
Challenges and Strategies in Teaching English for Young Learners Using Project-Based Learning Method

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Abstract

This research describes a study regarding the challenges experienced by teachers when teaching English to young learners using the Project-Based Learning method in elementary schools as well as the strategies used by teachers to overcome the challenges they experience. The research subject of this study are two English teachers who taught in grades 1A and 1B at Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori School Bali. This research uses a qualitative method by using observation checklists and conducting interviews with the two teachers. The results showed that the two teachers did not experience serious challenges. The challenges experienced by teachers, such as time management, managing groups in making projects, and students who have lack of confidences in presenting the result of the project. To overcome the challenges teachers in both grades have their own strategies for overcoming the difficulties they experience and strategies for teaching in class because both teachers already understand the characteristics of students and the appropriate strategies to use in class.

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English is an international language used by almost all countries. English has become an international language and is the most widely used communication medium, this is due to the number and geographical area of its speakers and because many non-native speakers use it in their international context (Fajarika et al., 2020). As in Indonesia itself, English has been taught since elementary school and is one of the subjects used in national exams (Alfarisy, 2021).

A teacher must be able to employ effective teaching strategies when instructing young students in English in order to facilitate learning. The use of appropriate learning methods may produce positive results for students, so learning methods themselves are extremely important to classroom learning (Nasution, 2017). Generally, most teachers still use the lecture method when teaching English in class. This method has several disadvantages, namely that it easily makes students feel bored, cannot stimulate the development of student creativity, and the material mastered by students is limited (Adisel et al., 2022).

One of the learning methods that teachers can use when teaching English to young learners is the Project-Based Learning Method (PjBL). It is stated by (Nurkhamidah, 2023) PjBL is an alternative method can be implemented by the teacher. PjBL defined as a student-centered method that can help students develop their independence (Wahyu et al., 2023). PjBL is described as a method of teaching which combines student-centered problem-solving activities with a final product. This method might involve tasks like performances or presentations, among other things (Widiyati & Pangesti, 2022). According to Kimsesiz (2017) When using PjBL as a method of teaching, students need to participate in the learning process more actively. This method gives students the chance to plan, organize, and carry out specific projects in order to create a final product. PjBL's basic principle is the creation of supportive environments that enable students to engage in real-world learning. As a result, the teacher's responsibilities in this process include guiding, leading, encouraging, and evaluating the students. As a chance for young learners to use their critical thinking abilities to solve the problem and produce a project in order to learn new knowledge.

The implementation of the PjBL model in primary and secondary school environments continues to develop. This is proven by the many research articles that examine the application of the PjBL model. However, the implementation of the PjBL model in elementary schools does not run without problems. The obstacles experienced by teachers when teaching using the PjBL method will vary. There are several factors that make PjBL difficult to implement and a solution must be found immediately.

Therefore, this research aims to compile and describe a study regarding the challenges experienced by teachers when teaching English to young learners using the PjBL method in elementary schools as well as the strategies used by teachers to overcome the challenges they experience. Researchers hope that this article can be a reference for readers regarding the implementation of PjBL in elementary schools.

METHODS

Research Design

This research adopted a qualitative research approach in order to know challenges and strategies experience by teachers in teaching English to young learners using PjBL method. Qualitative research provides well-grounded, comprehensive descriptions and explanations of human processes. According Nasution (2023) qualitative approach described as applying verbal descriptions and a holistic approach to comprehend phenomena related to what research subjects ideally experience, such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, and language, in natural sources custom data illustrations made with a variety of natural processes.

Research Participant

The research subject of this study are two English teachers who taught in grades 1A and 1B at Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori School Bali. These teachers are selected as informants or participants of the study because the two teachers implementing Project Based Learning. The two teachers teach English at the same level with a total of 26 students in grades 1A and 1B.

Research Instrument

The research instrument for this study uses three instruments. First conducting observation, observation can be defined as the process of gathering information through observation, which involves paying close attention to the people and environments in which the research will actually take place (Ahmad et al., 2019). Second, an observation checklist will be used in this research to support researchers when conducting observations to see teacher activities while implementing Project Based Learning. According to Jarzabkowski & Bone, (1998) states in the article of (Tek Ong et al., 2017) in evaluative research, observations written in checklist form are equally valid for determining how well certain behaviours or teaching practices were observed during instruction. Third, conducting an interview with each teacher individually using semi-structured interviews. An interview with each teacher individually using semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview is defined as an interview that is flexible, the researcher can ask new questions related to the object and the consequence of the interviewees' answers (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

