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## IMPLEMENTING PROJECT-BASED LEARNING TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' READING SKILLS IN REPORT TEXT

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### ABSTRACT

This study concentrated on using project-based learning to help students become more proficient readers, particularly of report texts. This study had two goals, the first is to examine how project-based learning can be used to help students become better readers specially on report texts. Moreover, the study aims to track students' reactions to the implementation of project-based in reading learning. Mixed method design was used as the research design for this study. Additionally, the researchers used several instruments to gather data, including observation sheets, reading tests for students, questionnaires, and interviews' questions. The study's findings showed that project-based learning, when used to teach students in reading reports text with common themes and constant teacher guidance throughout the reading process may enhanced students' reading comprehension. The average score of the students' reading tests taken chronologically shows that the students enhance their reading skills in report text. The results also demonstrated that students responded positively to the implementation of project-based learning in reading report text. The opinions of the students demonstrated that they believed project-based learning improved their comprehension on the content of report text. Additionally, since project-based learning enables students to read more comprehensively, it is advised that English teachers use it to teach reading skills for other genres of texts and to other language skills.

*Keywords: Project-Based Learning, reading skill, report text*

### INTRODUCTION

In learning a language, there are four skills that are interconnected and cannot be separated from each other: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The statement implied that when one learns language, it should be interrelated and integrated with other skills. Mastering those four skills will make learners outstanding language learner. Vice versa, if they experienced difficulties in one skill, it would affect the process of comprehending the language and become a barrier to becoming an outstanding learner.

Certainly, language learners may encounter difficulties at some point during their language learning process. Language learners may struggle with only one language ability or they may struggle with two or three. It is necessary to get through these challenges if students are to meet their learning goals and develop into capable language users.

It was observed that some students have reading difficulties in learning English. According to Byrne (1988) in Chikita, et. al. (2013), some students' reading difficulties caused by two main reasons. First, the students are required to read the text on their own without any supervision or feedbacks from the teacher. Second, the students do not have any information whether the strategies they use can increase their understanding or not.

Another issue in learning to read is that students have trouble understanding the text's substance and they have low vocabulary mastery. Students also found it tedious to read numerous pieces because the strategies used did not hold their interest. Two consequences of the aforementioned issues are that most students are becoming disinterested in reading and that their reading motivation is declining. Consequently, students reading difficulties affected by low interest in reading activity and low reading ability.

The low of students' reading interest was reported by IKAPI (Indonesian Publisher Association) concerning the publication number of books per year in Indonesia. The IKAPI report shows that the numbers of new book titles published approximately 12,000 titles per year, including translations and reprints in 2010. It reflects that the reading interest of Indonesian people in general are still very low compared to other countries. Moreover, regarding reading ability, based on the PISA 2018 Report published in December 2019, the reading ability of Indonesia students is ranked low. From the 2018 PISA Report it was shown that out 78 countries, Indonesian is in 72 position (OECD, 2019).

To solve the reading problem above, researchers offer a learning model to improve the students' reading skill known as Project-Based Learning model which is in this paper shortened to PBL. Project-based learning (PBL) is an instructional model that emphasizes learner autonomy, learner-centered teaching, collaborative learning, and task-based learning while imparting curriculum concepts through a project (Mali, 2016). In this study, the researchers implemented the PBL model in teaching reading specially in report text. There are two objectives that researchers proposed: to describe the implementation of the PBL model in teaching reading report text and to analyze students' responses after they experience PBL model in learning reading report text.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Researchers highlighted some theories underpinning the study, among them those about the Project Based Learning (PBL) Model, reading comprehension, and report text.

PBL, or project-based learning, is a type of instructional method that places an emphasis on task-based learning, collaborative learning, learner autonomy, and learner-centered teaching while transmitting curriculum concepts. Goodman and Stivers (2010) define PBL as a teaching approach that is built on learning activities and real tasks that provide challenges for students related to everyday life to be completed in groups. From those definitions, the implementation of PBL in learning language would be suitable, as according to social constructivist theory, the importance of learning language taking place when learners engage with one another is emphasized by the social and dynamic nature of language learning. According to Ghosheh (2021), learning a language is a social and dynamic process that emphasizes the occurrence of learning when learners interact with each other, and PBL could be one of the factors that make social interaction succeed.

