

An English Teacher's Perspective on Project-Based Learning in an Indonesian Elementary EFL Classroom: Perceived Contributions to Students' Critical Thinking and Communication

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Abstract

Project-Based Learning (PBL) has been widely recognized as a student-centered approach that supports the development of twenty-first-century skills, including critical thinking and communication. However, limited research has explored teachers' perspectives on the implementation of PBL in TESOL contexts at the elementary school level in Indonesia. This qualitative case study investigated an English teacher's perspective on the implementation of PBL and its perceived contribution to students' critical thinking and communication skills at the International Class Program of MI Plus Walisongo Trenggalek. Data were collected through a semi-structured interview with an English teacher and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that the teacher implemented PBL through descriptive text projects, the creation of visual aids, and public presentations involving teachers, classmates, and parents. According to the teacher, these activities encouraged students to organize information, express ideas, engage in authentic communication, and develop greater confidence in using English. The teacher also perceived that PBL increased student motivation and participation, although challenges related to varying proficiency levels, limited instructional time, and presentation anxiety were identified. The study contributes to understanding how Project-Based Learning is implemented and perceived within an Indonesian elementary TESOL context.

Keywords: Project-Based Learning; TESOL; critical thinking; communication skills; teacher perspective; qualitative case study.

Perspektif Guru Bahasa Inggris tentang Project-Based Learning di Kelas EFL Sekolah Dasar Indonesia: Kontribusi yang Dipersepsikan terhadap Berpikir Kritis dan Komunikasi Siswa

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji perspektif seorang guru bahasa Inggris mengenai penerapan Project-Based Learning (PBL) dan kontribusi yang dipersepsikan terhadap keterampilan berpikir kritis dan komunikasi siswa pada International Class Program MI Plus Walisongo Trenggalek. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan seorang guru bahasa Inggris dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa guru menerapkan PBL melalui proyek teks deskriptif, pembuatan media visual, dan presentasi publik yang melibatkan guru, teman sekelas, dan orang tua. Menurut guru, kegiatan tersebut mendorong siswa untuk mengorganisasi informasi, mengemukakan gagasan, terlibat dalam komunikasi autentik, serta mengembangkan kepercayaan diri yang lebih besar dalam menggunakan bahasa Inggris. Guru juga memandang bahwa PBL meningkatkan motivasi dan partisipasi siswa, meskipun terdapat tantangan berupa perbedaan tingkat kemampuan bahasa Inggris, keterbatasan waktu pembelajaran, dan kecemasan saat presentasi. Penelitian ini memberikan pemahaman mengenai bagaimana Project-Based Learning diterapkan dan dipersepsikan dalam konteks TESOL sekolah dasar di Indonesia.

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Kata Kunci: Project-Based Learning; TESOL; berpikir kritis; keterampilan komunikasi; perspektif guru; studi kasus kualitatif.

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The demands of the twenty-first century have significantly transformed educational goals worldwide. Beyond mastering subject knowledge, students are expected to develop critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity, commonly known as the 4Cs of twenty-first-century skills ([Trilling & Fadel, 2009](#)). In English language education, these competencies are particularly important because learners are expected to use English effectively in academic, professional, and intercultural contexts.

Within the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), traditional teacher-centered approaches have often been criticized for emphasizing language accuracy and rote learning while providing limited opportunities for students to engage in authentic communication and higher-order thinking processes ([Richards & Rodgers, 2014](#)). Contemporary TESOL practices therefore advocate learner-centered pedagogies that encourage active participation, problem-solving, collaboration, and meaningful language use ([Brown, 2014; Harmer, 2015](#)).

One instructional approach that aligns with these educational goals is Project-Based Learning (PBL). Project-Based Learning is a student-centered teaching method that engages learners in investigating authentic questions, solving real-world problems, and producing meaningful products ([Thomas, 2000](#)). According to Blumenfeld et al. ([1991](#)), PBL promotes meaningful learning by integrating inquiry, collaboration, and reflection into the learning process. Similarly, Larmer et al. ([2015](#)) argue that PBL enables students to develop both academic knowledge and essential life skills through authentic learning experiences.

