

Investigating High School Students' Perceptions on The English Teacher's Use of Project-Based Learning in Teaching Reading Comprehension

Moch. Rizky Oktavian Hadi, Siti Sundari, Zakiyah Tasnim

English Education Study Program, Language and Arts Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Jember University, Jember, East Java, Indonesia

Email: rizkyoktavian0310@gmail.com

Abstract

English is considered as the major foreign language to learn in Indonesia. English is mainly taught in Indonesian classrooms as a required subject, but it is not given as a daily communication language. Dealing with reading comprehension of English texts, English teachers seem to look for the most effective way to teach reading skill to get reading comprehension. One learning model that can be applied as an alternative for teaching reading comprehension is Project-Based Learning (PBL). This research used a qualitative descriptive approach. The data taken were interview of the students based on their experiences in dealing with Project-Based Learning (PBL). The results of thematic analysis showed: (1) The students' perceptions on the English teacher's overview in explaining the application of Project-Based Learning (PBL); (2) The students' perceptions on the English teacher's explanation about the meaning of Project-Based Learning (PBL); (3) The students' perceptions on the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the classroom; (4) The students' perceptions on the benefit of using Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the classroom; (5) The students' perceptions on the difficulty of doing Project-Based Learning (PBL) task. The research findings and discussion revealed that those five perceptions were the students' perceptions.

Keywords: Project-Based Learning (PBL); reading; perceptions

Introduction

English is considered as the major foreign language to learn in Indonesia. English is mainly taught in Indonesian classrooms as a required subject, but it is not given as a daily communication language (Hamra and Syatriana, 2010). This is because English is not close to Indonesian students. Students seem to have

limited chance to practice English. Since English is a foreign language, it takes many times of practices to acquire. To master English, students have to practice it in daily basis, day by day, through real-life experience. Since English is classified as a foreign language in Indonesia, this situation has caused a problem to Indonesian students. Many Indonesian students from elementary level to university level find a difficulty in reading English texts.

Dealing with reading comprehension of English texts, English teachers seem to look for the most effective way to teach reading skill to get reading comprehension. Applying an engaging model to teach reading comprehension is another option to help the students' reading comprehension (Hamra and Syatriana, 2010). One learning model that can be applied as an alternative for teaching reading comprehension is Project-Based Learning (PBL). Deckahup in Friska (2018) explains that Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an in line learning method with a scientific procedure which lets students think and design the work through a project. It supports students in learning exploration, decision-making, interpretation, and taking a conclusion in a purposeful way. Through the application of Project-Based Learning (PBL), students are encouraged to be able to make a product (outcome) of their learning material (Osakue and Thomas, 2011 as cited by Sari and Prasetyo, 2021).

Considering Project-Based Learning (PBL) to be a learning method is an excellent option for the English teacher to assist teaching reading comprehension since it offers advantages for students as well. Bell (2010) and Edutopia (2008) in Mali (2016) stated Project-Based Learning (PBL) helps students to gain deeper understanding of a certain topic, levels-up the students' learning motivation, and inspires students to explore through a vast material of a certain subject. In addition, the other justification of why to choose Project-Based Learning (PBL) as the learning approach is that it lets the teacher applies and designs the learning program as long as it fits to the framework of the instructional design (Foss et al., 2007 in Mali, 2016).

Method

Research Design

This research applied descriptive qualitative as the research design. A descriptive qualitative research stated by Magilvy and Thomas (2009) is a natural-in-setting question given to investigate the problem during the study to discuss. Then, Turale (2020) noted that qualitative descriptive is practical to expose the doer (who), the event (what), and the place (where) of certain

phenomenon in the field of study. This research design is best to conduct when the detailed description of the events studied is required. Moreover, descriptive qualitative research serves complete summarization of the real phenomenon experienced by the participants as the results (Lambert and Lambert, 2012).

Research Context

I conducted this research in one of the state high schools (SMA) in Jember, mainly at XI class. This school was chosen purposively as the research area because of some reasons. First, I was one of the students in that school and I had been already familiar with the environment of the school. Second, the high school is near from my house so it was easier for me to go to that school. Third, the headmaster of the school gave permission to conduct this research. The fourth, the English teacher permitted her class to be the research field.

