A Case Study of the Implementation of Project-Based Learning in Business English Conversation Class

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Abstract

This study aims to find out: (1) Lecturer's perception of Project-Based Learning in Business English Conversation classroom; (2) The steps of implementing Project-Based Learning in Business English Conversation class; (3) The problems found during the implementation of Project-Based Learning; and (4) The solutions used to overcome the problems found during the learning process. The respondent of this research was a lecturer of Business English Conversation class. The respondent was chosen based on the purpose of the study. She was selected by using purposive sampling. The data collection techniques used in this study are interviews, questionnaires, and observation. The results of this research show that: (1) The lecturer has positive perception in conducting Project-Based Learning in Business English Conversation class; (2) The lecturer implements Project-Based Learning in Business English Conversation class in 3 stages: Pre-Project making (topic selection, grouping, ideas development, and timeline explanation), Project making (ideas finalization and video making process), and Post-Project making (product presentation and evaluation); (3) There are five problems which are found during the implementation of Project-Based Learning in Business English Conversation class: missing timeline, lacking of students' curiosity, grouping, and assessing the presentation; and (4) In overcoming the problems found, the lecturer gave tolerance to the students' excuses, grouped the students by considering their gender, activeness, and English proficiency, visited each group to control the progress and discussion, and focused on the content and language features for the final assessment.
Keywords: Case study; PBL; speaking

INTRODUCTION

Business English Conversation (BEC) course is an advanced course for learning speaking skills. After learning oral theory in the previous semester, students are faced certain situations to practice their oral skills, in this case, a business context. The classroom environment is the same as speaking class, and students are required to practice and express their speaking skills according to indicators of speaking. The objective is to measure oral skills based on indicators and show that oral skills can be applied to specific situations and contexts. According to Afshar and Asakereh (2016, p.112), speaking is part of the four macro language skills that students must improve to communicate effectively in many settings or situations. Sisrimangkorn (2018, p. 14) added that speaking is an important skill that must be mastered because it is used to communicate with different functions and purposes.

Although BEC is an advanced classroom for oral skills, students cannot avoid challenges. Students' challenges are not much different from the challenges they faced in previous speaking classes. Rodríguez and Torres (2017, p. 58) also added that students face negative feelings of speaking English since they are not accustomed to being challenged to take an active speaking role and have few contexts to speak it for communicative purposes. In addition, Sisrimangkorn (2018, p. 15) pointed out that it is difficult for learners who use English as a foreign language to apply English in a real environment because the most used language in the surrounding environment is L1.

A study conducted by Afshar and Asakereh in 2016 found some problems in learning oral skills. One of them is the least efficient classroom activity. In most oral courses in EFL countries, teachers emphasize practice, repetition, and memorization of dialogue. Furthermore, the applied method does not use authentic materials or tasks.

To meet the needs of an ideal Business English Conversation classroom, teachers should consider a method that provides students with many opportunities to develop their speaking skills. In addition, to obtain effective oral skills, students must apply their oral skills in a communicative and real context. Therefore, the teacher believes that PBL is an appropriate method to achieve the objectives of the BEC course.

PBL is a teaching method. Teachers drive students. The role of teachers is to guide. Students collect information by asking questions they want to know (Bell, 2010, p.39). PBL is a teaching strategy that can enrich students' curiosity about their things and show their new knowledge through various demonstration models (Klein, Traveras, King, Commitante, Bey & Stripling, 2009, p. 8). Therefore, it can be concluded that PBL is a way to encourage students to collect information and present their new understanding in some form.

Studies have confirmed the effectiveness of project-based learning in learning English. Miller (2006 in Sisrimangkorn 2015) mentioned that PBL encourages teachers to achieve various teaching goals: fostering communication, combining cultural studies with language, and connecting language and content. Rochmawati (2015) added that PBL improves students' skills through meaningful project-based activities. PBL is beneficial because it is associated with real-world challenges and helps students apply their knowledge in the real world. Bell (2010, p. 39) pointed out that students solve real-world problems by designing their research, planning learning, organizing research, and

implementing the best learning strategies. As a result, students are more motivated to learn and acquire valuable skills to help them overcome the difficulties of learning to speak to achieve the goal of learning to speak.

