
The Implementation of Project-based Learning in English Classrooms: A Case Study at SMKN 1 Mataram

Irma Rizki Utami*, Ahmad Zamzam, Lalu Jaswadi Putera

English Education Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Mataram, Jl. Majapahit No. 62, Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara, 83125. Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: irmarizkiutami@gmail.com

Article History

Received : April 07th, 2026

Revised : April 27th, 2026

Accepted : May 03th, 2026

Abstract: This research examined the implementation of Project-based Learning (PjBL) in English classes at SMKN 1 Mataram. The study aimed to examine students' engagement, autonomy, and attitudes during project activities, analyse the relationship between PjBL and constructivist learning in vocational education, and provide insights for teacher training, curriculum development, and classroom practices in Indonesian vocational schools. This study used a qualitative case study design involving one class, Class XII LPS 1 majoring *Layanan Perbankan Syariah* (Sharia Banking Service), consisting of 1 English teacher and 28 students selected through purposive sampling technique. The data collection was employed through observation checklists, document analysis, and field notes, with validated instruments to ensure credibility. The data analysis was conducted thematically to identify patterns in the implementation of PjBL. The findings showed that the implementation of PjBL varied across two observed meetings and remained incomplete. In the first meeting, the teacher only implemented the initial stage by introducing essential questions related to job interviews. Student participation was limited, and no further stages such as project planning or development were conducted. The teacher also shared a personal experience of being rejected for a job in Belgium because she wore a hijab to engage students in discussion. In the second meeting, the implementation improved as the teacher facilitated group work, introduced a project, and monitored students' activities. However, important stages such as detailed planning, presentation, assessment, and reflection were still absent. Although some progress was evident, the implementation did not represent the complete cycle of PjBL and failed to fully support constructivist principles or student autonomy. The study concludes that comprehensive teacher training, structured planning, and the implementation of all PjBL stages are necessary to maximize its effectiveness in vocational English classrooms.

Keywords: Constructivism; English learning; Project-based Learning; Vocational education.

INTRODUCTION

Education in the twenty-first century requires a fundamental shift from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered learning that prepares learners to face real-world challenges. In Indonesia, this transformation has been reflected in the ongoing education reforms under the *Merdeka Belajar* policy, which emphasizes creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication as core competencies. Vocational schools, such as SMKN 1 Mataram, play a crucial role in developing students who are not only skilled in technical aspects but also able to think independently and adapt to global demands. Project-based Learning (PjBL) has been widely

recognized as an effective approach to achieve these goals because it encourages learners to apply knowledge in authentic contexts and develop autonomy through meaningful projects (Bell, 2021). However, despite the growing popularity of PjBL, its implementation in Indonesian vocational English classrooms still faces many practical and conceptual challenges that require further exploration.

Many Indonesian studies report that PjBL enhances students' motivation, collaboration, and creativity, yet several teachers still find it difficult to integrate this model into their regular lessons (Rohmaniyah & Asih, 2024; Aisyah & Novita, 2025; Pratiwi et al., 2025; Aslan, 2026). teachers are expected to align their teaching with industry needs while ensuring that students can use

English for professional purposes. This dual expectation creates a tension between curriculum demands and classroom realities. Such challenges open an important space for qualitative inquiry into how PjBL is actually implemented in vocational English settings and how teachers and students experience the process.

Globally, several research has consistently shown that PjBL supports deeper understanding and knowledge transfer (Larmer et al., 2022; Miller & Krajcik, 2019). Studies in Australia and the United Kingdom have demonstrated that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) contributes to the development of critical thinking, self-directed learning, and lifelong learning skills that are essential for 21st-century education (Institute for Teaching and Learning Innovation, The University of Queensland, n.d.; Almulla, 2020). In the United States (Maida, 2011), PjBL has been strongly associated with the constructivist paradigm, which conceptualizes learning as an active process in which learners construct knowledge and meaning through interaction, inquiry, collaboration, and reflection (Dewey, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978; Kolb, 1984). Within this perspective, teachers serve as facilitators who guide students to explore problems, collaborate in groups, and present authentic solutions. These global practices resonate strongly with the goals of Indonesia's *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Independent Curriculum), yet their localized adaptation in Indonesian vocational contexts remains underexplored.

One important aspect connected to PjBL is autonomous learning, which encourages students to take ownership of their learning process. In the context of 21st-century education, autonomy is not only about independent work but also about the ability to manage learning goals, monitor progress, and evaluate outcomes (Benson, 2019). Autonomous learners are active, self-motivated, and capable of solving problems using both internal and external resources. In Indonesian vocational schools, fostering autonomy is crucial because students must develop not only language competence but also workplace habits such as initiative, discipline, and responsibility. Nevertheless, studies show that many Indonesian students still rely heavily on teachers for direction and evaluation, indicating that their autonomous learning skills remain limited (Lengkanawati, 2017). Therefore, the exploration of how PjBL nurtures autonomy within real

classroom practices becomes a significant research focus.