The theoretical foundation of PBL is closely associated with constructivist learning theory. Constructivist scholars such as Piaget ([1972](#)) and Vygotsky ([1978](#)) emphasize that knowledge is actively constructed through experience and social interaction. In language learning contexts, PBL provides opportunities for learners to construct knowledge collaboratively while using English as a medium of communication ([Stoller, 2006](#)).

Previous research has demonstrated the positive effects of PBL in educational settings. Bell ([2010](#)) found that PBL enhances learner engagement and promotes the development of twenty-first-century skills. Likewise, Kokotsaki et al. ([2016](#)) concluded that PBL contributes positively to students' collaboration, communication, and problem-solving abilities. A systematic review conducted by Guo et al. ([2020](#)) further revealed that PBL improves student motivation, learning outcomes, and critical thinking skills across various disciplines.

Critical thinking has become one of the most essential learning outcomes in modern education. Facione ([2015](#)) defines critical thinking as purposeful, self-regulatory judgment involving analysis, evaluation, inference, and interpretation. Within TESOL classrooms, critical thinking enables students to evaluate information critically, formulate arguments, and engage in meaningful discussions using the target language ([Paul & Elder, 2019](#)). Research has shown that project-based activities encourage students to analyze problems, evaluate evidence, and make informed decisions, thereby fostering critical thinking skills ([Loes & Pascarella, 2017](#)).

Communication skills are equally important in language education. Effective communication involves the ability to express ideas clearly, interact with others, negotiate meaning, and participate actively in social and academic contexts ([Johnson & Johnson, 2017](#)). Through collaborative projects, discussions, presentations, and peer interactions, PBL creates opportunities for learners to practice authentic communication in English ([Fried-Booth, 2002](#); [Stoller, 2006](#)).

In Indonesia, Project-Based Learning has increasingly been promoted as an instructional approach that supports student-centered learning and the development of twenty-first-century skills. One educational context that implements Project-Based Learning is the International Class Program (ICP) at MI Plus Walisongo Trenggalek. Through project-based activities, students are encouraged to collaborate, solve problems, present ideas, and communicate their learning outcomes. An important characteristic of the program is that students publicly present their projects before parents, teachers, and members of the school community. This practice reflects the public product component of high-quality Project-Based Learning proposed by Larmer et al. ([2015](#)).

Although previous studies have documented the benefits of Project-Based Learning, limited research has explored teacher's perspective on its implementation in TESOL contexts, particularly at the elementary school level in Indonesia. Teachers play a central role in planning, facilitating, monitoring, and evaluating project-based learning activities. Therefore, investigating an English teacher's perspective can provide valuable insights into how Project-Based Learning is implemented and how it contributes to the development of students' critical thinking and communication skills.

Furthermore, studies focusing on Project-Based Learning within International Class Programs remain limited. Most previous research has focused on students' learning outcomes, while fewer studies have examined teacher's perspective regarding the implementation process and its perceived impact on students' skill development. For these reasons, this study seeks to investigate an English teacher's perspective on Project-Based Learning in TESOL and its role in fostering students' critical thinking and communication skills at the International Class Program of MI Plus Walisongo Trenggalek.

Research Questions

Based on the background above, the research questions of this study are:

1. How is Project-Based Learning implemented in TESOL at the International Class Program of MI Plus Walisongo Trenggalek?
2. What is the English teacher's perspective on the contribution of Project-Based Learning to students' critical thinking skills?
3. What is the English teacher's perspective on the contribution of Project-Based Learning to students' communication skills?
4. What benefits and challenges does the English teacher perceive in implementing Project-Based Learning in TESOL?

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate an English teacher's perspective on Project-Based Learning in TESOL at the International Class Program of MI Plus Walisongo Trenggalek.

Specifically, this study aims:

1. To explore the implementation of Project-Based Learning in TESOL at the International Class Program of MI Plus Walisongo Trenggalek.
2. To investigate the English teacher's perspective on the contribution of Project-Based Learning to students' critical thinking skills.