Based on the above explanation, researchers tried to investigate the implementation of project-based learning methods. The researcher decided to carry out a project entitled "Project-based Learning (PBL) Implementation in Business English Conversation classroom."

From the explanation above, this study has the objective of investigating the lecturer's perception of Project-Based Learning in Business English Conversation class, the steps of implementing Project-Based Learning in Business English Conversation class, the problems which are found during the implementation of Project-Based Learning in Business English Conversation class, and the solutions which the lecturer tries to overcome the problems found during the learning process.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Speaking skill

Widdowson (2004, p. 1) points out that everyone knows that making sentences is important for language learning. Still, understanding language is about how to understand, speak, read, and write, but also includes learning to speak and establish communication. Speaking is a kind of mutual interaction. It needs to cooperate in real-time management of speaking rounds, so there is not much time for detailed planning (Thornbury, 2005, p. Iv). Speaking is a two-way process involving the real exchange of thoughts, information, or feelings (Eckard and Kearny, 1981; Florez, 1999; and Howarth, 2001). Brown (1994), Burns & Joyce (1997), and Louma (2004, p. 2) mention that speaking is an interactive process of meaning construction involving the production, reception, and processing of information. The form and meaning of speech depend on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, the physical environment, and the purpose of the speech. Speaking is usually spontaneous, open, and evolutionary. However, speaking is not always unpredictable, and language's functions (or patterns) can be used to identify certain speaking situations.

The ability to speak fluently requires the understanding of language features and the ability to process information and language impromptu (Harmer, 2007, p. 269-271). Brown (2000, p. 271) states that speaking has five aspects that the speaker should know to achieve communication goals: conversational discourse, pronunciation, accuracy and fluency, affective factors, and the interaction effects. Syakur (1990, p. 5) mentions that the abilities that should be mastered in speaking skills by the learners are vocabulary mastery, fluency, grammar, and pronunciation. In line with Syakur, Weir (1998, pp. 147-148) states that the mastery of vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and pronunciation should be completed to adjust the speech content appropriately. Richards and Renandya (2002, p. 223) add that the speech should be comprehensible to the listener. Brown (2003, p. 157) suggests grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, pronunciation, and task (reaching the objectives of the given task) as the judgmental points of speaking skill. From the definition above, it can be concluded that indicators of speaking are vocabulary, grammar, fluency, pronunciation, and comprehension.

Project-Based Learning

According to Klein et al. (2009, p. 8), project-based learning is a learning mode that allows students to freely pursue their knowledge and demonstrate their new knowledge through some demonstration modes. In addition, REEP (1997, p. 6) pointed out that project-based learning is a collaborative learning method in which students use real language to achieve specific learning goals. Students are planners workers and consultants for work, performance, and progress. The project is determined by the students' questions, or needs.

Rochmahwati (2015, p. 204) pointed out that according to constructivist learning theory when students actively participate in learning activities and find their understanding, project-based learning will be more effective. Based on Vigotsky (1978, p. 45), Constructivist theory explains that students experience themselves and reflect on their own experience. On another occasion, Torres and Rodrigues (2017, p. 59) explained that project-based learning is a constructivist learning method in which students have the opportunity to work in groups and engage in social interaction to solve problems. Project-based learning also guides students to collaborate with other students in a concessional relationship. It demonstrates that they are responsible for solving problems in their environment or broader areas of life.

There are three characteristics of Project-Based Learning: 1) the activity should be student-centered; where the role of the learners as the main actors in the learning process, 2) the project should be realistic; meaning that the project is the realization of awareness of social responsibility which is practical, and 3) the learning process guides the learners to be critical and creative thinkers by the questions or problems as the realization of constructivism theory (Klein et al., 2009; Kubiatko and Vaculova, 2011; Thomas, 2004).

Taken from Mergendoller, et al. (2009) and Bell (2010), stages in Project-Based Learning are: 1) Planning the project; this stage includes the selection of topic which is going to be discussed, defining project area, problem and idea, developing a question, forming group, and assessing the plan for the teacher; 2) Launch the project; this stage includes the deepening of the interest, enthusiasm, concern, clarifying the project attributes, forming a high expectation, clarifying rules, procedures, product, timeline, grading practices, and designing the project, including assigning roles and methodology decision; 3) Guided inquiry and product creation, where the learner gathers information to support the process of project-making, discusses with the group, uses the gathered-resources, defines task and assesses their own progress, cultivates their presentation skills, and the teacher acts as facilitator to help/scaffold the learners who find problems; 4) Final product, is the stage of presenting the final product, evaluating the project, and reflecting the goals achievement.