The constructivist theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the effectiveness of PjBL in enhancing students' autonomous learning. Constructivism asserts that learners actively build knowledge based on their prior experiences, social interactions, and reflective processes (Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1996). In a constructivist classroom, learning happens through engagement, collaboration, and authentic tasks rather than through passive reception of information. Teachers act as facilitators who scaffold learning experiences to help students connect prior knowledge with new understanding. This approach aligns naturally with the goals of PjBL, where projects serve as a platform for students to explore problems, apply concepts, and produce tangible outcomes. When implemented effectively, PjBL can transform the traditional teacher-centered paradigm into a dynamic, learner-centered process that promotes self-regulation, autonomy, and lifelong learning skills (Bell, 2021; Zhou, Jantharajit, & Srikhao, 2025). Although PjBL is grounded in a well-established theoretical framework, its practical implementation in Indonesia presents considerable challenges. Several studies have identified gaps between teachers' understanding of PjBL concepts and their practical application in classrooms (Susanti et al., 2023; Syahdia et al., 2024; Irawan, 2025).

Teachers often express uncertainty about how to design projects that align with curriculum objectives, assess student outcomes, and manage group dynamics effectively. Moreover, students may perceive PjBL as time-consuming and demanding, particularly when they are accustomed to traditional learning methods focused on memorization and examination results. These findings suggest a critical research gap in understanding of how PjBL is practiced in vocational contexts, how teachers adapt to constraints, and how students respond to the model. At SMKN 1 Mataram, where English serves both academic and vocational purposes, investigating these dynamics will provide valuable insights into how PjBL can be optimized for vocational education.

Furthermore, a major challenge lies in ensuring the compatibility of PjBL with national educational policies and curriculum frameworks. The Indonesian *Kurikulum Merdeka* encourages

schools to implement project-based assessments as part of the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Pancasila Learner Profile) framework, which emphasizes 6 key competencies: faith, independence, critical thinking, creativity, cooperation, and global citizenship. However, there remains a mismatch between policy aspirations and classroom realities, especially in vocational schools where teachers face time, resource, and training constraints (Bound, 2011). The limited availability of contextualized English materials and lack of teacher training in PjBL pedagogy hinder effective implementation. Therefore, it becomes necessary to examine how teachers at SMKN 1 Mataram interpret and apply PjBL principles under the current curriculum framework, and what factors influence their success or challenges.

Previous studies in Indonesia and abroad have emphasized the importance of teacher adaptability and reflection in implementing PjBL effectively. In Europe, for instance, research by Cojorn (2024). revealed that teachers who integrated reflection and peer collaboration improved their ability to design meaningful projects and evaluate outcomes holistically. Similarly, in the Indonesian context, Yusupova et al. (2025) found that English teachers who practiced reflective teaching were more capable of linking PjBL activities with students' real-life vocational experiences. These findings reinforce the notion that teacher agency and continuous professional development are crucial in sustaining PjBL practices. Yet, few studies have examined how teachers and students co-construct project-based experiences in Indonesian vocational schools, highlighting a need for localized qualitative research.

The current study aims to fill this research gap by examining the implementation of PjBL in English classrooms at SMKN 1 Mataram. It explores 3 important inquiries of how teachers design and manage PjBL activities, how students engage in project tasks, and what challenges or opportunities arise during the process. This focus is particularly relevant for the reason that SMKN 1 Mataram represents a vocational environment where English is taught as both a general subject and a professional tool. By analysing the lived experiences of teachers and students, the current study seeks to uncover how PjBL contributes to developing student autonomy, creativity, and communicative competence in line with constructivist principles. The findings will

contribute to improving the quality of English teaching in vocational schools and provide evidence-based recommendations for effective integration of PjBL.

METHODS

Research Design

The research employed a qualitative approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of classroom practices and participant experiences in a natural educational setting. The research was conducted in Class XII LPS 1 (Sharia Banking Services) at SMKN 1 Mataram from 25 February to 4 March 2026. The study focused on examining the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in English classes, particularly the teaching process, as well as the challenges and opportunities experienced by teachers and students during its implementation.

Research Participants

The participants of this research consisted of 28 students from Class XII LPS 1, majoring in Sharia Banking Services, and one English teacher at SMKN 1 Mataram. The participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. This technique enabled the researchers to select participants who possessed direct experience and relevant knowledge regarding the phenomenon under investigation. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), purposive sampling ensures that participants can provide meaningful and informative data relevant to the research objectives.

Data Collection

The data collection was conducted through classroom observations that observed how English teachers implemented the PjBL process in the participating class, and what challenges and opportunities faced by teachers and students during its implementation in English lessons. The researchers observed the implementation of PBL by English teachers and analysed the challenges and opportunities faced by teachers and students during its implementation in English lessons. The techniques used to collect data for this study were observation checklists and document analysis. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), data collection can be divided into two methods: (1) observation checklists and (2) document analysis.