3. To investigate the English teacher's perspective on the contribution of Project-Based Learning to students' communication skills.
4. To identify the benefits and challenges of implementing Project-Based Learning in TESOL.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the existing literature on Project-Based Learning in TESOL, particularly regarding teacher's perspective on its implementation and its role in fostering students' critical thinking and communication skills. This study may also enrich discussions on learner-centered approaches and twenty-first-century skills development in English language education. The findings may provide insights into effective strategies for implementing Project-Based Learning in English language classrooms and promoting students' critical thinking and communication skills. The study may serve as a reference for schools seeking to strengthen the implementation of Project-Based Learning and support innovative English language teaching practices. The findings may provide useful information and references for future studies related to Project-Based Learning, TESOL, critical thinking skills, and communication skills.

Limitation

This study is subject to several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study involves a single participant – one English teacher at the International Class Program of MI Plus Walisongo Trenggalek – and therefore the findings reflect one individual's perspective and experience. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note, single-participant qualitative studies prioritize depth over breadth, and the findings should be interpreted as contextually situated insights rather than generalizable conclusions applicable to all TESOL settings.

Second, data were collected exclusively through a semi-structured interview, without supplementary data sources such as classroom observation, analysis of student work samples, or document review. The absence of methodological triangulation means that the findings represent the teacher's self-reported perceptions rather than independently verified accounts of classroom practice. While self-report data are appropriate and widely used in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018), readers should interpret the findings with this constraint in mind.

Third, this study does not directly measure students' critical thinking or communication skills. All claims regarding students' skill development are based exclusively on the teacher's perceptions and observations, not on independent assessment of student performance. Accordingly, findings related to student outcomes should be understood as teacher-perceived contributions of PBL rather than empirically demonstrated learning gains.

Finally, the study is bounded by a specific context – an International Class Program at an elementary Islamic school in East Java, Indonesia – and the findings may not transfer directly to other educational settings, student populations, or instructional contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Constructivist Learning Theory

This study is grounded in Constructivist Learning Theory. According to Piaget (1972), learning occurs when individuals actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment. Learning is not a passive process but an active process of meaning-making.

Similarly, Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. Through collaborative activities and scaffolding provided by teachers and peers, learners

can achieve higher levels of understanding. This perspective is highly relevant to PBL because project activities require collaboration, negotiation, and knowledge construction.

Dewey (1938) also argued that education should be based on meaningful experiences and active participation. These principles form the philosophical foundation of Project-Based Learning.

Project-Based Learning

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an instructional approach in which learning is organized around projects that require students to investigate authentic questions and create meaningful products (Thomas, 2000). According to Larmer et al. (2015), high-quality PBL includes several essential elements, namely challenging problems or questions, sustained inquiry, authenticity, student voice and choice, reflection, critique and revision, and a public product. Blumenfeld et al. (1991) explain that PBL promotes deeper learning because students actively engage in inquiry and problem-solving processes. Bell (2010) further argues that PBL supports the development of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity.

Within TESOL settings, PBL provides opportunities for authentic language use. Students communicate in English while conducting research, discussing ideas, preparing presentations, and producing project outputs (Stoller, 2006).

Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking is one of the most frequently discussed competencies in modern education. Facione (2015) identifies six core components of critical thinking, namely interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. Paul and Elder (2019) argue that critical thinking involves disciplined reasoning that enables individuals to assess information objectively and make sound judgments.

Research indicates that PBL can foster critical thinking because learners must identify problems, evaluate information, generate solutions, and justify decisions (Loes & Pascarella, 2017; Guo et al., 2020). In TESOL contexts, critical thinking supports learners' ability to engage in argumentative discussions, evaluate texts, and communicate ideas effectively in English (Lu & Xie, 2024).

Communication Skills

Communication skills refer to the ability to exchange information effectively through speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). According to Trilling and Fadel (2009), communication is one of the core competencies required for success in the twenty-first century. Research has demonstrated that PBL promotes communication skills by engaging learners in collaborative tasks and authentic language use (Bell, 2010; Fried-Booth, 2002; Stoller, 2006).