Procedure of Data Collection

The data obtained by the researcher are analyze using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis defined as a method in analysis that is used to finding, evaluating, and summarizing patterns (*themes*) in data. It describes the data set with great detail and minimally organizes it (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Rozali (2022) there are four steps in using thematic analysis as a technique in analyzing data. First, understanding the data, reading or replaying the recordings and interview transcripts that were obtained during the data collection process helps researchers make sense of the data they have. The second stage is coding where the researcher finds the main themes from the interview results, besides that the researcher also evaluates themes that are relevant or not. The next stage is the search for themes. Searching for themes is done to suit the research objectives that describe the patterns and phenomena studied. After that, the theme is re-evaluated so that the theme has a connection with the questions so that when there are similar themes, they can be classified into one theme. Last, Conclusion, the last stage contains conclusions on all the codes that have been obtained to be used as major themes.

To achieve research data trustworthiness, researchers conduct interviews with teachers in class 1A and 1B and conduct observation activities from the research location at Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori School repeatedly. This is done in order to provide reliable data that meets high credibility standards, can be credibly explained, and can be trusted scientifically.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the researcher presents the findings of this study followed by a discussion of the findings as the answer to the research question on English teachers' challenges and strategies when teaching English to young learners using PjBL.

Challenges in Implementing Project-Based Learning at Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori School Bali

The following table shows the challenges faced by the teacher in grades 1A and 1B during teaching topic 1 "My Family" and topic 2 "Fruits and Vegetables".

Table 1.

The Challenge experienced by Teachers in Grade 1A and 1B

No	Challenges	Sub Challenges	Topic			
			My Family		Fruits and Vegetables	
			1A	1B	1A	1B
1.	Difficulty of mastering the project (Cintang et al., 2018)	1) Facing difficulties in starting the project	X	X	X	X
		2) Experiencing difficulties in mastering PjBL method	X	X	X	X
2.	Time management (Syahlan et al., 2023)	1) Having difficulties in time management	✓	X	X	X
		2) Mismatching of time management with learning activities	✓	X	X	X
3.	Technical difficulties of project implementation (Cintang et al., 2018)	1) Paying attention with teacher instruction	✓	✓	✓	✓
		2) Having difficulty in managing student attention	X	X	X	X
		3) Students' understanding affect the project results	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.	The project result is not maximal, particularly on the type of project that produces real products (Cintang et al., 2018)	1) Students' project results are not maximal	X	X	X	X
		2) Lack understanding impact project results	✓	✓	✓	✓
		3) Understanding the project takes a lot of time	X	X	X	X
		4) Impacting on cost for the project results	X	X	X	X
5.	Manage group work (Nurkhamidah, 2023)	1) Facing difficulty in group division	X	X	X	X
		2) Dividing group based on students' capabilities	X	X	X	X
6.	Inadequate facilities (Syahlan et al., 2023)	1) Struggling to provide materials for the project	X	X	X	X
		2) Facing difficulty in managing costs for project facilities	X	X	X	X

1. Difficulty of Mastering the Project

The first challenge in implementing Project-Based Learning is Difficulty of Mastering the Project, in this challenge it is divided into two sub-challenges. First, facing difficulties in starting the project, both teachers in grades 1A and 1B never facing difficulties when starting the project.

“No, because I always give projects that suit the students’ abilities” (Teacher 1A and 1B)

According to the teacher in 1A and 1B both teachers never facing difficulties when starting the project because both teachers always give projects that appropriate with students’ abilities. From this, as a teacher needs to understand the characteristics of students in learning. In pedagogic competence, mastering student characteristics is one of the indicators that teachers need to master. The different characteristics that students have in learning will influence the abilities that students have. These student characteristics can be seen from the learning style and the way students understand the instructions given by the teacher. This is in line with Hafizha et al (2022) understanding the variations in student characteristics is crucial for teachers because it allows them to provide the best possible instruction and learning opportunities for their students by educating, guiding, and directing them based on their knowledge of those characteristics. In addition, teachers will find it easier to create lessons that meet the needs of different learning styles when they are aware of the characteristics of their students. Second, experiencing difficulties in mastering PjBL method, both teachers in 1A and 1B never experiencing difficulties in mastering the method. Both teachers already understand this learning method so that when teaching in class the teachers already know the learning activities.

2. Time Management

The second challenge is time management. Both teachers in grade 1A and 1B experience differences when teaching in class. The teacher in 1A experience difficulties in time management, but this difficulty does not take longer time and can be overcome by the teacher.