Observation checklists were used to obtain data through direct observation of participants'

activities and interactions in natural settings. The observation was conducted over a two-week period, during which two meetings, each lasting 45 minutes, the aim of the observation was to evaluate the teaching and learning processes in English classes using the PjBL method in Class XII at LPS 1. The researchers observed the teaching and learning processes taking place in the class. the checklists were used to observe teachers facilitating the learning process. Maudi (2016) and Fahlevi (2022) state that there are six procedures in PjBL. First, the teacher starts with the question. It means that, the teacher guides the students to ask the question related to the material. Second, planning the project. It means that, the students make some plans the material/problem that teacher given. Thirdly, create the project. It means that, the students investigate the material in group discussion. Fourthly, monitoring the students. In this part, the teacher monitors the students' project in their group. Fifthly, prepare and present. In here, the students prepare their project and present in the front of the class in each group. Lastly, assess and evaluate. The teacher assesses and evaluates their project. Based on the explanation above, that there are several PjBL procedures. This included observing student engagement during project-based English lessons and the dynamics that occurred during the learning process.

Meanwhile, document analysis was then employed to analyse documents in the form of lesson plan, project results, worksheets and student reflections.

Research Instrument

The primary instruments used in this study were observation checklists and document analysis guidelines. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), observation and document analysis are important instruments in qualitative data collection. The observation checklist was designed based on the six procedures of Project-Based Learning proposed by Fahlevi (2022) and Maudi (2016). These procedures included: (1) starting with essential questions, (2) planning the project, (3) creating the project, (4) monitoring students' progress, (5) preparing and presenting the project, and (6) assessing and evaluating the project outcomes. The checklist was used to observe the teacher's facilitation strategies, students' participation, and classroom interactions throughout the PjBL implementation process.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which involves three simultaneous processes: data reduction, data display, and drawing/verifying conclusions. During the data reduction stage, the raw data obtained from observations and documents were carefully coded and categorised according to emerging themes. The researchers used open coding to identify significant statements and then grouped them into categories such as 'teacher strategies', 'student engagement', and 'assessment challenges'. In the data display stage, these categories were organised into matrices and narrative summaries to visualise relationships and patterns. In the final stage, the researchers interpreted meaning, developed thematic insights, and verified conclusions through member checking and triangulation. This iterative process enabled continuous reflection and refinement, ensuring the analysis remained grounded in the data. The final results are expected to reveal the strengths and limitations of the PjBL implementation at SMKN 1 Mataram, providing deeper insights into its pedagogical impact.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings section is organized into several thematic sections derived from the data analysis process, including teacher practices in implementing PjBL, students' perceptions and learning experiences, as well as the challenges and opportunities encountered during its implementation. Each theme is supported by data obtained from classroom observations, document analysis, and field notes, ensuring a comprehensive and triangulated interpretation of the phenomenon.

1. Teacher Practices in Implementing Project-based Learning in English Classrooms at SMKN 1 Mataram

This section presents the key aspects of PjBL implementation in English classes at SMKN 1 Mataram, focusing on three main components: the strategies employed by teachers, the processes involved in carrying out PjBL activities, and the assessment practices used to evaluate students' learning outcomes. These components are discussed to provide a

comprehensive understanding of how PjBL is designed, implemented, and assessed in the classroom context.

The Strategies Used by English Teacher in Implementing Project-based Learning at SMKN 1 Mataram

The strategies employed in implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in English classrooms were analysed through the lesson plan documents (RPP) prepared by the English teacher of SMKN 1 Mataram. Figure 1 below shows the English lesson plan used for Grade XII of SMKN 1 Mataram. The topic is about 'Authentic Text–

Job Interview'. It contains an identification of student readiness consisting of three aspects: knowledge, skills, and understanding. In terms of knowledge, the students are expected to understand the purposes of job interviews. In terms of skills, the students are expected to be able to ask simple questions in job interviews. In terms of understanding, the students are expected to be able to ask simple questions to find out the personal information needed in job interviews. Based on the analysis of this selected lesson plan, 6 instructional strategies are evident that reflect a well-planned implementation of Project-based Learning (PjBL) for English subject.



Figure 1. The Analysed English Lesson Plan Integrating Project-Based Learning for Grade XII of SMKN 1 Mataram

First, the teacher applies a student-centered and collaborative learning strategy evident from the use of group discussions and collaborative tasks in groups based on the results of the initial assessment. This strategy allows students to actively participate in constructing knowledge together, aligning with the principles

of PjBL that emphasize collaboration and shared responsibility.