Project-Based Learning in TESOL

The application of PBL in TESOL has gained increasing attention due to its compatibility with communicative language teaching principles. Stoller (2006) argues that PBL creates meaningful contexts for language learning by integrating content, communication, cognition, and collaboration. Beckett and Miller (2006) similarly found that project work encourages learner autonomy and authentic language use.

Recent studies have also highlighted the effectiveness of PBL in promoting higher-order thinking skills in language classrooms. Nguyễn (2021) reported that project-based activities enhanced TESOL students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Beckett (2023) further emphasizes that PBL supports the development of the "Five Cs" of language learning: communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and cultural awareness.

Research Gap

Although previous studies have established the benefits of PBL, several gaps remain. Bell (2010), Kokotsaki et al. (2016), and Guo et al. (2020) focused primarily on general education settings, leaving limited attention to TESOL classrooms specifically. Beckett and Miller (2006) examined language learning outcomes but did not simultaneously investigate critical thinking and communication skills. Nguyễn (2021) addressed critical thinking while leaving communication skills largely unexplored. Furthermore, most existing studies were conducted in Western or East Asian contexts, with limited evidence drawn from Indonesian TESOL settings.

Therefore, this study seeks to investigate an English teacher's perspective on Project-Based Learning in TESOL and its role in fostering students' critical thinking and communication skills at the International Class Program of MI Plus Walisongo Trenggalek. By focusing on teachers' experiences and perceptions, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how Project-Based Learning is implemented and how it supports students' development of essential twenty-first-century skills within an Indonesian elementary school context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative case study design to investigate teacher's perspective on the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in TESOL and its role in fostering students' critical thinking and communication skills at the International Class Program of MI Plus Walisongo Trenggalek. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations regarding a particular phenomenon in depth. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research is used to understand how individuals make sense of their experiences and the meanings they attribute to them.

The use of a single participant is consistent with the epistemological assumptions of qualitative case study research. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argue that in qualitative inquiry, the goal is not statistical representativeness but depth of understanding, and that a single carefully selected participant can yield rich, detailed insights into a specific phenomenon. Furthermore, Yin (2018) distinguishes between statistical generalization and analytic generalization, noting that case study findings can be generalized to theoretical propositions rather than to populations. Accordingly, the findings of this study are not intended to represent all TESOL teachers in Indonesia but to contribute an in-depth, theoretically grounded understanding of how one teacher implements and perceives Project-Based Learning within a specific educational context.

Furthermore, Yin (2018) states that a case study design is suitable for investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Since this study seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of how Project-Based Learning is implemented in an English language learning context and how teachers perceive its contribution to students' critical thinking and communication skills, a qualitative case study design is considered appropriate.

Following Yin (2018), this study is classified as a descriptive case study, which aims to describe a phenomenon – in this case, the implementation of Project-Based Learning and its perceived contribution to students' skill development – within its real-life context. The bounded case in this study is defined as the English teacher's experience implementing Project-Based Learning within the International Class Program of MI Plus Walisongo Trenggalek. The case is bounded by a specific participant (one English teacher), a specific instructional approach (Project-Based Learning), and a specific educational program

(the International Class Program). This clear bounding of the case reflects the case study tradition described by Merriam and Tisdell ([2016](#)), who emphasize that a case must be identifiable as a specific, bounded instance of a phenomenon.

Research Setting and Participant

The study was conducted at the International Class Program (ICP) of MI Plus Walisongo Trenggalek, East Java, Indonesia. The International Class Program is designed to provide students with meaningful English learning experiences through interactive and student-centered instructional approaches. One of the learning approaches implemented in the program is Project-Based Learning, which encourages students to participate actively in collaborative projects and present their learning outcomes publicly.

The participant of this study is an English teacher who teaches in the International Class Program of MI Plus Walisongo Trenggalek and has experience implementing Project-Based Learning in English language instruction. The teacher was selected purposively because of their direct involvement in planning, facilitating, and evaluating project-based learning activities within the program. As this study aims to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of Project-Based Learning and its perceived contribution to students' critical thinking and communication skills, a participant with relevant experience was considered appropriate for the study.