Advantages of implementing PBL in speaking class based on Handayani (2010) are: 1) Appropriateness, 2) Adequacy of vocabulary for purpose, 3) Grammar accuracy, 4) Intelligibility, 5) Fluency, 6) Relevance and adequacy of the content. In line with the previous explanation, Kamisah et al. (2013, p. 99) explained that the learners improve accent, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension by conducting two cycles of Project-Based Learning.

Moreover, according to Fragoulis (2009, p. 92), as cited in Dewi, there are many benefits of implementing the Project-Based Learning (PBL) approach in teaching speaking: 1) PBL provides contextual and meaningful learning for students, 2) PBL can create an optimal environment for practicing speaking English, 3) PBL makes students actively engage in project learning, 4) PBL enhances students' interests, motivation, engagement, and enjoyment, 5) PBL promotes social learning that can enhance collaborative skills, 6) PBL can give an optimal opportunity to improve student's language skills (2009, p. 349).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative case study to analyze a specific topic, "Implementation of project-based learning in business English conversation classes ."A qualitative case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a given case to understand the activities that occur in important situations (Stake, 1995). The qualitative approach was chosen for this study because the researcher wanted to explore how to implement project-based learning in a particular environment. The case can be an individual, institution, or group considered an investigative unit (Margono, 2007, p. 19). 29). This research used this method because it is suitable for focusing on implementing project-based learning in business English conversation courses. The research results emphasized the interpretation of the data found in the field. The results are not written in figures and tables with statistical measures but rather in the form of text that describes the results and is presented in narrative form (Nazir, 2005, p. 54).

The research was carried out at the fifth semester of English education students at one of the universities in Surakarta in 2018/2019. The research respondent was a lecturer of Business English Conversation of the English Education Department. The respondent was chosen based on the purpose of the study. She was selected by using purposive sampling. Vanderstoep and Johnston (2001, p. 187) asserted that purposive sampling is to choose the people based on the particular attribute and to arbitrarily include equal representation of groups that might not be equally represented in society. The writer used questionnaires, interviews, observation, and document review to collect data.

To ensure the trustworthiness of this research, some strategies are adopted to obtain the trustworthiness of the data. These strategies are used to verify the accuracy or validity of the research results carried out. The researchers used two techniques proposed by Merriam (1998): triangulation and thick description.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

To adapt to the course's objectives and hope that students can practice speaking skills in business communication, the lecturer decides to implement project-based learning. According to the research results, the teacher has a positive view of the implementation of PBL in classroom activities that focus on spoken English. The teacher believes that classroom activities that focus on spoken English should allow students to speak and interact in English. PBL is a group-based method that provides students with opportunities to speak and communicate with group members to express their opinions in a smaller circle to achieve their goals. The research results of Sisrimangkorn (2018) helped students have more opportunities to speak through the implementation of PBL. As

a result, they are more motivated and confident speaking English with other group members. In addition, in group discussions, students interact and communicate with group members in various situations to achieve the project's goals. The same results were found in a study conducted by Bakar, Noordin, and Razali (2019), which showed that interaction between group members is inevitable. This type of interaction reduces students' anxiety about speaking because they are more willing to communicate with group members.

In addition, the lecturer believes that through the implementation of PBL, students can simultaneously demonstrate and use their soft and hard skills to complete the assigned tasks. Hard skills include oral skills, while soft skills include teamwork and discipline. According to the findings of Zhang (2015), the students realized that in addition to improving their performance and motivation in language, they could also improve their teamwork skills, such as solving problems within the team and being responsible for the tasks. Roles assigned to them.