Second, the teacher employs a scaffolding strategy through 3 structured learning stages i.e. understanding (*memahami*), applying (*mengaplikasikan*), and reflecting (*merefleksikan*). In the understanding stage,

students are introduced to the concept of job interviews through videos and guided activities such as completing texts and analyzing question forms, providing foundational knowledge before students move to more complex tasks. In the applying stage, students use the learned language structures to create and perform job interview dialogues, which represents the core project activity. Lastly, in the reflecting stage, students evaluate their learning through feedback and reflective journaling that supports deeper learning and autonomy.

Third, the teacher integrates authentic and contextual learning strategies by selecting job interview as the main topic. This topic is closely related to students' vocational needs, making the learning process more meaningful and relevant to real-world contexts. The use of real-life scenarios, such as face-to-face and panel interviews, reflects the application of authentic tasks, which is a key characteristic of PjBL.

Fourth, the teacher utilizes multimodal and digital learning strategies by incorporating digital tools such as YouTube and Canva. The use of video materials helps the students understand real examples of job interviews, while digital platforms supported creative project development. This strategy enhances the students' engagement and accommodates diverse learning styles.

Fifth, the teacher implements a formative assessment and feedback strategy throughout the learning process. Observation, group work, presentations, and individual tasks are used to monitor the students' progress. Additionally, peer feedback and teacher feedback is provided after presentations, allowing the students to reflect on their performance and improve their learning outcomes.

Finally, the teacher finally promotes learner autonomy and reflective learning strategies. The students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning through tasks such as creating their own interview questions, performing dialogues, and writing reflective journals. This approach fosters independence, critical thinking, and self-evaluation that are the essential components of PjBL.

In summary, the strategies planned to be used in the Lesson Plan by the English teacher at SMKN 1 Mataram demonstrate a comprehensive implementation of PjBL, combining collaborative learning, scaffolding, authentic tasks, digital integration, continuous assessment,

and reflective practices to support meaningful and student-centered learning.

The Implementation of Project-based Learning Integrated in English Learning Activities

The implementation of PjBL in English learning activities was analysed through classroom observation checklists conducted during the teaching and learning process at SMKN 1 Mataram. Based on the observation checklists of the implementation performed by the English teacher, it is evident that most of the key indicators of PjBL or the learning steps/syntax were identified that reflect the implementation of PjBL in the English classrooms at SMKN 1 Mataram as follows.

First, the teacher started the lesson by posing guiding questions and encouraging the students to ask questions related to the material. This step aimed to activate the students' prior knowledge and stimulate their curiosity about the topic. *Second*, the teacher asked the students to plan the project. In this stage, students were guided to develop initial ideas and organize their plans based on the given material or problem. *Third*, the teacher instructed the students to create the project. At this stage, the students worked collaboratively in groups to investigate the material and develop their project through discussion and exploration.

Fourth, the teacher monitored the students' progress during the project. The teacher observed each group's activities, provided guidance, and ensured that students stayed on track in completing their tasks. *Fifth*, the teacher asked the students to prepare and present the results of their project. The students organized their work and presented it in front of the class in groups, demonstrating their understanding and communication skills. *Finally*, the teacher assessed and evaluated the students' projects. This stage involved evaluating both the students' performance and the outcomes of their work.

Although most of the procedures were conducted by the teacher and followed by the students, a deeper analysis reveals that there were several important aspects of PjBL that were not optimally implemented by both the teacher and the students. *First*, the development of a strong driving question was not fully evident, as the questions used tended to focus on basic understanding rather than encouraging deeper inquiry or problem-solving. *Second*, the student autonomy in managing the project was still

limited, as most of the learning activities and project directions were determined by the teacher. *Third*, the authenticity of the project was not maximized, since the activities were primarily classroom-based and lacked direct connection to real-world practices or external stakeholders. Lastly, the assessment process appeared to focus more on the final product, such as presentations, rather than comprehensively

evaluating the learning process, including collaboration, critical thinking, and reflection.

Figure 2 below shows the results of the observation checklists. Based on these results, the implementation of PjBL in Meeting 1 and Meeting 2 shows noticeable differences in terms of completeness and execution of its stages as described below.

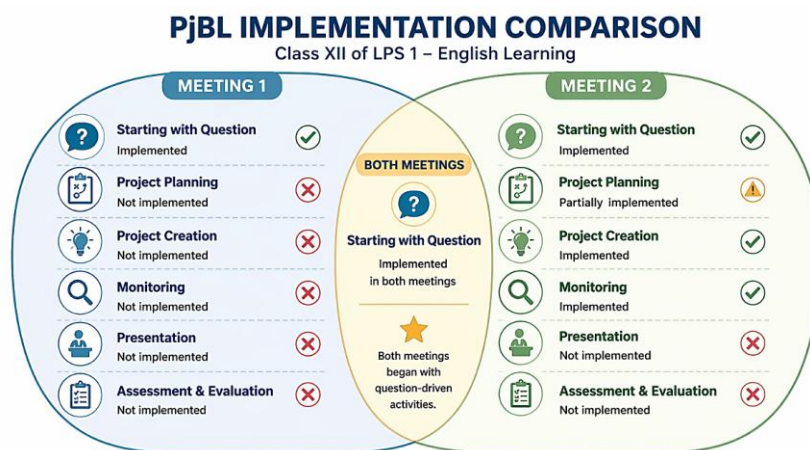


Figure 2. The Comparison of How Teacher Implemented PjBL in Meeting 1 and Meeting 2.

