

Investigating The Lecturers' Challenges In Implementing Project-Based Learning In Writing Class

Neni Nurkhamidah^{1*}

Abstract

This research aims at finding the challenges encountered by English lecturers in implementing Project Based Learning (PBL). This is qualitative research that implemented in English Department of Media Nusantara Citra University by involving five lecturers who teach writing classes. The researcher applies interviews to obtain the data. The interview questions are designed semi-structured, and some questions arise during the interview. The data obtained by the researcher are analyzed and coded to find the challenges encountered by lecturers. The finding shows that 5 lecturers involved in this research encountered challenges when they implement PBL. The challenge related to shifting the instruction to facilitating group work, time, creating the project, designing the project, managing group working, managing the project, and assessing the project. To overcome this problem, it is suggested Media Nusantara Citra university conduct seminars or workshops to enrich the lecturers' knowledge and skill in implementing PBL.

Keywords: challenges; writing; project-based Learning (PBL)

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¹STKIP Media Nusantara Citra, Indonesia

*Author Correspondent: neninurkhamidah@gmail.com

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Introduction

For learners who are not native English speakers, writing becomes a complicated activity because there are many differences in structure, style, and convention between English and their first language. Hidayati (2018) suggests that language and linguistic skills, motivation, and reading habits are factors that hinder students' ability to write. In addition, external factors such as time problems are also obstacles encountered by students. Research conducted by Toba et al. (2019) reveal that Indonesian students have difficulty in aspects of written content, structure, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Because writing is a combination of skills and a complex process, the problem of lack of time for learning often arises in learning.

To develop proper writing, the student has to go through a process that is quite complicated and takes a long time. Therefore, teaching writing must be conducted with the appropriate approach to achieve effective and efficient learning. Teachers must also apply an interesting learning approach to shape students' paradigm that writing is a fun and beneficial activity. One of the promising approaches to be implemented is Project-based Learning (PBL). In simple terms, PBL model is learning that contextualizes learning by providing problems to be solved or certain products to be developed. The difference between this approach and traditional learning is in its activities. PBL emphasizes independent, interdisciplinary and integrated learning with real situations (Indrawan et al., 2018). By giving the experience of demonstrating knowledge through a product, students will have the opportunity to use several skills such as problem-solving, creativity, cooperation as well as language skills.

PBL is an alternative that can be implemented by the teacher. It is an approach that provides opportunities for students to design, plan, and run certain projects to produce a product. The basic principle of PBL is the existence of constructive conditions to help students

get an authentic learning experience. Because students get direct experience, learning will become more interesting so it increases students' motivation to learn which in the end their writing skills will increase (Salamin & Tamimi, 2020). Students who are given learning in the form of projects will use critical thinking because they are required to complete and present their products. The root of PBL is learning by doing. Through this approach, students are provided with opportunities to work on projects that are relevant to the real world. They also need to deal with the investigation, communication, and collaboration with peers. This process encourages students to construct their new knowledge by engaging with the project.

The implementation of PBL in writing classes conducted by previous researchers shows its effectiveness to increase students' motivation in learning languages. It also increases students' self-confidence, learning independence, and language skills (Shanti et al., 2018). Learning becomes richer by demonstrating the ability of students to plan, manage and complete a project using language knowledge and skills. The final products demanded are varied, from simple media such as bulletins, posters, and reports to media that utilize communication and information technology. Argawati & Suryani (2020) on research conducted in a university find out that students have positive attitudes toward the implementation of PBL in writing classes. They also gave positive opinions toward this approach. Students are more enthusiastic and actively involved in the learning activity. It is also proved that students are able to write better since the project given to the students engaged them with the real problems.

Soffiany & Purbani, (2020) mention that PBL is more effective compared to direct instruction in writing class. It is also proved by Fatmawati, (2021) that captures the implementation PBL in writing classes in an English education study program. The research finds out that generally there are four steps covered in its implementation. The steps are planning, designing, monitoring, and evaluating. Susanti et al. (2020) recommend the use of PBL in English learning since it has positive effects on students' writing skills. Pratiwi et al. (2020) find out that applying PBL in writing classes not only effect on students' skills but also their ability to use Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS).

