The Implementation of Project Based Learning in English Language Teaching at Rural School: A Conceptual Review

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Abstract

Teaching English as a foreign language in a rural education is challenging. Due to the fact that most schools located in rural areas are not equipped with audio visual aids, it affected the learning strategies used by the teachers which only focus on grammar and mainly use L1 translation. To overcome those problems and also equip students with 21st century skills, Project-Based Learning (PjBL) can be an alternative. Many studies related to PjBL in the EFL context have been conducted and provided benefits. Considering the benefits of PjBL, this paper tries to explore more closely the current practices of PjBL in the EFL context. Using library research by collecting some related books and articles, this paper explained the concept, the procedures, and the assessment of PjBL. It also described the strengths and the weaknesses of applying PjBL in the EFL context. Furthermore, this paper presented some teaching techniques in PjBL which can be applied to promote EFL students' language skills at rural schools. This review will give an implication for English teachers, especially at rural schools in understanding the concept and practice of PjBL which promotes 21st century skills.

Keywords

ELT
PjBL
Rural School
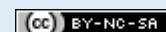
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Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language in a rural education is challenging. Some previous studies have been revealed that rural school has lack of learning facilities and sources (Faisal & Ali, 2021; Izquierdo et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2020; Prabowo & Akmal, 2019; Putri, 2021; Saiful & Triyono, 2018). Due to the fact that most schools which are located in rural areas are not equipped with proper technology, including audio visual aids, it affected the learning techniques and strategies used by the teachers which mostly focus on grammar and mainly use L1 translation. To overcome those problems and also equip students with 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, character, and culture, Project-based Learning (PjBL) is one of the alternatives. PjBL is a learning model in which students learn by actively participating and engaging in concrete and meaningful projects. According to Patton (2012), PjBL refers to students designing, planning and carrying out an extended project that produces a product, presentation, or publication.

However, not all learning methods with the result of a project are categorized as PjBL. According to Hamidah et al., (2020), learning ended with a project and PjBL are different. Learning ended with a project is an extension of the knowledge implementation which students have acquired in the classroom. Furthermore, the project is generally assigned at the end of the lesson, so the project is completed without an inquiry process and it can be done individually or in a group. On the other hand, a project in PjBL has a distinctive character. Students experience an inquiry process from the beginning, develop questions related to the topic and what they want to learn. The teachers in PjBL are the facilitators, not the lecturers. They assist the students to develop the information and skills they need to be successful.

PjBL has been implemented in many fields of studies, including in English Language Teaching. Many studies have proven that PjBL promotes students' language skills (see Karyawati & Ashadi, 2018; Sirisrimangkorn, 2018; Torres & Rodriguez, 2017). It also improves students' engagement during the learning, enhances students' creativity, and promotes students to collaborate (Astawa et al., 2017; Barak, 2012; Stoller, 2013).

Considering the benefits of PjBL, this paper will explore more closely the PjBL practices, techniques and assessment. Therefore, this paper is written to elaborate the concept, the procedures of PjBL, and how to assess PjBL in an EFL classroom. Furthermore, the strengths and weaknesses of applying PjBL in an EFL classroom are also explained. Moreover, it presents some teaching techniques in PjBL that are suitable to be conducted in rural schools to enhance EFL students' language skills.

Method

This paper employed a library research method. The data and information were collected from books and articles related to the current practices of PjBL in EFL context which can be applied at rural schools and presented descriptively. The information included the concept of PjBL, the procedures in applying PjBL, assessment in PjBL, the strengths of PjBL, the weaknesses of PjBL, and PjBL ideas for EFL classrooms at rural schools.

Result and Discussion

The Concept of Project Based Learning

PjBL is not a new instructional approach, nor a new method in language teaching. Many philosophers and educators have discussed it before: Socrates, John Dewey, Carl Rogers, Lev Vygotsky, and many others have stressed the importance of placing the students at the core of their learning by providing them opportunities to investigate and find solutions to the real life problems (Tavares & Potter, 2018).