As shown in the Figure, in Meeting 1, the teacher only implemented the initial stage of PjBL i.e. *starting with the essential question*. The teacher asked students to observe pictures or phenomena and encouraged them to mention information related to the topic. However, the teacher did not guide students to share their knowledge with others, which resulted in limited student participation. Furthermore, none of the subsequent PjBL stages were implemented. The teacher did not divide students into groups, assign projects, or ask students to plan their work. Similarly, there was no instruction for students to begin creating the project, and no guidance was provided for collaborative idea-sharing. The teacher also did not monitor students' progress or provide assistance during activities. In addition, the stages involving project preparation and presentation, as well as the assessment and evaluation of students' work, were not implemented during the session. Thus, Meeting 1 can be regarded as focusing primarily on the introductory phase, without advancing to the core stages of PjBL.

In contrast, Meeting 2 demonstrated a more developed implementation of PjBL, although it was still incomplete. The teacher successfully carried out the initial stage by asking students to observe and respond to the given

material and guiding them to share their knowledge. In the planning stage, the teacher divided students into groups and introduced the project related to the topic. However, students were not asked to develop a detailed plan for their project, indicating that this stage was only partially implemented. The project creation stage was carried out, as students began working in groups and were guided to share ideas during the process. In addition, the teacher monitored students' activities and provided assistance when needed, indicating the implementation of the monitoring stage. Despite these improvements, several important stages were still not implemented. Students were not asked to prepare or present their project results, and there was no assessment or evaluation of their work. The lesson also lacked a concluding or reflective activity involving both teacher and students.

In general, while Meeting 2 showed progress compared to Meeting 1, the implementation of PjBL remained incomplete. Key components such as project planning in depth, presentation, assessment, and reflection were not carried out in both meetings. This indicates that the PjBL process was only partially implemented and did not fully follow the complete cycle of PjBL. Despite these limitations, the overall implementation of PjBL

demonstrated positive classroom dynamics, where students were actively involved in group work, discussions, and presentations. This suggests that while the teacher has begun to adopt the principles of PjBL, further refinement is needed to ensure a more comprehensive and authentic implementation of the approach.

The learning syntax model in Project Based Learning (PBL) must consist of: (1) Starting with the essential questions, (2) Designing a plan for the project collaboratively between the teacher and the students, (3) Creating a schedule collaboratively between teacher and students to arrange schedules activities in completing the project, (4) Monitoring the students and the progress of the project, (5) Assessing the outcome, and (5) Evaluating the experience.

Assessment in PjBL Learning

In Indonesia, the *Kurikulum Merdeka* promotes formative and project-based assessments that reflect students' learning progress rather than only their final products. Nevertheless, teachers in vocational schools still report difficulty designing rubrics that fairly evaluate both group and individual performance (Hadi & Kurniawan, 2023). However, assessment remains one of the most debated aspects of PjBL practice. Traditional assessments often emphasize written tests and factual recall, which contradict the authentic and process-oriented nature of PjBL. In recent years, alternative assessment models such as rubrics, self-assessment, and peer evaluation have been introduced to measure collaborative skills, creativity, and problem-solving abilities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Based on the findings, the researchers found that during observations in Class XII LPS 1, the teacher did not provide assessments or evaluations of his students.

2. Students' Perception toward Their Learning Experiences during the Implementation of Project-based Learning

Students' Motivation and Engagement in the Language Learning Process

Student engagement and motivation are key indicators of successful PjBL. Research consistently shows that students who participate in well-designed projects are more likely to engage actively with their learning,

demonstrating curiosity and persistence (Bell, 2021; Thomas, 2020). In both the European and Indonesian contexts, students have expressed greater satisfaction with project-based tasks that encourage creativity and collaboration with peers (Cojorn, 2024). However, research in Indonesia reveals that many vocational high school students are not accustomed to independent learning due to their previous experience of teacher-dominated learning. Based on questionnaires and observations of students at SMKN 1 Mataram, particularly in Class XII LPS 1, it is evident that students are heavily engaged in the learning process, yet they are reluctant to answer questions posed by teachers.

