An Exploration Of Local Culture In English Classroom Practices Through Project Based Learning

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Abstract Interesting aspects from the cultural experience, lifestyle, tourism, habit, and food from Indonesian customs were part of the projects for the students in this study to express in English. For instance, we assigned the students to find information about any culture in Indonesia that they think is unique. They designed a project to describe the uniqueness of people, things, and places. By implementing them in the project, the students could pleasantly learn English and motivate them to speak in English as we ask them to present their group's findings at the end of the project

Keywords. Project Based Learning; Local Culture; English Language Teaching

INTRODUCTION

In classroom practices, Project Based Learning (PBL) is a method of differentiating instructions that allows language learners to do their tasks independently, set the stage for active learning and teamwork, and complete their final work using the proper media. Through the process, we train language learners to take the initiative in their learning process. However, the researcher in this study changed the phases into three stages. They are planning, creating and implementing, and processing.

Project-based learning may provide the students, as a teenager, a chance to reduce their anxiety and be more independent in learning English as a Foreign Language, especially in speaking. It is to solve some language acquisition issues. One of them is group work. Practicing in a group strengthened the students' confidence to speak more (Wijirahayu & Larasati, 2022). Through group work, the students learn how to collaborate with their group mates and try their best to present their group results to compete with other groups. As the theorist mentioned, young adult learners have more control over the learning situation. Through the project, they practice controlling their learning.

We have designed the oral description project for students because we include it in the eighth-grade curriculum. The topic for discussion is aspects of the student's daily experience, such as lifestyle, tourism, habit, food, and many others. For instance, we assigned the students to find information about any culture in Indonesia that they think is unique and design a project to describe the uniqueness of the people, thing, and place from that province. By implementing the project-based, the students could learn English and motivate them to speak English as we ask them to present their group's findings at the end of the project.

Project-Based Learning (PBL), which is a real-life problem-solving as an alternative to the teacher-centered way of teaching and learning (John Dewey and William Heard Kilpatrick), and David Snedden revealed PBL was good in science subjects during this era (Beckett, 2002). He stated it relates to Krashen's theory, which states that students need extensive exposure to get the language target as they learn their first language. It also

allows students to produce a language in a variety of communication modes so that they can engage, negotiate, and interact meaningfully with others or an audience.

Brumfitt (1984) affirmed that PBL on language learning is a project-based communicative language teaching (CLT) method. The application of CLT from a video project is promising (Hama, Rashid, and Wijirahayu, 2022). Pitura & Monica (2018) in their study aimed to outline a class project that illustrates the integration of a project-based learning approach in the language (English) and content (Polish language and culture) learning, the execution of which causes collaboration in groups, as well as the use of technology.

McCarthy (2010) researched to analyze how PBL could foster autonomous learning in a Japanese university classroom and the reaction to the new learning technique as the opposite of the traditional one. The researcher employed a qualitative method that involved 192 students in the second semester of their first year of tertiary education. She used the PBL approach and the textbook as part of the syllabus to solve the failure of traditional teaching techniques. She assigned the student participants to work on assignments from the textbook, which focused on group communication and writing skills. The researcher uses the questionnaire, self-assessment, semi-structured interview, and observations to collect data before and after the PBL. In analyzing the data, the researchers consulted the theory of PBL presented by Beckett and Slater (2005), measuring attitudes through self-reflection by Benson (2007), improving critical thinking through problem-solving by Kobayashi (2004) and Beckett (2005), and fostering autonomous learning. Critical thinking developed creativity in classroom practiced (Wijirahayu, Priyatmoko & Hadianti, 2019).The finding showed that students found PBL increased their motivation and aspects of their learning autonomously, such as research and writing skills and public speaking. The researcher found it encouraging self-reflective teaching and the alternative teaching approach.

One obstacle that makes it difficult for students to speak a foreign language is their errors in using and ordering words. Practicing describing people and things with their characteristics will help the students memorize and use the vocabulary in their daily lives. In addition, students are more enthusiastic about learning things in English. Therefore, we selected topics based on the concept as a combination of action and theoretical understanding. Wijirahayu & Armi (2020) argued that religious values bounded the texts could motivate the students to learn more. The motivation reduced the anxiety (Wijirahayu & Kamilah, 2021). We categorized the skill of classification or description as part of the knowledge framework. From this view, the researcher assigned the students in groups to investigate a unique culture in Indonesia to engage the student understanding of the setting of the culture, characteristics of the people, type of food, traditional dress, and tourism aspect.

METHOD

In the first stage, the researchers selected a topic about the unique culture of Indonesia. We will assign the students to work in groups and find information about any culture in Indonesia that they think is unique. Then, the students describe the people, things, and places in that culture. At this stage, the descriptive text provides the students with ways to show descriptions of people, things, and destinations. It is by taking the example of Papua province as having a unique culture.

At the second stage of creation, the researchers encourage the students to design their projects with guidance through worksheets. The worksheets comprise some information. It is about the organization of the project, the roles and responsibilities, and the evaluation to meet the criteria.