Thus, PBL has a great chance of working when it comes to teaching and learning languages since it employs the integration of language skills when students negotiate a genuine, real-world problem while also utilizing group collaboration and communication to find solutions. The exercises within PBL give students the chance to use their language both within and outside of the classroom, which improves their language proficiency. In reading skills, because students are directly engaged with the text and its connections to other linguistic abilities, PBL activities may improve students' reading comprehension of any kind of texts they read. Furthermore, PBL also relates to students designing, planning, and carrying out an extended project that produces a publicly-exhibited output such as a product, publication, or presentation (Jeff, 2012 in Elsa, 2017).

Some experts proposed the steps of the implementation PBL in the classroom. Fauziati (2014) elaborates that the administration of PBL is following the steps: starting the project, developing the project, reporting to the class, and assessing the project. Another PBL expert, Kriwas (1999, as quoted in Bell, 2010) mentions four stages in the implementation of PBL: speculation, project design, project implementation and evaluation. Moreover, Shabbir (2020) proposed six steps for the implementation of PBL in the classroom: identifying a problem, planning the project, making a schedule, monitoring the progress, doing assessment, and evaluating the program. In this study,

researchers implement the steps of PBL proposed by Shabbir (2020) as the steps are clear and easier to follow.

By adopting PBL in the classroom, hopefully teachers can help strengthen social relations between team members, increase cooperation between fellow students, and between students and teachers produce something as the end result of the learning process. Moreover, Lee (2002, as quoted by Widyastuti 2021) states that by implementing PBL students can increase motivation, engagement, and pleasure because the project takes place according to the context and interests of the student, and this PBL activity may also be integrated with the attention of cyberspace.

Additionally, the researchers presented various thoughts about reading-related beliefs that were associated to PBL and report text. Reading is a complex process that requires the analysis, coordination, and interpretation of a variety of sources of information (Scanlon, 2010 cited in Anggraini, 2018). Moreover, Hill (2006 cited in Anggraeni, 2018) states that reading comprehension is the act of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning from the text. Reading comprehension, as part of the English skills that should be mastered by the students, has become an important activity in the teaching and learning process because it highlighted the process of understanding texts that were read and the process of constructing many meanings from text.

Since all the components of the reading process work together to develop a mental image of the text in the reader's mind, comprehension is referred to as a "constructing process." The level of knowledge of a passage or text can be referred to as reading comprehension. From the easiest to the most difficult reading levels, there are three comprehension levels offered. Reading comprehension is the capacity to read text, process it, and comprehend its meaning, according to this definition. Someone's personality and skills, including their capacity for inference, have an impact on how well they can comprehend written material. Students' capacity to express themselves in writing and their vocabulary development can both benefit from reading comprehension.

Reading comprehension involves both perception and thought. Prior knowledge, vocabulary, grammar abilities, and other approaches will be used by readers to aid in their comprehension of written information. It implies that reading is a way for the author and the reader to communicate. Through information, feelings, concepts, and arguments, the author hopes to convey a message. The message is then incorporated into the text by the author. As a result, reading is a way to comprehend or interpret anything. Reading involves more than just being able to understand words and syntax. Reading requires

more than just translating, in order to comprehend English-language reading, the reader must take text's meaning into account. To increase comprehension across all text varieties, children must be exposed to a variety of reading resources in learning activities.

Junior High School students were given any kinds of text such as; descriptive, narrative, recount, notice, announcement, procedure, and report. Report text is known as informational report (Steven, 2014 in Elsa, 2017). According to Standard Kompetensi Lulusan (2015 in Elsa, 2017) report text is included on the list of SKL, which is used in junior high school. This text is one of text which is given for junior high school, especially in grade ninth. The English word "report" means 'to describe' designates something that has established its veracity through some steps of observations. Report text is a unique text genre used to systematically convey the findings of observation or inquiry. Report text must be written as it is without making any subjectivity because it is a report of something.

Gerot and Wignell (1994) state that the generic structure of report text is general classification and description. In general classification, the writer states classification of general aspect of things: people, plant, animal, place. In description, the writer describes the things which described in details.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A mixed method design was used to carry out this investigation. A mixed method is a design in which one data set provides a supportive, secondary role in a study based primarily on the other data type (Creswell, 2012 in Lestari, 2022). To get comprehensive data, the researchers employed a variety of instruments to gather the data. The instruments include, among others, the reading assessments for students, the observation checklist, the student surveys, and the student interviews. For each instrument, the researchers took a different approach to the analysis.

A test is a tool used to gauge someone's proficiency or understanding in a particular subject matter in an academic context (Brown and Abeywickrama, 2018). Using an analytical scoring system, the researchers examined the students' reading assessments results. After being taught using the PBL method, the students got an assessment to assess their understanding of the material given.