Student Perceptions of Project-based Learning Experiences

According to Thomas (2020) and Bell (2021), PjBL allows students to gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period to investigate and respond to authentic, engaging, and complex questions. It is grounded in the constructivist view that learners build understanding through experiences rather than receiving information passively from teachers. Many Indonesian studies report that PjBL enhances the students' motivation, collaboration, and creativity, yet several teachers still find it difficult to integrate this model into their regular lessons (Sari & Suyatno, 2021; Rahmawati et al., 2022). However, research in Indonesia reveals that many vocational high school students are not accustomed to independent learning due to their experience of teacher-dominated learning. Based on questionnaires and observations, student engagement at SMKN 1 Mataram, particularly in Class XII LPS 1, remains low, with students reluctant to respond to questions posed by the teacher in class.

3. Challenges and Opportunities Teachers and Students Encounter in Applying Project-based Learning in English Language Learning

Based on research findings in Class XII of LPS 1, the implementation of PjBL in English learning faces several challenges as well as opportunities. One major challenge is low student participation, as evidenced by the large number of students unable to answer teacher questions in both the first and second meetings. This indicates that students lack confidence or are not yet accustomed to learning that requires active participation. Furthermore, students'

understanding of the material remains limited. Although teachers have used stimulus in the form of questions and YouTube videos about job interviews, most students still struggle to understand the material and respond appropriately to questions. Another significant challenge is time constraints, which limit teachers' flexibility in optimally implementing all stages of PjBL, particularly during project development, presentation, and evaluation. Furthermore, because PjBL is still a relatively new approach, both teachers and students are not yet fully accustomed to a learning process that demands independence, collaboration, and critical thinking.

However, despite these challenges, there are several opportunities that can be utilized to improve the quality of learning. The use of digital media such as YouTube videos provides a more engaging and contextual learning experience, potentially increasing student interest and motivation. Furthermore, the topic of job interviews provides opportunities for students to develop communication skills, particularly speaking skills, which are highly relevant to the needs of the workplace. The implementation of PjBL also provides opportunities for students to learn through direct experience, making learning more meaningful and not merely theoretical. Furthermore, group work activities that have begun to be implemented in learning can encourage social interaction, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas among students. Thus, although the implementation of PjBL has not yet run optimally, this approach still has great potential to increase student engagement and the relevance of English learning in a vocational context.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of PjBL at SMKN 1 Mataram demonstrates both alignment and gaps with the theoretical framework. From a planning perspective, the lesson plans developed by teachers reflect the main principles of PjBL as explained by Thomas (2020) and Bell (2021), particularly in emphasizing student-centered, collaborative, and authentic task-based learning. The choice of the topic about job interview also demonstrates strong relevance to the vocational context, aligning with the opinions of Beckett and Slater (2020) and Musa et al. (2011) that stated that PjBL is effective in connecting language

learning with the needs of the workplace. Furthermore, the use of digital media such as YouTube and Canva reflects efforts to develop 21st-century skills as emphasized by the OECD (2021) and UNESCO (2022). Therefore, at the planning stage, the implementation of PjBL aligns with the principles of constructivism and the Independent Curriculum.

However, during the classroom implementation phase, a gap was identified between the learning design and actual practice. Although several stages of PjBL were implemented, particularly in the second meeting, the implementation was not optimal and did not encompass the entire PjBL cycle. This finding aligns with research by Yulianto et al. (2025) that stated that students in Indonesia, particularly in vocational schools, are still unfamiliar with independent learning due to the previous dominance of the teacher-centered approach. This is evident in the low student participation in answering questions and limited initiative in developing projects. Furthermore, the teacher's dominant role in directing learning activities has not led to optimal student autonomy, as stated by Benson (2019).

Furthermore, the failure to implement several crucial stages, such as in-depth project planning, presentation of results, and evaluation and reflection, indicates that PjBL implementation does not fully adhere to the ideal syntax. According to Barron and Darling-Hammond (2008), the success of PjBL depends heavily on the balance between learning freedom and teacher scaffolding. In this context, the lack of evaluation and reflection stages also indicates that the learning process does not fully support the in-depth construction of knowledge as described by Piaget (1972) and Vygotsky (1978). Furthermore, the lack of assessment aspects also reinforces the findings of Septiawati and Hadi (2026) that teachers in Indonesia still face difficulties in designing comprehensive project-based assessments.

Regarding student perceptions, the findings indicate that although students are engaged in learning activities, their motivation and active participation remain low. This contradicts the findings of Bell (2021) and Thomas (2020), who stated that PjBL can increase student engagement and motivation if well-designed and implemented. This situation indicates that the implementation of PjBL in these classrooms has not fully created a learning

environment that encourages student activeness and self-confidence. A passive learning culture and a lack of experience with PjBL are the main causes of low student response, as explained by Bound (2011) regarding obstacles to implementing constructivist learning in Indonesia.

In addition to challenges, this study also identified opportunities in the implementation of PjBL. The use of digital media and topics relevant to the world of work offers significant potential for improving students' communication skills, particularly in the context of vocational English. This aligns with the findings of Cojorn (2024) show that PjBL can enhance students' creativity, collaboration, and learning satisfaction. Furthermore, the implemented group work activities also provide opportunities to develop students' social and collaborative skills, which are essential for 21st-century competencies.