Data Collection Technique

The data for this study were collected through a semi-structured interview with an English teacher.

Semi-structured interviews are considered appropriate because they allow the researcher to obtain detailed information regarding participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations while maintaining flexibility during the interview process. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison ([2018](#)) explain that semi-structured interviews enable researchers to explore participants' perspectives in depth while still focusing on predetermined research topics.

The interview was audio-recorded with the participant's consent and subsequently transcribed for analysis. The interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. The transcript served as the primary source of data for thematic analysis. The interview focused on several aspects related to the implementation of Project-Based Learning, including the planning and implementation of project-based activities, the teacher's role during project work, students' participation in projects, the development of students' critical thinking skills, the development of students' communication skills, the implementation of project presentations as public products, and the benefits and challenges of implementing Project-Based Learning in TESOL.

Research Instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis ([Creswell & Poth, 2018](#)). The researcher is responsible for collecting, organizing, interpreting, and analyzing the data obtained during the research process.

To support data collection, an interview guide was developed based on the research questions and the theoretical framework presented in Chapter II. The interview guide consists of open-ended questions that allow the participant to provide detailed explanations and reflections regarding the implementation of Project-Based Learning and its contribution to students' critical thinking and communication skills.

The interview guide also helps ensure that all relevant topics are discussed while allowing flexibility for follow-up questions when additional clarification is required.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a method used to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns of meaning within qualitative data.

The analysis process consists of six stages. First, the researcher familiarised themselves with the data by reading and rereading the interview transcript. Second, initial codes were generated from meaningful statements and significant information. Third, related codes were grouped into broader categories to identify potential themes. Fourth, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure consistency and relevance. Fifth, the themes were clearly defined and named. Finally, the researcher interprets the findings and presents them in relation to the research questions and relevant theories.

To illustrate the analytic process, Table 1 presents a representative example of how raw data were coded and developed into themes.

Table 1. Example of Coding and Theme Development

Interview Extract	Initial Code	Sub-theme	Theme
"Students cannot simply copy information. They have to decide which information is important and how they want to present it to the audience."	Decision-making content selection	Information organization	Critical Thinking Development
"Before presenting, students revise their work based on feedback. They often realize that some information is unclear and needs improvement."	Revision feedback	Reflection and self- evaluation	Critical Thinking Development
"At the beginning, many students were shy when speaking English. After practicing and presenting several times, they became more confident."	Growth in speaking and confidence	Confidence in oral communication	Communication Skills Development
"Because parents and teachers are watching, students prepare more seriously and try to communicate more clearly."	Audience awareness motivating preparation	Authentic communication context	Communication Skills Development
"Students are usually more excited during project activities because they can create something and show it to others."	Increased enthusiasm learning	Engagement motivation	Benefits of PBL
"Some students can prepare their presentations independently, but others need much more guidance from the teacher."	Proficiency-related scaffolding needs	Differentiated support requirements	Challenges of PBL

Note: Codes were generated inductively from the interview transcript and subsequently grouped into sub-themes and broader themes aligned with the research questions.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed member checking and peer debriefing.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checking is one of the most important techniques for establishing credibility in qualitative research. In this study, member checking was conducted by returning the full interview transcript to the participating teacher following transcription. The teacher was asked to review the transcript for accuracy, verify that their responses had been recorded correctly, and clarify any statements that may have been ambiguous or misrepresented. The teacher confirmed the overall accuracy of the transcript and provided minor clarifications regarding the sequence of project preparation stages and the specific visual aid formats used by students. These clarifications were incorporated into the final transcript before analysis proceeded.

In addition, peer debriefing were conducted through discussions with supervisors or fellow researchers. This process allows the researcher to receive feedback regarding data interpretation and helps reduce potential bias during the analysis process. The use of member checking and peer debriefing is expected to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Four major themes emerged from the interview data: (1) implementation of PBL, (2) critical thinking development, (3) communication skills development, and (4) benefits and challenges of PBL implementation.