Although the benefit of PBL is recognized, the implementation of this approach is not easy since it has particular characteristics. Sheppard & Stoller 1995 in (Aubrey, 2022) mention that PBL activity is reflected by step-by-step guidelines: 1) The teacher and students determine the theme and output of the project, as well as agree with both theme and output, 2) the teacher and students construct the project, 3) the teacher get students ready for data gathering; students gather data, 4) the teacher gets students ready to compile and analyze data. 5) the teacher gets students ready for the language demands of the final activity, 6) students present the final product, and 7) the students evaluate the project. Therefore, it is suggested that the type of tasks in PBL are complex, based on challenging questions or problems, that involve students designing the product. The projects they develop also involve students' problem-solving, and decision-making. The purpose of the tasks is to give students the opportunity to work for extended periods of time, and the top of the activity is they show realistic products or conduct presentations.

Teachers or tutors as a facilitator in PBL have an important role in learning success Wondie et al.(2020). However, they still have a problem in implementing this approach. They worry that PBL may disturb the learning process. In planning they encounter a challenge in determining learning outcomes and in the assessment, teachers have difficulty conducting the authentic assessment. Aldabbus (2018) also reveals that teachers found it is hard to manage the time in their classrooms as the projects took more than the expected time. Designing valid and reliable assessment also become a challenge for them. Therefore, it is suggested that workshops, seminars, and training sessions on PBL be conducted to spread the culture of this approach. Intykbekov (2017) identifies that the major challenges faced by the lecturer in implementing PBL are lack of knowledge, lack of time, and group work problems.

For Gen Z students, PBL is very ideal to develop their skills, critical thinking, and perseverance (Seibert, 2020). As it is suggested by the Indonesian Ministry of Education project-based need to be implemented since it's in line with Merdeka Curriculum therefore, educational institution from elementary to higher education applies this approach. The application of PBL in higher education equips students with the applicable competence that help them be ready to work because when they study at university, they have skilled with the ability to solve problems in the real world.

Universitas Media Nusantara Citra always emphasizes the implementation of PBL in the learning process. Therefore, this approach is also implemented in writing class. Several writing courses are offered at a different level. Introduction to Writing in the second semester, Writing for General Purposes in the third semester, and the last Academic Writing in the fourth semester. As a lecturer is one factor affecting the success of learning, he or she has to understand how to design, implement and evaluate the learning to guide students in achieving the learning goal.

This research aims at finding the challenges encountered by English lecturers in the implementation of PBL in writing classes. Since the previous research found that implementing PBL is not easy and teacher found challenges (Aldabbus, 2018; Devkota et al., 2017). The research tries to figure out whether English lectures of English Education in Media Nusantara University meet the same challenge. This study needs to conduct not only to find the type of obstacle they encountered but there will be the suggestion for them on how to overcome this problem.

Methods

A qualitative research design is applied for this study. Creswell (2014) explains that qualitative research methods provide researchers the opportunity to gain important information from participants on the particular phenomenon. This research design allows researcher to directly contact participants, therefore very valuable detail data can be gathered. Qualitative research design is suitable to conduct research where the variables are not easy to be identified and theories are not available to explain all subject behavior.

This research involves 5 lecturers from English Department of Media Nusantara Citra University. Before conducted interview, researcher collected syllabi used by lecturers to make sure that they implement PBL in writing course. All lecturers participated in this research teach writing class in English Department. Open ended interview is applied to get the information related to their challenge in implementing PBL in writing course. There are 10 questions given in interview session. The interview is conducted for an average of about 20 minutes for each lecturer. Interviews are recorded audio on smartphone. The interview questions are designed semi-structured with some questions arise during the interview.

The data obtained by researcher are analyzed by applying the model propose by Miles and Haberman (1994). The steps of this model are data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion. The data from the recorded interviews were transcribed by researchers immediately after every interview was conducted. The recording was transcribed in Word documents then the transcriptions were judiciously read and coded related to the teachers challenges in applying PBL. Finally, the categories were arranged based on Harris (2014) namely shifting the instruction to facilitating group work, time for planning and implementing, creating the project (coming up with the idea), designing the project, managing group working, managing the project, meeting all of the testing accountability standard and requirements, and assessing the project to determine a grade.