“For PjBL itself, sometimes I have to introduce terms one by one, such as in the My Family material, I have to introduce the term “grandparents” to students” (Teacher 1A)

According to the teacher in 1A, the teacher experience difficulty when teaching “My Family” to the students. As it stated teacher in 1A, the teacher needs several minutes to explained the terms “grandparents” to the students. Different with teacher in 1A, the teacher in 1B did not having difficulties in time management. During the learning process all of the activities were carried out well.

“Yes, I have, but I can anticipate this by instructing students to make something simple”

Second, mismatching of time management with learning activities. From the statement stated by teacher in 1A the teacher had experience mismatching of time management with learning activities. But teacher in 1A but teacher 1A can prevent this by anticipating students by giving instructions to make simple projects. As we know, in 21st century learning, students are required to have a high level of creative, critical, and supported by good digital literacy (Sukardi et al., 2021). Young learners, such as those at elementary school level, always want to be superior to their friends, therefore sometimes when doing their assignments they tend to use all their imagination and creativity to achieve superior

results. Because students always want to be superior, as a teacher you must be able to anticipate undesirable things such as a lack of time when giving projects to students. Anticipating this does not actually mean limiting students from being creative, but teachers also need to direct the learning process to run according to the allotted time.

3. Technical Difficulties of Project Implementation

The next challenge about technical difficulties of project implementation. Both teachers in grade 1A and 1B experience same challenge.

“Yes, students always pay attention to the instructions I give, although sometimes there are some students who pay attention to the instructions but still make mistakes so I have to explain the instructions again so that they really understand” (Teacher 1A)

“Yes, but sometimes there are one or two students who lack focus when learning. The way I use to get students to focus again is with the help of a teacher's assistant to remind students to stay focused during the lesson” (Teacher 1B)

According to the statement stated by teacher in 1A and 1B, it can be said that both teacher experienced difficulty in managing student focuses. Student focuses and concentrations really important when the students listening to the teacher in class. When students are in class, students tend to be easily distracted. There are many things that affect students' concentration when studying, such as a noisy environment outside the classroom or from friends around their seats. This concentration is something that is difficult for students to overcome, as a teacher, helping students to concentrate on studying requires quite a long time (Riinawati, 2021). So, to deal with this, a teacher's guidance and attention can help increase student concentration in learning (Yulia & Navia, 2017).

“If the topic is interesting to students, they will feel excited and their curiosity will be very high. However, if students feel the topic is not interesting, I usually use games to make the learning topic interesting” (Teacher 1A)

Besides that, there are other factor can influence students' concentration is using games to make student interest with the learning. According to (Adipat et al., 2021) Using games in learning can increase students' interest in learning. The mini games that can be played are related to images, sounds and colors to increase student responsiveness and attract maximum student attention. According to Yuliansih et al (2021) the use of visual media in the classroom also a teachers strategy can employ to catch students' attention. In order to support students' learning objectives, interest as an internal factor is important. Students who are not interested in the subject matter will approach the teaching-learning process with less empathy, lazy, and enthusiasm.

4. The Project Result is Not Maximal, Particularly on The Type of Project That Produces Real Products

The next challenge is Project result is not maximal. All of the students in grade 1A and 1B have optimal results of the project. Both teacher in 1A and 1B said that:

“No, the results of the projects carried out by students are always optimal” (Teacher 1A)

No, the results of the projects carried out by students are quite optimal because I give projects according to the students' abilities, not difficult ones and not easy ones either” (Teacher 1B)

As it stated both teachers always get maximum project result from the students. From the results it can be concluded that all students understand about the instruction given by the teacher. This student understanding is closely related to the results of the projects that students work on, therefore the application of the PjBL method in these two classes is able to make students gain a deeper understanding, increase their interest and motivation, and encourage the development of active learning and innovative thinking skills, resulting in learning the optimal one (Zhang & Ma, 2023).

5. Manage Group Work

The fifth challenge about managing group work. Both teachers in 1A and 1B never experience difficulty in divide students into group. During teaching English in topic 1 *“My Family”* and topic 2 *“Fruits and Vegetables”* both teachers never used group in making the project. All of the students’ project done individually, this is because the teachers in 1A and 1B designing the project that can be done by students individually. After interviewed teachers in 1A and 1B, both teachers said that in the previous project the teachers have used a group project before this research was conducted. The teacher in 1A usually maximize group division into 2 students. Different with teacher in 1A, the teacher in 1B usually maximize group division into 2-4 students in a group. In dividing student groups, the teacher does not experience difficulties because the students always follow the instructions given by the teacher. so that group division always goes well.