The Implementation of Project-Based Learning in TESOL

Based on the interview data, Project-Based Learning is implemented through project activities that require students to apply English in meaningful contexts. The teacher assigns projects related to descriptive texts, including describing themselves, describing people, and describing objects. Through these projects, students are encouraged to use English not only as a subject of learning but also as a tool for communication. The implementation follows four main stages: (1) topic introduction and language modeling by the teacher, (2) project development including idea organization and preparation of visual aids, (3) rehearsal and revision of presentation performance, and (4) public presentation before teachers, classmates, and parents.

The implementation process begins with the introduction of the topic and the provision of language models by the teacher. The teacher explained:

"I usually start by explaining the topic and giving students examples. After that, they prepare their own project, create visual materials, and practice presenting before the final presentation."

Students are then guided to develop ideas, organize information, prepare presentation materials, and practice their speaking performance. In addition to preparing their presentations, students are required to create visual aids or teaching props that support the content of their descriptive texts. For example, when describing themselves, students prepare personal profile posters; when describing people, they use pictures or character displays; and when describing objects, they bring or create models, drawings, or replicas of the objects being described. As the teacher noted:

"Students prepare posters, pictures, or other visual materials because these help them explain their ideas more clearly during the presentation."

These visual aids help students convey information more clearly and make the presentation more engaging for the audience. The process of designing and preparing the visual materials also encourages students to be creative and to think carefully about how their ideas can be represented effectively.

The final stage of the project is a public presentation in which students present their work before teachers, classmates, and parents. During the presentation, students use the visual aids they have created to support their explanations and enhance audience understanding. According to the teacher, this project-based activity allows students to actively participate in the learning process, engage in authentic communication, and showcase their learning outcomes through both oral presentations and tangible products. The presentation session also serves as a public product, which is one of the essential elements of high-quality Project-Based Learning proposed by Larmer et al. (2015).

English Teacher's Perspective on the Development of Students' Critical Thinking Skills

The interview findings reveal that Project-Based Learning contributes positively to the development of students' critical thinking skills. According to the teacher, students are encouraged to think carefully

throughout the project process, from selecting information to preparing and presenting their final products. Rather than simply memorizing English vocabulary and sentence patterns, students are required to make decisions about what information should be included and how it should be presented effectively. As the teacher stated:

"Students cannot simply copy information. They have to decide which information is important and how they want to present it to the audience."

When working on descriptive text projects, students first identify the subject they want to describe, such as themselves, a person, or an object. They then collect relevant information, select important details, and organize their ideas into a logical sequence. The teacher explained that students must consider which information is most relevant for the audience and how to present it clearly and systematically.

In addition, students create visual aids or supporting materials to accompany their presentations. The process of designing these materials requires students to think critically about how information can be represented visually. They need to decide what pictures, colors, words, or objects should be included to help the audience understand the content more effectively. According to the teacher, this activity encourages students to connect their ideas with visual representations and develop more organized thinking.

Furthermore, students are expected to evaluate and revise their work before presenting it. The teacher explained:

"Before presenting, students revise their work based on feedback. They often realize that some information is unclear and needs improvement."

During preparation, they receive feedback from the teacher and make improvements to both their presentation scripts and visual materials. This process helps students reflect on their work and identify areas that need improvement.

From the teacher's perspective, these activities suggest several dimensions of critical thinking, including analysis, interpretation, evaluation, and explanation. The teacher observed that students become more independent in organizing information, more active in expressing ideas, and more capable of making decisions throughout the project process. Therefore, Project-Based Learning is perceived as an effective approach for fostering students' critical thinking skills in English language learning.

English Teacher's Perspective on the Development of Students' Communication Skills

The teacher perceived that Project-Based Learning supported the development of students' communication skills. Throughout the project process, students are provided with numerous opportunities to use English meaningfully while preparing and delivering their presentations.

According to the teacher, students practice speaking in English during several stages of the project. They discuss ideas with the teacher, prepare presentation scripts, rehearse their performance, and finally present their projects before an audience. These activities provide authentic opportunities for students to use English for real communication purposes rather than merely completing classroom exercises.

The teacher reported noticeable improvements in students' confidence when speaking in front of others. As the teacher stated:

"At the beginning, many students were shy when speaking English. After practicing and presenting several times, they became more confident."