At the final stage of processing, both researchers and students will evaluate the end product of their oral description project. The researchers observed the student participation and how the PBL could help the students ease their anxiety through their project presentation. Meanwhile, we use some questionnaires and a self-reflection form to assess their learning progress and the effectiveness of PBL to help them learn autonomously.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Planning

At the planning stage, the researcher introduced the students to the PBL for their speaking project. The task was assigning students to find information about any culture in Indonesia that they think is unique. Then, the students described the people, things, and places in that culture. In this stage, the researcher conducted the teaching by giving the students a project, and later on, they had to describe the unique culture. Local wisdom from many Indonesian novels and other literary works are rich resources to explore (Wijirahayu & Muliya, 2022). The lesson is descriptive text. This subject allowed students to be able how to describe people, things, and places at the beginner level.

The researcher took the example of Papua as a unique province. The students could make a description of people, such as famous people, heroes, actresses, and athletes, from that province. Then, they should explain the most exciting places in Papua, such as Raja Ampat, Jaya Wijaya Mountain, and others. At last, the students describe traditional food, housing, fashion, dance, song, and musical instruments.

Acting

After the planning stage, the researcher organized students into groups for the project. There were thirty-four students as participants divided into six groups (each comprising six students). Then, the researcher distributed the worksheet to students. This form provided information for students to organize their projects, such as their roles and responsibilities. For instance: What culture to choose? How do they find the culture is unique as people, things, and places? How do they present their findings in multimedia? In this stage, the researcher's role as the instructor who assisted the students in their project. The result at this stage was that six groups had found their topics about the unique province in Indonesia, such as Aceh, Sumatera Utara, Sumatera Barat Nusa, Tenggara Barat, Bali, and Papua.

Observation

At this stage, the researcher observed the interest in the project on both the planning and acting level. On the planning level, the students showed high curiosity as PBL was new in their learning. Meanwhile, the students had many questions about the oral descriptive project of the province. The questions asked were: What are we going to do? What is the function of the task? Whether the tasks need to be presented in front of the class individually or in a group? At this level, some students looked nervous when they

should explain the project personally, but they turned out to be happy when it was in a group.

On the acting level, the students showed their curiosity when the activity form of PBL was there. They paid full attention when the researcher explained the roles and responsibilities. Then, the students collaborated well and spontaneously to discuss the team task. A few groups took time to decide their choice and conform to other groups to avoid a similar topic. However, when presenting the project to evaluate their performance individually, 59% (19 students) were anxious, and 41% (15 students) were.

The evaluation was from the researcher, the result of self-reflection, and the collaborator. Cycle 2 was there for three main reasons. The students felt discouraged by the direct feedback, felt anxious although the task was well-prepared, and had negative thoughts that their classmates would evaluate them negatively. Here, teachers' beliefs about assessment in classroom practices played an important role in motivating the students to have better performance (Wijirahayu & Rokhmani, 2021)

There are three main problems in investigating speaking anxiety in performing oral descriptions. The FLCAS results and the observations made were similar. They lack self-confidence, motivation to put more effort into English, and lack of monologue experience in front of a crowd.

The first problem was anxiety as they did not prepare when impromptu. Young (1991) stated that students get it when they perform a spontaneous role-play activity, a speaking class, an oral presentation in front, and present a dialogue.

The second problem was that the students felt discouraged by the direct feedback. They were afraid of making mistakes and believed that the teacher would correct them immediately in front of others. They perceived anxiety about the mistakes they made on practices or tests. It was ambiguous, invalid, and unfamiliar in high evaluation. The corrections or improvements by teachers that spontaneously cause anxiety in students (Koch & Terrell (1991, pp. 109–126) offer a way to minimize their speaking problems by participating in some activities, such as pair-work and discussion personally. These activities also trained the students to respect others.

The third problem of being laughed at or negatively judged by their peer was no longer a consideration to overcome the anxiety in speaking English as a Foreign Language. Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a teaching strategy to reduce speaking anxiety. PBL for oral description as the aim is successful. Most of the students lessen that problem by doing the project. This finding is like Shand (2008) found that using drama in the classroom positively affected their speaking anxiety.

Self-reflection during the treatment showed that implementing project-based learning with an oral description as the objective eases speaking anxiety. After action research, 85% of students successfully overcame their anxiety problems and had higher speaking test scores. The findings were in line with the study that the students in an English class with high anxiety talk less and stiffly than those with a low one (Phillips, 1992). Thus, when it decreased, they spoke better.

The eighth-grade students of one class of a state Junior High Islamic school in Jakarta consider the PBL an English learning method that encourages them to improve their speaking skills. I revealed this through the interviews as a reflection in observation. The students mentioned an awareness that project-based learning is beneficial for them. Even though PBL is still new to them, they could enjoy the process. However, these

attitudes might influence speaking anxiety. Especially when correcting the students during the performance, they felt anxious, uncomfortable, and stressed out.

CONCLUSION

At the planning stage, the researcher introduced the students to the PBL and assigned the students to find information about any culture in Indonesia. The acting stage organized thirty-four students into six groups, distributed the worksheet, and asked them to fill it out with descriptions of their roles and responsibilities. The observing stage was to find the students' interest in the project. It was about both planning and acting level, and in presenting the project to evaluate their performance individually.

There was more than half of the students were still anxious. At the reflecting stage, the researcher found PBL is beneficial as an English learning method because of the three main reasons mentioned before: being discouraged by the teacher's direct feedback, feeling anxious although the task was well-prepared, and having negative thoughts that classmates would evaluate them negatively.

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