PjBL is a constructivist and student-centered approach which organizes learning with concrete project outputs (Kimsesiz et al., 2017). According to Rachmajanti et al. (2020), PjBL is a learning model which actively engages students by providing them opportunities to be involved in a project to produce a product through scientific steps in order to achieve attitude, knowledge and skills. Furthermore, in PjBL, students actively participate and engage in the learning process by exploring, analyzing data, finding problem solving, making conclusions, creating products, and sharing knowledge (Gras-Velázquez, 2020).

There are some principles of PjBL that teachers need to consider in applying this model in the classroom. According to Larmer et al. (2015) in Hamidah et al. (2020), PjBL has seven primary standards as the main principles. 1.) Providing a problem or question. The project is iniated by a meaningful problem to be solved or a question to answer at the appropriate level. Al-Balushi and Al-Aamri (2014) explained that PjBL is considered to be a particular type of inquiry-based learning where the context of learning is provided through authentic questions and problems within real-world practices 2.) PjBL involves an inquiry process. Students engage in an extended process of posing questions, finding resources, and applying information. 3.) The next principle of PjBL is authenticity or contextuality. The project is related to students' interest or their real-life context. 4.) Students' voice and choice. Students make some decisions about the project, including how they work, what they create, and express their own ideas in their own voice. 5.) Reflection. Students and teachers reflect on their learning, the effectiveness of the project's activities, the obstacles may arise and obtain the solution to overcome the problems. 6.) Critique and revision. The students give, receive, and apply feedback to improve the process of the project. 7.) Last principle in PjBL is a public product. Students make their project work by presenting and sharing it in front of the class.

To sum up, project-based learning in ELT emphasizes students' context and collaborative learning while building the knowledge. The goal of PjBL is to engage students in a language learning process that fosters interaction among students, connects to the real-world and provides opportunities to use meaningful content to finish the project.

The Procedures in Applying Project-Based Learning

According to Rachmajanti et al. (2020) there are six steps in conducting PjBL. First, choosing project topics. In this activity, students and teacher discuss a project topic or theme. The topic chosen should be related to a particular basic competence. It also should be associated with the students' real life context. Second, designing project procedures. The teacher, as a facilitator, has a responsibility to assist the students to produce the product step by step. Third, creating a project timeline. The students set a work schedule assisted by the teacher in order to finish the project punctually. This activity will improve students' skills in self and time management as well as teamwork. According to Beth Werrel (2018), setting the deadline is important to achieve the goal. Fourth, monitoring. In this step, teachers need to monitor students' progress in conducting the project. Next is reporting. After the project is done, the students have to write a report and present the product in front of the class. Last is reflection. At the end, peers express ideas or comments and the teacher provides constructive feedback for revision or improvement.

Assessment in Project Based Learning

According to Hanardi (2015), Project-based assessment is defined as the combination of projects and assessments. He further explains that it is a tool to measure whether the objectives of learning are achieved through the teaching and learning process. PjBL assessment does not concern only on the final product. Students should be assessed throughout the process of learning. The assessment includes self assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment (Patton, 2012; Williams, 2017). Self assessment emphasizes the importance of student reflection, not just grade the students. Peer assessment is a key point in project-based learning assessment. The students can learn to evaluate others' work and give feedback and suggestion. In teacher assessment, it needs to provide rubrics for the assessment and present it to the students.

Larmer, et al. (2015) in Hamidah, et al. (2020) defines the assessment in PjBL into two forms; summative assessment and formative assessment. A summative assessment is conducted to assess the students' competence based on the basic competence or indicators stated in the lesson plan. It can be carried out by the teachers when the project-based learning process is completed. Meanwhile, a formative assessment is conducted in the process of learning. All the stages in PjBL can be the variables to assess. Moreover, teachers and peers can conduct attitude, knowledge, and skills assessment.

The Strengths of Project-Based Learning

There are some strengths of PjBL explained in the previous studies. First, PjBL promotes 21st century skills. It increases students' engagement by participating in meaningful activities which acquire authentic language use, facilitates students in content learning, and supports students' creativity (Assyahbana, 2019; Izzah & Diana, 2021). Moreover, PjBL can promote students' engagement, confidence, self-efficacy, collaborative learning ability, and social learning. In the process of learning, higher order thinking skills and critical thinking of the students are developed (Astawa et al., 2017; Izzah & Diana, 2021). It also motivates them to be more confident and experience fun learning.