The observation was carried out in this research to investigate the learning process during the implementation of PBL in teaching students reading comprehension on report text. Observation is an activity that carried out to observe and record what people do in the setting (Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun, 2012). By analyzing and evaluating the activities

of both teachers and students during the teaching and learning process in the classroom using observation sheets, researchers gathered valuable input about the learning process. The researchers and the observer then drew conclusions from the interpretation. Additionally, the researchers performed content analysis of open-ended questionnaires, which includes

the following steps: (1) conduct the coding process; (2) categorize the students' responses and treat them as nominal data; and (3) draw conclusions to determine the general reactions to the implementation of Project-Based Learning in reading report text (Dörnyei, 2010).

In addition, the researchers used the four procedures suggested by Creswell (2012) to examine the students' interviews. The four steps are (1) transcribe interviews into a text script; (2) read a text script for several times; (3) generate codes and themes and (4) interpret the meaning of the themes. Participants in this research are the researchers, the teacher, the researcher-observer, and students in one class of ninth grade of one private junior high school in Bandung. The study was conducted over six meetings, one meeting a week.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

As stated previously, this study implemented the six steps of PBL in the classroom proposed by Shabbir (2020) begin with identifying a problem, planning the project, creating a schedule, carry out project and monitoring progress, conducting assessments, and evaluating the program.

Following Shabbir's (2022) step before starting implement the model, researchers identify the problems that occurred in the classroom related with the reading activity. Home teacher observation revealed that students lack motivation to read and mostly cannot comprehend the content of the text given. Most of the students spend their time in reading activity by looking the meaning of difficult words from dictionary. To dig deeper information about the problem, the researchers continue the identification process by interviewing the home teacher and some students. The interviews came with result that low reading motivation and low reading ability happened because students face some difficulties in understanding low frequent words and were shy to ask the teachers if they had questions or did not understand the material given. Furthermore, students feel that they did not have a partner to discuss their thoughts and ideas with. The low reading motivation and low reading result thus influence students' ability in other language skills such as writing, speaking and listening.

The next PBL activity after identifying the problem students experience in learning according to Shabbir (2020) is planning and/or designing the project and designing the schedule. This planning stage is crucial as the researcher discuss the plan with home teacher and observer followed by discussion between teachers and students. Discussion between teacher and students speculates the possibilities that will lead to the project going smoothly (Bell, 2010). In PBL, designing project activities refers to organizing the structure of project activities, which includes group formation, role assignment, methodological decisions, sources of information, and the likes (Kriwas 1999, as quoted by Riswandi 2018).

In this study, in planning activity stage, the researchers designed lesson plan for the meetings, prepared the material, designed learning assessments, and developed research instruments. Researchers collaborate and discussed with English home teacher to ensure that all materials used in the research are appropriate and in compliance with research goals. During the discussions held prior to the research, suggestions and revisions were collected, making all of the documents more usable. In this stage home teacher information plays a crucial part in research since they were familiar with the students' skills as a whole and has a good understanding of the students' learning personalities.

The reading assessment was initially administered to find out students' reading comprehension skills. One report text and ten essay questions covering content in the text made up the test. Low order thinking skill (LOTS) and high order thinking skill (HOTS) questions were blended in the essay questions that came after the report text. By asking those two types of questions, the researchers could gauge how well students could read.

The next stage is to carry out the project and monitor the students' progress simultaneously. In the learning process, one of the researchers acted as the teacher and applied the lesson plan that, which consisted of PBL steps in teaching reading report text. In the second meeting, the teacher explained the definition of report text, language features, generic structures, and some examples of report text. Moreover, at the first meeting, the teacher informed the students that for the next four meetings they would learn report text by implementing PBL. Students were asked to be cooperative and follow the learning activity enthusiastically. At this stage, students work on projects on some report text reading material and follow the learning activities designed at the previous stage. From meeting three until meeting five students were given some informational report texts about people, animal and place. Students were asked to discuss the text and

find out some information within it, such as the social function, generic structure, language features, and the like. Students were asked to discuss problems they face with their friends before consulting with the teacher. After that, they need to present their results in form of presentation and posting it in Instagram. This is follow the suggestion proposed by Kriwas 1999 (quoted by Riswandi 2018) that students work or students' discussion results can be in the form of presentations, performances, publications, or the like.