When dividing student into group both teachers never divide students using their capabilities or it can be said that both teachers always divide students randomly. Using random group in class can make students focus on the learning, because sometimes when students find the group by themselves, they will look for friends who will make them not focus on learning, such as telling stories or playing, which will result in their work not being completed. Research stated by (Liljedahl, 2014) there are several benefits when teacher use random group in classroom, such as (1) Students learn to get along with others in whatever group they are assigned to. (2) Students' knowledge communicates more widely among them. (3) Students become more active in class activities.

6. Inadequate Facilities

The next challenge is inadequate facilities. The teachers in grade 1A and 1B did not experience difficulties in providing project facilities. The project facilities including the materials and costs for the project.

“No, because it is provided at school” (Teacher 1A and 1B)

Based on the statement stated by the teachers in 1A and 1B, all of the materials and cost that needed by the teacher in implementing PjBL were provided by the school. The materials teacher usually uses when giving project to students are paper, glue, plasticine, origami, etc. For the tool that students need such as scissor, color pencil, and another stationary provided by each student. At the beginning of the semester students asked to bring scissors with the student's name. Later these scissors will be collected by the teacher to make it easier for students when the teacher gives a project using scissors. So, it can be concluded that all of the facilities such as materials and costs for the project are provided by the school to make the learning process run well.

According to the interviewed with teacher in 1A, the teacher experience other challenge about one student did not want to make a presentation in front of the class.

“Another challenge was that there was one student who did not want to make a presentation in front of the class because he did not feel confident, but he always worked on the project well according to the instructions given. The way I got him to want to do a presentation was to give him the opportunity to present the results of the project that had been made the next day” (Teacher 1A)

Based on what teacher in 1A said this student did not want to present their project because the students did not feel confident. As what teacher said, the teacher always gives chance to the student to present the project in the next day. During the researcher's research in class 1A, this student did not want to present the results of his work because he was afraid of being blamed and ridiculed by his friends, even though the teacher and his friends never did that. Based on the research by Ningrum & Listyani (2022) low-confidence students fear using more language because they worry and feel embarrassed about being made fun of by their peers.

According to researchers, these students' friends are quite supportive when their friends are not fluent in presenting the project. They are all always taught to respect each other. From the efforts made by teachers by providing opportunities and guiding students, this is in line with research from (Tanjung & Sinta, 2017) where one of the efforts that a teacher can make is to provide support and guidance because students who have less self-confidence usually need encouragement and guidance.

Strategies in Implementing Project-Based Learning at Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori School Bali

The following table shows the strategies in implementing Project-Based Learning by the teachers in grades 1A and 1B during teaching topic 1 *“My Family”* and topic 2 *“Fruits and Vegetables”*.

Table 2.
 Strategies in Implementing PjBL in Grade 1A and 1B

No	Strategies	Sub Strategies	Topic			
			My Family		Fruits and Vegetables	
			1A	1B	1A	1B
1.	Project Modification (Cintang et al., 2018)	1) Modifying the project	X	X	X	X
		2) Modifying helps students to complete the project	X	X	X	X
2.	Limited time (Cintang et al., 2018)	1) Combining more than 1 theme for a project	X	X	X	X
		2) Increasing students' participation	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.	Financial (Cintang et al., 2018)	1) Having limit cost project	X	X	X	X
		2) Using class cash for project	X	X	X	X
		3) Using learning media funds	✓	✓	✓	✓

4.	Grouping (Bagheri et al., 2013)	1) Grouping the students as a strategy	X	X	X	X
		2) Having maximal project outcomes in every group student	X	X	X	X
5.	Lack of facilities (Syahlan et al., 2023)	1) Using school sources	✓	✓	✓	✓
		2) Utilizing other equipment that students bring	✓	✓	X	✓

1. Project Modification

The first strategy is project modification. The teachers in 1A and 1B have different strategies when giving project to students. The teacher in 1A never modify the project because teacher in 1A think that modifying the project for students in grade 1 will cause difficulties for students. The teacher in 1B even modified the project given to the students by playing a song.

“Yes, I have used songs. It makes students relax so that it makes it easier for students to complete projects” (Teacher 1B)

Using song in the learning proses when students making project can make students feel happy and increased their motivation. Choosing appropriate songs also influences students, therefore when teachers use songs in learning they must choose songs that are suitable for students. The right songs to give to young students are songs that are enthusiastic and cheerful so that learning becomes fun, relax, cheerful and satisfied (Džanić & Pejić, 2016).

2. Limited Time

The next strategy is limited time. Based on the teachers interviewed, both teacher in 1A and 1B never combined more than one them for a project. Both teachers only used one theme on a project.