When dividing students into groups, namely gender, motivation, and English proficiency, there are several considerations. In this case, students with generally low English proficiency should be grouped with students with good English proficiency. Teachers may face situations where they cannot control and pay attention to all the students in the class, which can cause less capable students to lose interest in learning. Therefore, by applying PBL, the smartest students in the group can help the less able students. This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Omar, Taib, and Basri (2012). They concluded that students with lower English proficiency, through the extended activities and collaborative nature of PBL, with the help of students with higher English proficiency, are more likely to be exposed to English and speak English with confidence.

Students can develop improvisational speaking skills in response to real-world situations in the project. This finding is consistent with Sisrimangkorn (2018), which shows that PBL is student-centered, end-product, and related to real-world problems and encourages students to demonstrate their knowledge practically. The teacher instructs the students to make a company introduction video as the final product. The video is considered an opportunity to combine the ability to use sentences or statements that suit the business background and possibilities. Practice the students' theoretical background. In addition, Miller (2016) pointed out that PBL provides students with the opportunity to work for real purposes and use academic language.

The lecturer carried out a PBL cycle divided into four stages: project planning, project initiation, product creation, and final product. First of all, the project planning and project initiation phase includes topic selection, grouping, brainstorming, student motivation, clarification of project attributes, formation of high expectations, rules, and project design in the first meeting. At this stage, the teacher found a problem when grouping. It needs to consider many factors, such as the number of team members, gender, skill, activity, and teamwork ability. The teacher's subjective judgment can solve this problem. Then the teacher divides the students according to their activities. Zhang's (2015) research also found that at the beginning, although clear roles were assigned to group members, some students dominated the work, while others did almost no work. In

addition, some students did not communicate in the target language but instead used their native language.

Second, the guided consultation and product creation phases include information gathering, group discussion, collected information, task definition, and expression skills development. Third, the final product stage includes product display, evaluation, and evaluation. In these stages, the teacher found three problems. First, they are lack curiosity about students and miss schedules and performance evaluations. The teacher hopes that students can independently ask what they want about the topic. However, the students were too passive and did not ask anything. The lecturer overcomes this problem by beginning to visit each group. Due to the time-consuming project, the implementation of the activity was slightly delayed. Therefore, the teacher discussed with the students a possible new schedule. Omar et al. (2012) believe that low achievers are in great need of PBL learning opportunities, they may need more time and help and more practice to improve with others. At the same time, for the third question in these stages, since most PBL activities occur outside the classroom, it is difficult for the teacher to assess students based solely on their statements, making it difficult for teachers to control the process. The statement by Bakar, Noordin, and Razali (2019) supported the ABP in promoting extracurricular activities, especially when collecting and discussing information, as students can find various sources. Therefore, the teacher promotes the solution by asking students to report on their progress at each meeting.

In summary, the study's overall findings indicate that teachers have a positive opinion about the implementation of PBL in business English conversation classes. PBL provides students with more opportunities to speak and interact and a situation where students can apply their knowledge to real-life situations. In addition, PBL can support students with low English proficiency through group activities with high English proficient students. During the implementation of the PBL, the lecturer encountered four challenges. They are group formation, students' lack of curiosity, schedules, and performance evaluations. The teacher overcomes these problems by assigning students according to their enthusiasm, beginning to visit each group, discussing possible schedules, and beginning to ask students about their progress.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The teacher positively views project-based learning in the Business English Conversation course. Teachers implement project-based learning in Business English conversation class, which is divided into three stages, namely (1) Pre-project production: topic selection, grouping, thinking development, line explanation of time; (2) Project production: creative completion and video production process; (3) Post-production of projects: exhibition and evaluation of products. During the implementation of Project-Based Learning in the Business English Conversation Class, the lecturer encountered four problems: lack of time organization, lack of student curiosity, grouping, and assessment demonstration. In response to the problems encountered in the implementation of project learning in business English conversation classes, the teacher gave excuses to tolerate students, group students according to their gender, enthusiasm, and command of English, visit each group, monitoring progress, discussing, and focusing on the final assessment

Language content and characteristics. Teachers better pay more attention to preparing project-based learning in the BEC classroom. Teachers should pay attention to time management and consider the number of meetings available to maximize the capacity of the course and students. Student-centered activities should be used more in ELT classrooms. These activities should use project-based learning to encourage students as the main role of the activity. Project-based learning helps students explore their skills and integrate them into hands-on activities.

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