As these results have shown, the implementation of PjBL at SMKN 1 Mataram has led to more innovative and contextual learning practices. However, implementation still requires strengthening, particularly in ensuring the full implementation of all PjBL stages. These findings confirm that the success of PjBL depends not only on sound planning but also on teacher readiness, student characteristics, and adequate learning system support.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

This study investigated the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in English classrooms at SMKN 1 Mataram, particularly in Class XII LPS 1. The findings reveal that the English teacher had attempted to integrate the principles of PjBL into lesson planning and classroom practices. The lesson plans reflected several important characteristics of PjBL, including student-centered learning, collaborative activities, authentic and contextual tasks, digital media integration, formative assessment, and reflective learning. The topic of job interviews also demonstrated strong relevance to students' vocational needs, making the learning process more meaningful and contextualized.

However, the classroom implementation of PjBL was not fully aligned with the ideal PjBL cycle. Although several stages of PjBL were

implemented, especially during the second meeting, important components such as in-depth project planning, presentation activities, assessment, evaluation, and reflection were not optimally conducted. The findings also indicate that students' participation and autonomy remained relatively low, as many students were still reluctant to actively respond to questions and engage independently in the learning process. This condition suggests that both teachers and students are still adapting to a more student-centered and collaborative learning environment promoted by PjBL.

Despite these limitations, the implementation of PjBL created positive classroom dynamics and provided opportunities for students to engage in collaborative learning, communication practice, and contextual English learning activities. The use of digital media and vocationally relevant topics also showed significant potential in supporting students' engagement and developing 21st-century skills. Therefore, this study concludes that PjBL has strong potential to improve English learning in vocational schools; however, its successful implementation requires greater teacher readiness, more comprehensive assessment practices, stronger student autonomy, and consistent implementation of all PjBL stages.

Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions can be proposed for improving the implementation of Project-Based Learning in English classrooms at SMKN 1 Mataram. First, English teachers are encouraged to implement all stages of PjBL more comprehensively, including detailed project planning, presentation activities, reflection, and evaluation stages. Teachers should also develop stronger driving questions that stimulate students' critical thinking, inquiry, and problem-solving abilities. In addition, teachers are expected to provide greater opportunities for students to manage their own projects independently in order to strengthen learner autonomy and active participation.

Second, schools should provide continuous professional development and training programs related to PjBL implementation, particularly in designing authentic project-based assessments and managing collaborative learning activities effectively. Adequate institutional support is important to help teachers apply innovative

learning approaches consistently and confidently. Furthermore, schools should optimize the use of digital learning media and technological resources to support more engaging and interactive learning experiences.

Third, students should be encouraged to become more active and confident participants in the learning process. Since many students are still accustomed to teacher-centered instruction, teachers need to gradually foster students' independence, collaboration skills, and critical thinking through structured guidance and continuous practice. Finally, future researchers are recommended to conduct broader studies involving more classes, participants, and longer observation periods in order to gain deeper insights into the effectiveness, challenges, and long-term impact of PjBL implementation in vocational English education contexts.

REFERENCES

- Aisyah, S., & Novita, D. (2025). Teachers' perception of the implementation of project-based learning in early childhood education in Indonesia: Project-Based Learning: a perspective from Indonesian early childhood educators. *Cogent Education*, 12(1), 2458663. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2458663>
- Almulla, M. A. (2020). The effectiveness of the project-based learning (PBL) approach as a way to engage students in learning. *Sage Open*, 10(3), 2158244020938702. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020938702>
- Aslan, A. (2026). The application of project-based learning to enhance creativity and collaborative skills among primary school pupils in the era of the Merdeka Curriculum. *Indonesian Journal of Education (INJOE)*, 5(2), 364-378. <https://felifa.net/index.php/INJOE/article/view/808>
- Barron, B., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2008). *Teaching for meaningful learning: A review of research on inquiry-based and cooperative learning*. Book excerpt. George Lucas Educational Foundation. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED539399>
- Beckett, G. H., & Slater, T. (2020). *Global perspectives on project-based language learning, teaching, and assessment: Key approaches, technology tools, and frameworks*. Routledge.
- Bell, S. (2010). Project-based Learning for the 21st century: Skills for the future. *The Clearing House*, 94(3), 125–131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00098650903505415>
- Benson, P. (2019). *Teaching and researching learner autonomy* (3rd ed.). Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/Teaching-and-Researching-Autonomy-in-Language-Learning/Benson/p/book/9781408205013>
- Bound, H. (2011). Vocational education and training teacher professional development: Tensions and context. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 33(2), 107-119.
- OECD. (2021). *The future of education and skills: Education 2030*. OECD Publishing.
- Cojorn, K. (2024). A collaborative professional development and its impact on teachers' ability to foster higher order thinking. *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)*, 18(2), 561-569. <https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v18i2.21182>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Barron, B., Pearson, P. D., Schoenfeld, A. H., Stage, E. K., Zimmerman, T. D., ... & Tilson, J. L. (2015). *Powerful learning: What we know about teaching for understanding*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2019). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(2), 97–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>
- Dewey, J. (1998). *The essential Dewey, volume 1: pragmatism, education, democracy* (Vol. 1). Indiana University Press.
- Fahlevi, M. R. (2022). Kajian project based blended learning sebagai model pembelajaran pasca pandemi dan bentuk implementasi kurikulum merdeka. *Jurnal*