“I have never combined more than one theme, but when studying using just 1 theme, students are quite active when studying in class” (Teacher 1A and 1B)

When the teachers in 1A and 1B teaches student with topic 1 and topic 2 both teachers never combined the topic with other topics. The teachers only focus on one topic. During the learning process in both topic 1 and 2 all students in grade 1A and 1B quite active in class. This indicates that this learning topic is interesting for students. Selecting material that suits students' interests also influences them during the learning process (Gerschler, 2012). As the teacher in 1A and 1B done when teaching in class, in grade 1A sometimes teacher giving mini game to students and in grade 1B teacher modify the project using song. This is also can make students more interest in learning and make students feel happy.

3. Financial

The third strategy is financial. When implementing Project-Based Learning method both teachers in grade 1A and 1B never experience difficulty in project costs. All of project costs provided by the school and the school does not limit the project costs that it wants to use so teachers and students don't need to worry about project costs. Another strategy in financial also using class cash for the project. Class cash itself is defined as

money collected by all students in one class which can be used for class purposes such as for example using it to make projects. However, in both classes 1A and 1B there is no class cash so in this case class cash is not used as a strategy to create projects. Last strategy in financial is using learning media funds, based on the interview with teachers in 1A and 1B stated that:

“Using funds from the school because it has been provided by the school” (Teacher 1A and 1B)

It can be concluded that Both teachers in 1A and 1B in implementing PjBL always uses learning media funds is the strategy in making project for students. These learning media funds should be prepared by the school so that the learning process in class runs well.

4. Grouping

The next strategy is grouping. Both of the teachers in 1A and 1B rarely use group in working on projects. Usually, teachers only use groups for certain materials that require projects to be completed in groups. When the learning material requires students to complete projects in groups, both teachers 1A and 1B have their own regulations on the number of group members. As in class 1A, teacher 1A limits students to each group of only 2 people. However, in class 1B the teacher limits each group of students to 2-3 people. The group division system in both classes is divided randomly.

“There are definitely some students who will play more with their group partners rather than completing their assignments first” (Teacher 1A)

“There will be some children who are not optimal in making the project, another thing is that if the students do it individually, they will do well” (Teacher 1B)

In fact, after interviewed teacher in 1A and 1B, both of the teachers experience the same problem when using group as a strategy in learning. As the teacher stated when the teacher using group the students are not focus on the assignment the students will play more and keep talking with the peers. Research conducted by (Dulay, 2020) found that few students are like to play around and not doing the project. It is because students think that they cannot make the project perfectly. this research also found that When they notice their classmates interacting with each other in the classroom talking, laughing, and playing they become excited. In this case, students will join in and make the classroom noisy when they see their friends laughing or talking while they are learning.

5. Lack of Facilities

The last strategy is lack of facilities. In implementing Project-Based Learning methods, of course teachers need several facilities and materials that can support in making projects in the classroom. After conducting interviews with the two teachers in grades 1A and 1B, both teachers said that for facilities that could support student in making projects, they used school sources.

“Yes, using sources from school” (Teacher 1A and 1B)

Sources from schools are included in educational facilities such as classrooms, books, library, and labs are examples of educational facilities because they directly assist the learning process in order to accomplish educational goals (Ruhjana & Aeni, 2019). Besides school sources, teacher in both grades 1A and 1B also asked students to bring

their own stationaries such as, colored pencils, scissor, pencil, rubber etc. Students are asked by the teacher to collecting scissors at the beginning of the semester for their needs when working on a project requires scissors. For paper, glue, or plasticine are provide by teacher in school. So, it can be concluded that the teachers are use school sources and utilizing equipment that students bring In the learning process using projects, this is done so that the learning process runs smoothly.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions regarding the challenges experienced by teachers in classes 1A and 1B at the Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori School Bali during the process of implementing the Project-Based Learning method, the two teachers did not experience serious challenges. The challenges experienced by teachers, such as time management, are caused by students not being focused enough to pay attention to the teacher's instructions. Then another challenge experienced by teachers is regarding managing groups in making projects where teachers rarely use groups because students contribute less to working on projects, students tend to play rather than completing the assignments given. Apart from that, another challenge was experienced by the teacher in class 1A who had a student who lacked confidence in presenting the results of his project. To overcome this student, the teacher in grade 1A always provides an opportunity the next day for this student to present his project, the teacher also provides guidance and direction to this student. The strategies for implementing Project-Based Learning in both classes have also supported the learning process in the class. Teachers in both classes also have their own strategies for overcoming the difficulties they experience and strategies for teaching in class because both teachers already understand the characteristics of students and the appropriate strategies to use in class.

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