At the beginning of the project, some students appeared hesitant and nervous when using English. However, after participating in project preparation and repeated speaking practice, students became more comfortable expressing their ideas orally. They demonstrated better pronunciation, increased vocabulary usage, improved fluency, and stronger presentation skills.

The use of visual aids also contributed to the development of communication skills. By utilizing posters, pictures, models, and other supporting materials, students were able to explain their ideas more clearly and maintain audience attention during presentations. The visual aids served as communication tools that helped students organize their explanations and deliver information more effectively.

Another important aspect identified by the teacher was the public presentation session. Students presented their projects before teachers, classmates, and parents. The teacher further noted:

"Because parents and teachers are watching, students prepare more seriously and try to communicate more clearly."

This audience created a meaningful communication environment that encouraged students to perform their best. The teacher believed that presenting before parents increased students' motivation and helped them develop greater self-confidence when speaking publicly.

Overall, the teacher perceived that Project-Based Learning not only improved students' linguistic competence but also strengthened their confidence, public speaking ability, and overall communication skills. Through meaningful project activities and authentic presentations, students were able to practice English in ways that closely resemble real-life communication situations.

Benefits and Challenges of Project-Based Learning

According to the teacher, Project-Based Learning provides several significant benefits for students. First, it increases student motivation because learning activities are more meaningful, engaging, and enjoyable. According to the teacher:

"Students are usually more excited during project activities because they can create something and show it to others."

Students are actively involved in creating projects, preparing visual materials, and presenting their work, which makes the learning process more interesting than traditional classroom instruction.

Second, Project-Based Learning promotes active participation. Students are not passive recipients of information but active learners who take responsibility for completing project tasks. They are encouraged to explore ideas, solve problems, make decisions, and express their creativity through project products and presentations.

Third, Project-Based Learning provides authentic opportunities for English language use. Students practice English while preparing projects, designing visual aids, and presenting information before an audience. This allows them to apply language knowledge in meaningful contexts and develop communication skills more effectively.

Fourth, the teacher perceived that Project-Based Learning supports the simultaneous development of critical thinking and communication skills. Students are required to analyze information, organize ideas, create supporting materials, and communicate their findings through oral presentations. As a result, cognitive and communicative skills develop together throughout the project process.

Despite these benefits, several challenges were identified. One challenge is the variation in students' English proficiency levels. The teacher explained:

"Some students can prepare their presentations independently, but others need much more guidance from the teacher."

Some students require additional guidance and support when preparing presentations and using English. Another challenge is limited classroom time, as project activities require more preparation and implementation time than conventional lessons.

The teacher also noted that some students experience nervousness and anxiety when presenting before an audience, particularly during public presentations involving parents. In addition, preparing visual aids and project materials sometimes requires additional effort and resources from both students and teachers. As the teacher described:

"Several students become nervous when presenting in front of parents, especially during their first presentation."

Nevertheless, the teacher believed that these challenges can be addressed through appropriate scaffolding, continuous practice, and teacher support. Overall, the benefits of Project-Based Learning were perceived to outweigh the challenges, making it an effective instructional approach for English language teaching at the elementary school level.

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that the English teacher perceived Project-Based Learning as playing an important role in fostering students' critical thinking and communication skills in the TESOL classroom at the International Class Program of MI Plus Walisongo Trenggalek. Through project activities involving descriptive texts, students were required not only to learn English language forms but also to use the language meaningfully to express ideas, organize information, and communicate with an authentic audience.

The implementation of PBL observed in this study reflects the principles of Constructivist Learning Theory. According to Piaget (1972), learning occurs when learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment. Similarly, Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes that learning is socially constructed through interaction and collaboration. In this study, students actively participated in planning, preparing, and presenting their projects. Rather than receiving information passively, they were involved in constructing their own understanding through meaningful learning experiences. The process of discussing ideas, organizing information, and preparing presentations allowed students to engage actively in knowledge construction.