Research Participants

The participants of this research were the 11th grade students in the 2022/2023 academic year in one of the state high schools (SMA) in Jember. Furthermore, the participants chosen in this research were based on sampling using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a method of determining a sample by taking into account some certain considerations. The characteristics of the participants in this study were (1) Respondents must be at least 17 years old and above, taking into account that respondents at that age are adults enough when providing answers to the research interview and (2) Respondents had received English lessons using Project-Based Learning (PBL) in class 11 when giving the answers to the researcher as the interviewer.

Data Collection Method

To gather the data in this research, I utilized interview. Using interview as a data collection method seems to be able to go deeper into exploring and developing the understanding of the topic under the study (Edwards and Holland, 2013). To collect the data about the students' perceptions about the topic under the study semi-structured interview was used. Even though there is no fixed procedure of interview process to follow, there is still a series of basic steps that mostly followed. Those steps are interview preparation, setting-up, getting the interaction right, and final organization (Keith in Heigham and Crocker, 2009). However, to make it simpler in this research, I adapted those series to use in the interview process with different steps: (1) The first step of the interview was to prepare the interview guideline; (2) The second step of this research data

collection method was starting the process of interview; (3) The last stage of the interview step was reviewing the notes I had taken from the participants.

Data Analysis Method

Following the data generation method for this research, thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected from the interview I conducted. It is a method in which the identification and organization of the meaning into theme across the data collected needs to be done in the research (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The data generation method, in this research, was joined to six steps of data analysis method proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) Familiarizing the data; (2) Generating initial codes; (3) Searching for themes; (4) Reviewing themes; (5) Defining and naming themes; (6) Producing the report.

Findings and Discussion

The Results of Thematic Analysis

The data analysis was done to find the theme which consisted of five themes and eleven sub-themes from the data taken. The data were obtained from the results of interview with the students. The themes found were adapted from Kartika (2020) in interviewing the students' perceptions of the Project-Based Learning (PBL) implementation in teaching reading by the teacher. The themes shown in this research from the interview data can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. The Predetermined Themes

Themes	Sub-Themes
The student's perceptions on the teacher's overview in explaining the application of Project-Based Learning (PBL)	The students' perceptions on the English teacher's overview in explaining the application of Project-Based Learning (PBL)
The student's perceptions on the teacher's explanation about the meaning of Project-Based Learning (PBL)	The students' perceptions on the English teacher's explanation about the meaning of Project-Based Learning (PBL)
The student's perceptions on the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL)	The students' perceptions on the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the classroom

The student's perceptions on the benefits of using Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Increasing collaboration (teamwork) skill (2) Increasing critical-thinking skill (3) Increasing media-research skill (4) Increasing problem-solving skill (5) Enhancing creativity (6) Developing self-confidence (7) Developing self-motivation (8) Being an active and independent learner
The student's perceptions on the difficulties of doing Project-Based Learning (PBL) task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Paraphrasing for the project's result (2) Having different ideas with other teammates (3) Lack of motivation

Further, each theme and sub-theme from the predetermined themes table above will be respectively described into different sub-chapters as the research findings and discussion.

The Students' Perceptions on the English Teacher's Overview in Explaining the Application of Project-Based Learning (PBL)

This first theme discusses the students' perceptions on the English teacher's overview in explaining the application of Project-Based Learning (PBL). Based on the interview results, the majority of the students indicated that the English teacher always had her time explaining the new material at the beginning of the English class session, including the material of Project-Based Learning (PBL).

All of the students stated that the English teacher made an explanation about Project-Based Learning (PBL) before going further to the main teaching and learning activity. Hence, the students will know of what is going to do in the teaching and learning process. This has the correlation with the research from Fleming (2000) and Vander Ark and Dobyns (2018) that stated giving the explanation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) at the beginning of the class teachers can provide such a teaching-learning frame for what students will be doing and why it is important. Therefore, the teacher should explain Project-Based Learning (PBL) at the beginning of the class since it provides a precious opportunity for both the teacher and the students to recognize the class settings through Project-

Based Learning (PBL) (Fleming, 2000). Further, Fleming (2000) mentioned that it is essential to underline the importance of explaining the application of Project-Based Learning (PBL) at the beginning of the class for the teacher to build the students' self-readiness.

The Students' Perceptions on the English Teacher's Explanation about the Meaning of Project-Based Learning (PBL)

The second theme talks about the students' perceptions on the English teacher's explanation about the meaning of Project-Based Learning (PBL). From the interview results with the students, it was found that most of the students had acquired the term of Project-Based Learning (PBL) explained by the English teacher.