Furthermore, students were asked to perform their work results in front of the class, other classes, teachers, or others using various media permitted by the teacher (Kriwas 1999, as quoted by Riswandi 2018). When carrying out the project, researchers monitor the students' progress simultaneously. In the monitoring phase, researchers observed the students' activities in following the PBL stage and observed the teacher performance in implementing PBL as written in the lesson plan.

At last meeting the teacher conducted a final assessment to find out students' ability to read report text after they got learning using PBL. Similar to the initial assessment at the beginning of the study, one report text and ten essay questions covering content in the text made up the assessment. Low order thinking skill (LOTS) and high order thinking skill (HOTS) questions were blended in the essay questions that came after the report text.

After all the learning activities are over, the last stage of PBL is evaluating the program. As Shabbir (2020) mentions, PBL begin with identifying a problem, planning the project, creating a schedule, carrying out the project and monitoring progress, conducting assessments, and ending with evaluating the program. The last stage refers to an assessment of the participants' activities and discussions about whether the initial goals and objectives have been achieved, the implementation of the process, and the final product (Kriwas 1999, as quoted by Riswandi 2018). In evaluation phase, teacher, observer and all researchers reflect all learning activities and evaluate all information as shows in observation sheets that reflect the interaction between students during the implementation of PBL in learning process.

After the evaluation stage, the researchers tried to answer the first research question based on the result of observation sheets and the students' assessment test. Based on the result of observation sheets, the teacher followed almost all steps in PBL. She forgot some steps when she applied the lesson plan at the third, fourth and fifth meeting,



however, the forgotten steps were steps that were not crucial and did not significantly affect the result of the study.

Furthermore, the observation sheet reflected that most students did not pay attention during learning process, and they were still not active in discussing with their group members at the first and second implementation of PBL. In addition, students did the presentation unclearly at the first and second implementations of PBL. However, at the third and fourth meetings of the implementation of PBL, all students paid attention during the learning process and actively discussed with their group members. Besides, they also did the presentation clearly at the third and fourth implementations of PBL. Shortly, based on the observer's observations, good teacher performances in applying lesson plan affect students' good performance, too.

Moreover, the students' reading report text assessment showed students' improvements in reading report text. It can be seen by the average scores from the result of initial assessment compared to the result of the final assessment. In the initial assessment, the average students' score of reading report text was 71. Then in final assessment, the average score was 81. The result above somehow showed that the implementation of PBL improved the students' reading skill on report text. In other words, PBL might be considered an alternative model that effectively used in teaching reading report text. This is in line with Harmer (2007: 279) opinion that "Project work is popular in EFL/ESOL teaching and learning." Shortly, based on Harmer (2007) doing a project in teaching a foreign language is popular including teaching English reading.

Moreover, the researchers tried to respond to the second objective of the study based on the result of students' questionnaires and interviews. Based on the result of the students' questionnaires, the students reveal that the implementation of PBL helped them understand the report text and help students understand the content of the text. It can be seen from students' statements that they felt any progress and they also felt they became more active in reading report text while applying PBL by interacting with others students.

Furthermore, based on the result of students' interviews, the researchers observed that all students gave positive comments toward the implementation of PBL in reading report texts. It can be seen from their statement that they felt they understood how to read report text with the implementation of PBL. Even, students gave suggestions to implement PBL in other subjects, as it gave students the opportunity to interact more with other students in an academic setting. Students feel that they can encourage themselves to inquire about something within the material given.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the implementation of PBL improved the students' reading skills on report text thus increases their motivation to read. As Han and Bhattacharya (2014: 5) stated that "PBL increases the students' motivation because it allows them to determine the project based on their own interest and abilities." PBL also requires the students to increase their abilities by collecting some resources to put into the project. According to Han and Bhattacharya (2014: 5), "PBL increases students' resource-management skills because it triggers the students to train their skills in managing time to do the project and choosing which resource will be used."

## **CONCLUSION**

There are some conclusions based on the result of this research: (1) based on the result of observation sheets and the students' assessments, the implementation of PBL improved the students' reading skill on report text by understanding familiar theme and guiding the students during reading process, and (2) based on the result of students' questionnaires and interviews, the students' responses toward the implementation of PBL were positive.

The researchers add some recommendations which are related with PBL: (1) it is suggested for English teachers to implement PBL model in teaching reading for another text genre as an alternative teaching model. Moreover, hopefully English teachers can implement PBL to teach other English language skills, (2) it is suggested for the students to implement PBL when they read another text genre, and (3) the researchers hope that these research results can be useful for other researchers who wants to improve the quality of teaching reading skills.

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