To achieve research data trustworthiness, the researcher used data triangulation. The first is source triangulation. The researcher conducts interview to some students have been taught writing by the researcher that involved in this research. The second is time triangulation. The interviews are conducted more than once to each lecturer. The interview is conducted in

different atmosphere and situation. Authentic document such as teaching syllabus is also analysed to ensure that the data is trusted.

Results and Discussion

In this part, the researcher presents the finding of this study followed by a discussion of the findings as the answer to the research question on English lecturers' challenges in implementing PBL in writing courses. The following table shows the challenges encountered by five English lecturers involved in this research. L1 indicates lecturer 1, L2 indicates lecturer 2 and soon.

Table 1.
The Challenges Encountered by English Lecturers

Challenges	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5
1. Shifting the instruction to facilitating group work		√			
2. Time for planning and implementing				√	√
3. Creating the project (coming up with the idea)	√	√	√		
4. Designing the project	√	√			
5. Managing group working	√				
6. Managing the project		√			
7. Assessing the project to determine a grade		√			

Table 1 shows that all lecturers encountered challenges in implementing PBL in writing class. The most challenging area is creating the project (coming up with the idea) where this challenge is encountered by three lecturers (lecturer 1, lecturer 2, and lecturer 3). Designing the project is the challenge encountered by 2 lecturers (lecturers 1 and 2). Time for planning and implementing, this challenge is encountered by 2 lecturers (lecturer 4 and 5). Shifting the instruction to facilitating group work encountered by 1 lecturer (lecturer 2). Managing working group is the challenge faced by 1 lecturer (lecturer 1). Managing the project is the challenge experienced by 1 lecturer (lecturer 2). And the last assessing the project to determine a grade is also encountered by 1 lecturer (lecturer 2).

From the finding, it can be concluded that PBL is not easy to implement. This is in line with Aldabbus (2018) and Ramadhani & Ngadiso (2022) who reveal that implementing PBL is not easy, therefore huge numbers of challenge may find when teachers implement it in the teaching-learning process. Based on the finding, there are 8 challenges faced by teachers in Problem Based Learning they implement in writing class. Each challenge will be elaborated on and discussed in this part.

1. Shifting the Instruction to Facilitating Group Work

The learner-centered approach as the nature of project-based learning provides students to construct knowledge by gathering and synthesizing information and integrating it with the general skills of inquiry, communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, etc. In traditional learning, the teacher's role is the director, on the other hand in project learning the role of the teacher is a facilitator. PBL does not merely give the project to students, but there are particular steps need to conduct by teacher from determining the project to assessing the project. Therefore, teachers have to be able to guide the students to achieve learning goals.

Based on the interview given to the lecturers, it is found that 3 lecturers have experiences in giving group work projects in writing class. They are lecturer 1, lecturer 2, and lecturer 5. But only lecturer 2 finds the challenge in shifting the instruction to facilitating group

work. The interview reveals that she is a junior lecturer who has been working for 2 years. It is a new experience for her to implement PBL. Further, she explains that it is not easy for her to apply new methods since shifting the approach is also shifting her role as a teacher. Greenier (2018) reveals that most teaching and learning processes, including EFL and ESL, are dominated by lecturing as the teaching method. Lecture 2 is also used to apply traditional teaching such as lecturing. In this situation, she acts as the primary source of knowledge which makes it more teacher-centered. The situation changes in Project Based-Learning environment where she has to facilitate students to learn in the group by giving projects. Since lecture 2 has not been exposed to PBL when she was a preservice teacher, she has lack knowledge about PBL. Therefore, she finds challenges when implementing it in writing class. To resolve this problem, she asks for guidance from the senior lecturers in the department.

2. Time for Planning and Implementing

The next challenge found by the lecturers is time for planning and implementing PBL in writing class. The interview conducted by the researcher reveals that two lecturers find it difficult to deal with time for planning and implementing project-based learning. The excerpt from lecture 4 can be seen below.

“I am not only a lecturer in my department. I am also the head of this department. There are so many tasks I have to do. Teaching, research, community service, administrative duty, and meeting. This makes me feel overwhelmed especially in time management. I feel that the syllabus I developed and the materials I prepared are appropriate but it's not the maximum. Since I have limited time the feedback, I gave to students is also not thorough. I think I need to learn time management to make all my work done well”

Moreover, lecturer 5 also adds the statement as it is shown in the following excerpt:

“I teach in 3 different universities and different courses. The time I invest in each course is very limited. It sometimes causes some problems in my teaching, especially when I apply project-based learning.