Second, PjBL is advantageous for students' autonomy (Barak, 2012; Sirisrimangkorn, 2018), especially when they are actively engaged in project learning (e.g. choice of topic). It is developed through working on the project. It is also said that PjBL could foster self-regulated learning and promote students' conceptual knowledge within a systematic process of documenting and reflecting on learning.

Third, PjBL improves students' language skills, especially speaking. PjBL is effective in fostering students' speaking skill (Dewi et al., 2019; Karyawati & Ashadi, 2018; Sirisrimangkorn, 2018). It motivates students to speak L2 confidently and experience learning in context. Moreover, some studies have proven that PjBL enhances students' vocabulary performances (see Astuti et al., 2021; Kholis & Aziz, 2020; Kimsesiz et al., 2017). They also found that PjBL developed students' motivation in vocabulary learning.

The Weaknesses of Project-Based Learning

Although there are many benefits of PjBL, there are also some weaknesses that teachers need to consider. First, it is time consuming. Torres & Rodriguez (2017) claimed that PjBL requires teachers and students to be more creative in the classroom and also is more demanding in terms of time allocated. Another challenge is grading individual students in a group project. There are always some students who do not contribute and some contribute more. It is not an easy job for teachers to carry out the assessment. Williams (2017) suggested that teachers should use several assessment tools, such as self and peer assessment. From the explanation above, the challenges in applying PjBL can be avoided by the teachers if the teacher and students can prepare the project carefully. The quality of communication between teacher and students is also an important thing.

Project Based Learning Ideas for EFL Classrooms at Rural Schools

One of the PjBL techniques that was recommended by previous study is the interview project. Torres and Rodriguez (2017) used this kind of project to ninth grade students in public school, located in Colombia. The data revealed that students were motivated to speak L2 and did not only focus on grammar practice. In addition, students became more responsible and autonomous.

Another ideas of project based learning in EFL classroom was Drama Project. Integrating PjBL with drama has been conducted by some previous studies (see Karyawati & Ashadi, 2018; Sirisrimangkorn, 2018). They explained that the use of PjBL focusing on drama in the language classrooms provides opportunities for students to speak a foreign language in a communicative context. Using a drama project in an EFL classroom provides many benefits for the students. Firstly, students are provided with opportunities for English speaking practice. Secondly, students experience a functional context to use their speaking skills. Thirdly, it motivates students to speak confidently. In addition, the process of project-based learning and drama reflect students' cooperative working skills which are useful for them in the future. Furthermore, Fiftinova, Inderawati, and Rosmalina (2018) added that by reading a drama script, students' reading comprehension skills are also improved. There are stages of activities in the implementation of Project-based Drama Learning: Critical Reading, Character Analysis, Class Discussion, Script Writing, Cast of Characters and Team Formation, Hot Seat Interview, Team Presentation, Drama Practices, Rehearsal, and Drama on Stage. From those previous studies, It can be concluded that a drama project is recommended to be used as a teaching

technique in EFL classrooms, both rural and urban schools to promote students' language skills, especially speaking and reading skills.

Another technique in PjBL that can be applied by EFL teachers is Poster Project. This study has been conducted by Assyahbana (2019). He used poster as a product the students in senior high school need to complete in writing narrative text. He suggested the teachers optimally present the process step of writing and give detailed feedback for the improvement of students' projects. He further explained that teaching narrative text by using poster project could develop students' creativity and responsibility in teamwork.

Conclusion

PjBL is an outstanding approach as it is applicable to all grades of learners and almost in all areas of education. It is also effectively used in EFL classrooms, both urban and rural schools. PjBL provides students opportunities to experience real-life world context learning and enhance their language competence. Some ideas of teaching can be integrated by teachers with PjBL and implemented in EFL context, even though they are at rural schools. Those are recommended by previous studies, such as interviews, drama and poster projects. This review will give some implications for English teachers, especially at rural schools in understanding the concept and practice of PjBL which promotes 21st century skills.

Acknowledgment

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