teacher Journal*, *9*(1). https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.21043/elementary.v9i1.9835

Blumenfeld, P. C., Soloway, E., Marx, R. W., Krajcik, J. S., Guzdial, M., & Palincsar, A. (1991). Motivating project-based learning: Sustaining the doing, supporting the learning. *Educational Psychologist*, *26*(3–4), 369–398. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.1991.9653139

Budiman, A., & Samani, M. (2021). The Development of Direct-Contextual Learning: A New Model on Higher Education. *International Journal of Higher Education*, *10*(2),

15–26. https://doi.org/doi:10.5430/ijhe.v10n2p15

Dewey, J. (1974). Religious education as conditioned by modern psychology and pedagogy. *Religious Education*, *69*(1), 5–11. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/0034408740690102

Farouck, I. (2016). A project-based language learning model for improving the willingness to communicate of EFL students. *Journal of Systemics*, *14*(2), 11–18. http://www.iiisci.org/journal/pdv/sci/pdfs/EB193TO16.pdf

Fragoulis, I., & Tsiplakides, I. (2009). Project-Based Learning in the Teaching of English as A Foreign Language in Greek Primary Schools: From Theory to Practice. *English Language Teaching*, *2*(3), 113–119. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1083088

Hafner, C. A., & Miller, L. (2011). Fostering learner autonomy in English for science: A collaborative digital video project in a technological learning environment. *Language Learning & Technology*, *15*(3), 68–86. https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10125/44263/15_03_hafnermiller.pdf

Han, S., & Bhattacharya, K. (2001). Constructionism, learning by design, and project based learning. *Emerging Perspectives on Learning, Teaching, and Technology*, 127–141. http://www.coe.uga.edu/epltt/LearningbyDesign.htm.

Harianto, G. P., Rusijono, R., Masitoh, S., & Setyawan, W. H. (2020). Collaborative-Cooperative Learning Model to Improve Theology Students'characters: Is it Effective? *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan*, *39*(2). https://doi.org/10.21831/cp.v39i2.31272

Hartley, J. (2008). *Academic writing and publishing: A practical handbook*. Routledge.

Hastuti, S. W. M., & Setyawan, W. (2021). Community Service in Study Potential Technology of Education Tour and Business Prospects of Traders in Tulungagung. *Mitra Mahajana: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, *2*(2), 134–144. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37478/mahajana.v2i2.952

Herry Setyawan, W., Budiman, A., Septa Wihara, D., Setyarini, T., Nurdyansyah, Rahim, R., & Barid Nizarudin Wajdi, M. (2019). The effect of an android-based application on T-Mobile learning model to improve students' listening competence. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, *1175*, 012217. https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1175/1/012217

Hogue, A. (1996). *First steps in academic writing* (Vol. 1). Longman New York.

Johnson, S. A., & Cuevas, J. (2016). The effects of inquiry project-based learning on student reading motivation and student perceptions of inquiry learning processes. *Georgia Educational Researcher*, *13*(1), 51. https://doi.org/10.20429/ger.2016.130102

Monippally, M. M., & Pawar, B. S. (2008). *Academic writing: A guide for management students and researchers*. SAGE Publications India.

Monk, D. F. (2013). John Dewey and adult learning in museums. *Adult Learning*, *24*(2), 63–71. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/1045159513477842

Musa, F., Mufti, N., Latiff, R. A., & Amin, M. M. (2011). Project-based learning: Promoting meaningful language learning for workplace skills. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *18*, 187–195.

https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.05.027

Nurhidayati, E. (2017). Pedagogi konstruktivisme dalam praksis pendidikan Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Educational Counseling*, *1*(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.30653/001.201711.2

Pearlman, B., & Thomas, J. W. (2000). *Bob Pearlman Home Project-Based Learning 21st Century Learning A REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON PROJECT-BASED LEARNING*.

Praba, L. T., Artini, L. P., & Ramendra, D. P. (2018). Project-based learning and writing skill in EFL: are they related? *SHS Web of Conferences*, *42*, 59. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20184200059

Richards, J. C., & Miller, S. K. (2006). *Doing academic writing in education: Connecting the personal and the professional*. Routledge.

Rifai, M., Masitoh, S., Bachri, B. S., Setyawan, W. H., Nurdyansyah, N., & Puspitasari, H. (2020). Using Electronic Design Automation and Guided Inquiry Learning Model in Higher Engineering Education. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*. https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.080723

Saptaria, L., & Setyawan, W. H. (2021). Desain Pembelajaran Technopreneurship Untuk Meningkatkan Motivasi Berwirausaha Mahasiswa Uniska Kediri. *Prima Magistra: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan*, *2*(1), 77–89. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37478/jpm.v2i1.880

Sari, H. P., & Setiawan, W. H. (2021). Peningkatan Teknologi Pendidik Pesantren Anak Sholeh melalui MEMRiSE: Coaching & Training. *Prima Abdika: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, *1*(3), 81–90. http://e-journal.uniflor.ac.id/index.php/abdika/article/view/1123

Setyawan, W., Rusijono, M., & Jannah, M. (2018). T-Mobile Learning Android Model-Based to Improve Students' Listening Capability. *1st International Conference on Education Innovation (ICEI 2017)*. https://doi.org/10.2991/icei-17.2018.96

Shalahuddin, Y., Rahman, F., & Setyawan, W. H. (2021). Pemodelan Simulasi Untuk Praktikum Teknik Otomasi Industri Berbasis Matlab/Simulink Di SMKN 1 Kediri. *Jurnal Pelayanan Dan Pengabdian Masyarakat (Pamas)*, *5*(1), 15–26. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.52643/pamas.v5i1.1061

Soeprajitno, E. D., Setyawan, W. H., & Wihara, D. S. (2019a). Dampak Pelatihan "Service Excellence" Terhadap Kinerja Karyawan Bank Perkreditan Rakyat (Bpr) Kota Kediri. *Jurnal MEBIS (Manajemen Dan Bisnis)*, *4*(2), 94–102. https://doi.org/10.33005/mebis.v4i2.58

Soeprajitno, E. D., Setyawan, W. H., & Wihara, D. S. (2019b). Faktor Utama Yang Mempengaruhi Nasabah Dalam Mengambil Kredit Di Bank Perkreditan Rakyat (Bpr) Kota Kediri. *Capital: Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Manajemen*, *3*(1), 48–59. https://doi.org/DOI: http://doi.org/10.25273/capital.v3i1.5063

Suparno, P. (2001). *Teori perkembangan kognitif jean piaget*. Kanisius.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1997). *The collected works of LS Vygotsky: Problems of the theory and history of psychology* (Vol. 3). Springer Science & Business Media.

Wardhani, N., Yuniasanti, R., Pratiwiri, R., & Iqbal, M. (2022). CASE STUDY: PSYCHOPRENEUR'S INTENTIONS IN PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS IN

YOGYAKARTA AND JAKARTA. *Prima Magistra: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan*, *3*(1), 100–105. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37478/jpm.v3i1.1445

Zaki, A., & Rosa, R. N. (2014). Using Project Based Learning In Teaching Writing A Procedure Text To Senior High School Students. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, *2*(2), 1–7. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24036/jelt.v2i2.3699