As the facilitator, the teacher has to be able to manage the time to guide students in completing the project. Before conducting teaching, lecturers need to plan teaching-learning activities. This planning is the backbone of the teaching and learning because good planning minimizes class management problems and leads to learning success (Moradi, 2019). Since planning has to be conducted to support organized and effective learning, teachers may need time to develop it. The time to determine the type of project, the learning source, writing activities, implement the activity, and assess the project. The time they need doesn't stop in the planning stage. Lecturers need time to implement the planning in teaching-learning activities. For example, group management, giving constructive feedback, and conflict resolution. Since planning and implementing is time-consuming, lecturers have to be able to possess time management skills.

The challenge in planning and implementing PBL regarding to the time has been found by previous research (Aldabbus, 2018; Cintang et al., 2018). This challenge arises because teachers have a huge amount of duty. They do not only teach but there are also other duties inside and outside the classroom they must conduct. Fayyumi (2018) explains that teachers have overwhelming administration tasks that may trigger burnout such as exam preparation, exam marking, preparing detailed lesson plans, data tracking, involvement in many events at school, involvement in school management, and extracurricular activities. With the limitation of time, the teacher may find it is difficult to manage the time, moreover, true PBL takes a great deal of time to plan and implement.

3. Creating the Project (Coming Up with the Idea)

The first step of PBL is determining the theme and output, and this has to be approved by both teacher and students. To determine the theme and output, the teacher needs to gather much information to help them create the project. But because there are so many aspects that need to be considered such as learners, teachers, and environmental aspects, teachers may face the challenge to find figure out the best, fittest, and most effective project to be implemented in writing class. Based on the interview with the lecturers involved in this research, it is found that creating the project is the most challenging aspect for them in implementing project-based learning this is validated by the data in table 1 that five of them encountered challenges in this area.

Lecture 1 mentioned that it is hard to come up with the idea since he has to fit the learning outcomes of the syllabus as it is written in this excerpt:

“In this course do not develop the syllabus. All the syllabi are developed by the course coordinator. Because the project I create has to fit with the syllabus, I have to find an idea that is not only in line with the learning objectives but also interesting for students.

Lecturer 2 explain that she encountered a challenge in designing the project because project-based learning is new for her. There are so many things she still needs to learn more about this approach as it is shown in the following excerpt:

“Although I had been teaching English for years, I rarely implement project-based learning. It is sometimes hard to design the project because of my low-level understanding of it. Moreover, when I learned in university, I had never been taught in dept about project-based learning, therefore I need to learn more.

Designing the project is one of being most challenging things in project-based learning. To overcome this challenge, it is suggested that teachers use resources from other teachers and focus on elements of PBL. This is also what have done by lecturer 2. As she is a new lecturer with a lack of teaching experience. She usually discusses with other lecturers and even modifies the design of a project that was developed by a senior lecturer and then implements it in her writing class.

4. Managing Group Working

In project-based learning, students can work independently, work in small or even big groups. But it is emphasized to apply small group work to develop collaborative skills. It is proved by Pardede (2020) that group work is one of the effective ways to integrate critical thinking, creative thinking, communicating, and collaborating into English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Working together in a group also allowed students to learn from and teach each other. Group Work could save some preparation time

Situmorang (2021) explain that students have positive attitude toward group work. They believe that working in group can bring advantage for them. They also believe that group work is effective technique in learning English. It is also revealed group work enlarge their commitment in completing assignments. Sometimes there is tension in interpersonal relationships since each member may involve more than the others. Differences in individual capacities also may cause imbalance involvement in group work. Here, the role of the teacher to manage the group is very important.

The teacher as a facilitator has to be able to guide the students in the learning process including managing students' group work. For lecturers who implement Project-Based Learning, the instructional methods in classroom management are quite different from that used by teachers in the traditional methods. With Project-Based Learning, teachers only devote little to

teacher-directed seatwork or class discussions. Students will spend the majority of their time working on their own or in small groups. Due to this distinction, teachers may find managing group working as a challenge. In this research, it is found that one lecturer encountered this challenge.