- Sustainable*, 5(2), 230-249.
<https://rumahjurnal.iainsasbabel.ac.id/sus/article/view/2714>
- Institute for Teaching and Learning Innovation, The University of Queensland. (n.d.). *Project-based learning*. The University of Queensland. Retrieved on 17 Jan 2026
<https://itali.uq.edu.au/teaching-guidance/teaching-practices/active-learning/project-based-learning>
- Irawan, D. (2025). Project-Based Learning and Its Contribution to Student Character Development in Secondary Education. *BRIDGE: The Multidisciplinary Research Portal*, 3(1), 262-272.
<https://jurnal.sttnlampung.ac.id/index.php/bridge/article/view/178>
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. FT Press.
- Larmer, J., Mergendoller, J., & Boss, S. (2015). *Setting the standard for project based learning*. Ascd.
- Lengkanawati, N. S. (2017). Learner autonomy in the Indonesian EFL settings. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 6(2), 222-231.
- Maida, C. A. (2011). Project-based learning: A critical pedagogy for the twenty-first century. *Policy Futures in Education*, 9(6), 759-768.
<https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2011.9.6.759>
- Maudi, N. (2016). Implementasi Model Project Based Learning Untuk Meningkatkan Kemampuan Komunikasi Matematis Siswa. *JPMI (Jurnal Pendidikan Matematika Indonesia)*, 1(1), 39-43.
<https://bit.ly/pbl-communication-skills>
- Miller, E. C., & Krajcik, J. S. (2019). Promoting deep learning through project-based learning: A design problem. *Disciplinary and interdisciplinary science education research*, 1(1), 1-10.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s43031-019-0009-6>
- 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/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.05.027>
- Piaget, J., & Inhelder, B. (2008). *The psychology of the child*. Basic books.
- Pratiwi, D. T., Zahratunnisa, F., & Rahmawan, S. (2025). The impact of project-based learning (PjBL) on students' motivation and learning outcomes: A literature review. *ASEAN Journal for Science Education*, 4(1), 53-58.
<https://www.ejournal.bumipublikasinusantara.id/index.php/ajsed/article/view/607>
- Rohmaniyah, N., & Asih, S. W. (2024). Project-based learning design in secondary schools: Enhancing students' collaborative and creative skills. *International Journal of Post Axial: Futuristic Teaching and Learning*, 274-287.
<https://journal.amorfati.id/index.php/postaxial/article/view/395>
- Septiawati, L., & Hadi, A. (2026). Exploring Language Assessment Literacy in EFL Classroom: A Case Study of EFL Teachers at a State Junior High School in Pekanbaru. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, 10(5), 241-257.
<https://jes.ejournal.unri.ac.id/index.php/JES/article/view/1718>
- Syahdia, R. R., Nuryani, H., Nuryanti, M., & Sukmayani, N. S. (2024). The Challenges of Implementing Project-Based Learning Models in Secondary Schools in Various Countries. *Jurnal Edusci*, 1(6), 281-294.
<https://annpublisher.org/ojs/index.php/edusci/article/view/340>
- UNESCO. (2022). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*. UNESCO Publishing.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (Vol. 86). Harvard university press.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvjf9vz4>
- Yulianto, B., Sueb, S., Subekti, H., Harmanto, H., Sukardani, P., Murtafiah, W., ... & Nasihah, S. A. (2025). Challenges in Indonesian language teaching: implementing the emancipated learning curriculum in vocational schools. *BASA Journal of Language & Literature*, 5(1), 60-73.
<https://riset.unisma.ac.id/index.php/BASA/article/view/23160>
- Yusupova, M., Gazieva, S., Abdullayeva, Z., Umarova, Z., Akhmedova, M., &

Kambarova, M. (2025). Integrating Project-Based Learning in English Language Teacher Education for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). *International Journal of Language Education*, 9(2), 245-266. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1479013>

Zhou, Y., Jantharajit, N., & Srikhao, S. (2025). Integrating Inquiry-Based and Project-Based Learning: A New Model to Enhance Students' Teamwork, Skills, and Critical Thinking. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 12(2), 215-237. <https://doi.org/10.22555/joeeed.v12i2.1340>