The findings also suggest that the teacher perceived that PBL contributed to the development of students' critical thinking skills. During project preparation, students needed to decide what information was important, organize ideas logically, and determine how to present their content effectively. These activities involve several components of critical thinking proposed by Facione (2015), including interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and explanation. Students were required to analyze information about themselves, people, or objects and transform that information into meaningful presentations. This finding supports previous studies by Loes and Pascarella (2017) and Guo et al. (2020), which found that project-based activities encourage learners to engage in higher-order thinking processes through problem-solving, decision-making, and information analysis.

Furthermore, the creation of visual aids or teaching props as supporting materials for presentations provided additional opportunities for critical thinking. Students were required to determine how information could be represented visually, select appropriate materials, and design products that effectively supported their oral presentations. This process encouraged learners to think creatively and strategically about how to communicate ideas to an audience. Therefore, the project involved not only language learning but also the development of cognitive skills that are essential for twenty-first-century learning.

Another significant finding is the contribution of PBL to students' communication skills. Throughout the project process, students practiced English in authentic situations by discussing ideas, preparing presentation scripts, and delivering presentations before teachers, classmates, and parents. These activities provided meaningful opportunities for language use beyond traditional classroom exercises. According to Stoller (2006), project-based learning creates authentic contexts in which language functions as a tool for communication rather than merely an academic subject. The findings of this study support this perspective, as students used English to share information, explain ideas, and interact with an audience.

The public presentation component was particularly valuable in enhancing students' communication skills and self-confidence. Presenting projects before parents and other audience members encouraged students to prepare carefully and communicate clearly. Repeated speaking practice helped students improve pronunciation, vocabulary usage, fluency, and presentation skills. This finding is consistent with Bell (2010), who argues that PBL promotes communication skills by providing authentic opportunities for learners to express ideas and collaborate with others. It also supports the view of Trilling and Fadel (2009), who identify communication as one of the essential competencies required in twenty-first-century education.

Moreover, the use of visual aids during presentations strengthened students' ability to communicate effectively. Visual materials helped students explain ideas more clearly and provided support when presenting in English. The visual aids also increased audience engagement and allowed students to connect verbal explanations with concrete representations. As a result, communication became more meaningful and interactive, contributing to both language development and presentation performance.

The findings further reveal that PBL increases student motivation and participation. The teacher perceived that students were more enthusiastic when working on projects because they were given opportunities to create products, express their ideas, and showcase their work publicly. This finding aligns with Blumenfeld et al. (1991), who argue that authentic tasks and meaningful products increase learner engagement and motivation. The opportunity to present projects before parents also appeared to provide additional motivation, as students felt a greater sense of responsibility and accomplishment.

Despite its benefits, the implementation of PBL also presents several challenges. Differences in students' English proficiency levels require teachers to provide continuous guidance and scaffolding. Additionally, limited classroom time and students' anxiety during presentations can affect the implementation process. These challenges are consistent with the findings of Kokotsaki et al. (2016), who noted that successful PBL implementation requires careful planning, sufficient time allocation, and ongoing teacher support. Nevertheless, the teacher in this study believed that the educational benefits of PBL outweighed these challenges.

Overall, the findings suggest that the participating teacher viewed Project-Based Learning as an effective instructional approach for promoting meaningful English language learning at the elementary level. According to the teacher, PBL provides opportunities for students to develop critical thinking and communication skills simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

This study explored an English teacher's perspective on the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in TESOL at the International Class Program of MI Plus Walisongo Trenggalek. The findings revealed that PBL was implemented through descriptive text projects, the development of visual aids, and public presentations involving teachers, classmates, and parents. According to the teacher, these activities

provided meaningful opportunities for students to organize information, express ideas, and use English in authentic communication contexts. The teacher reported that PBL supported the development of students' critical thinking and communication skills by encouraging them to analyze information, make decisions, prepare presentations, and communicate their ideas before an audience. The teacher also observed increased student motivation and participation, although challenges related to differing proficiency levels, limited instructional time, and presentation anxiety were identified. Overall, the findings suggest that Project-Based Learning was viewed by the teacher as a valuable approach for supporting meaningful English language learning within this specific elementary TESOL context.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

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