To create good teamwork teachers, have to establish the appropriate grouping pattern the principle of this activity is 1) group the students with the heterogeneous member, 2) match the grouping pattern that has been established to the context and need with the expertise and the task, 3) form the group where novice learners can learn from experienced learners, and 4) use jigsaw technique to share knowledge in the group. Furthermore, they also suggest a way to handle problems in group work such as 1) giving realistic consequences for students who do not participate, 2) tightening up time and tasks to make a group back on track, and 3) using group process techniques to promote the full participation of each student.

5. Managing the Project

Although the stage and detail online of project-based learning have been explained to the students in advance, teachers cannot simply leave the students working on their own without any supervision. The teacher has to monitor to facilitate students learning success. Particularly while students collaborate in group work, teachers have to monitor what problems students encounter and then intervene when it is needed.

The result of the interview finds that there is only one lecturer who experienced a challenge in managing the project (lecturer 2). Lecture 2 explains that this challenge happened because not all students work at a different pace, some groups may work very quickly and finish the project earlier. On the other hand, the other group works very low and does not fulfill the deadline. The lecturer then tries to find out activities to do by the group that finishes the project. The problem faced by the lecture is the way to push the student's work based on the schedule given as it is seen in the following excerpt:

“One of the hardest things in my class is when students cannot complete the project on time. Then they ask for more time to finish their project. Then I have to reschedule the presentation part”

To overcome the challenge of managing the project, it is suggested that teachers organize a strategy to manage the project and use time effectively. There are some suggestions in time management proposed by Martaliana et al., (2021) such as work based on the academics calendar, set the goals, do the more important work, write a daily schedule, make a to-do list, set a time limit for the work and students' task, and utilize transition time effectively.

6. Assessing The Project to Determine a Grade

Assessment does not only give a test to the students and then score it. The assessment also provides both students and teachers with a detailed view of the achievement of the learning goals within the teaching-learning process. The assessment process helps teachers to figure out the degree of appropriateness of their teaching methodology to decide whether they should keep applying the same techniques or adjust them. As assessment is important, teachers must have a clear idea of how to conduct an appropriate assessment of English teaching-learning.

Teachers need to make sure that they continually assess the students in the learning process to ensure their students obtain the knowledge and skills that they need to complete the project. Aldabbus (2018) find out that assessment is one of the challenges that may be found by the teacher. This is because, in project learning, teachers have to focus on all elements of project-based learning. This challenge was also encountered by lecturer 2 as it is written in the following excerpt:

“Sometimes I feel confused about what point I have to assess my students. I have the assessment rubric to assess students’ final projects. But I don’t have an assessment rubric to assess their progress. Then I consult the senior lecturers and they show me the way to continually assess students’ learning”.

The excerpt indicates that the lecturer is not sure if she needs to assess all the processes of the student's project or only the final project. This challenge could be due to a lack of experience. Project-based assessment is defined as a combination of projects and assessments. Therefore, both the process and the final artifact have to be assessed. It will be more complicated because there are several features that must be addressed such as design, accuracy, and organization. Ariningsih et al., (2021) suggest using portfolios to help students reflect on their learning in each phase of the project. The portfolio they suggested is in the form of an electronic or E-portfolio since it's able to promote students’ creative thinking, problem-solving skills, and communication skills. Mahendra (2022) online PBL as a formative assessment in learning can help students achieve maximum higher-order thinking skills. Therefore, teachers have to be able to take advantage of online technology in implementing PBL.

Conclusion

This research sought to investigate the challenges encountered by English lecturers in the implementation of PBL in writing classes at Media Nusantara Citra University Jakarta. The result shows that 5 lecturers involved in this research encountered challenges when they implement PBL. The challenge related to shifting the instruction to facilitating group work, time, creating the project, designing the project, managing group working, managing the project, and assessing the project. The source of the challenge mostly comes from lecturers’ unfamiliarity with PBL since they used to implement the traditional teaching-learning process. It is found that there are some experienced and inexperienced lecturers in this research. To overcome this challenge, inexperienced lecturers seek help from experienced lecturers, and their helps really work. As all lecturers encounter the challenge in implementing project-based learning, it is recommended that the institution conduct seminar enrich the lecturers’ knowledge and skill in implementing PBL.

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