Most of the students claimed that Project-Based Learning (PBL) explained by the English teacher in the classroom to assist the teaching and learning process was applied as a learning method. The students' perceptions about the definition of Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a learning method implemented by the English teacher are correlated with the term of Project-Based Learning (PBL) proposed by Solomon (2003) and Schuetz (2018). Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a student-centered pedagogy that involves a dynamic classroom method in which students acquire knowledge and skills through engaging projects set around challenges and problems they may face in the real world (Solomon, 2003; Schuetz, 2018). It is designed to build students' creative capacity to work through difficult or ill-structured problems, commonly in small teams (Fleming, 2000). The educational value of Project-Based Learning (PBL) is that it aims to develop students' critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills (Solomon, 2003). Fleming (2000) stated that Project-Based Learning (PBL) involves students designing, developing, and constructing hands-on solutions to a problem. Moreover, Project-Based Learning (PBL) emphasizes learning activities that are long-term, interdisciplinary, and student-centered (Chard, 2007). Unlike traditional teacher-centered classroom activities, Chard (2007) added students must often organize their own work and manage their own time in a project-based class.

The Students' Perceptions on the Implementation of Project-Based Learning in the Classroom

The third theme mainly reports the students' perceptions on the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the classroom. The interview results with the students concluded that the implementation of Project-Based

Learning (PBL) in the classroom made the students felt happy to join in the teaching and learning process.

The students' perceptions showed that most of the students were happy when the teacher implemented Project-Based Learning (PBL). The students' feeling happy about the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) is correlated with the research idea of Chard (2007) and Shaffer (2018). Project-Based Learning (PBL) makes the teaching and learning process more like real life by providing an in-depth investigation of a real-world topic that is worthy of students' attention and effort (Chard, 2007). In addition, Project-Based Learning (PBL) is filled with active and engaged learning, which inspires students to obtain a deeper knowledge of the subjects they are studying (Shaffer, 2018). It encourages students to explore, investigate, and understand the content in a hands-on and interactive way. Moreover, Shaffer (2018) added Project-Based Learning (PBL) helps students develop a range of essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, and self-direction. Furthermore, Project-Based Learning (PBL) also keeps students motivated and engaged through hands-on activities, allowing them to take an active role in their education (Haddad, 2022). It provides opportunities for creativity, autonomy, and self-expression. Additionally, Chard (2007) stated that Project-Based Learning (PBL) accommodates students with varying learning styles and differences. It allowed students to approach projects in ways that suit their strengths and interests, promoting personalized and differentiated learning experiences.

The Students' Perceptions on the Benefits of Using Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the Classroom

In this research, there are several benefits based on the interview data taken from the students. In other words, the benefits explained in the following parts were gained from the students' perceptions while they were experiencing the English teacher's use of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in teaching reading comprehension. The benefits shown in this research including increasing collaboration (teamwork) skill, increasing critical-thinking skill, increasing media-research skill, increasing problem-solving skill, enhancing creativity, developing self-confidence, developing self-motivation, and being an active and independent learner. Here are the findings of the students' perceptions on the benefits of using Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the classroom.

Increasing Collaboration (Teamwork) Skill

Based on the interview data taken from the students, there were five students who stated that Project-Based Learning (PBL) can help them to work in team. It means half of the participants agreed that Project-Based Learning (PBL) offers a great way of increasing collaboration during teaching and learning process.

The students' perceptions on the benefits of Project-Based Learning (PBL) that can increase collaboration or teamwork have the similar notion to the research conducted by Torre-Neches et al. (2020) and Ibrahim and Rashid (2022). Increasing collaboration in Project-Based Learning (PBL) is crucial for fostering students' engagement, enhancing learning outcomes, and promoting teamwork skills. Moreover, collaborative learning throughout the project should not be limited to produce deliverables. Encouraging students to collaborate at every stage of the project, from defining responsibilities to discussing ideas and creating deliverables can help them to work with their groups (Torre-Neches et al., 2020).

Increasing Critical Thinking Skill

From the interview data taken, it can be known that there were four students who stated that Project-Based Learning (PBL) helped them in increasing critical thinking skill. It implies that Project-Based Learning (PBL) was beneficial for some of the students in increasing critical-thinking skill during the Project-Based Learning (PBL) implementation.

The students' perceptions on the benefits of Project-Based Learning (PBL) that can increase their critical-thinking skill are in line with the research from Sasson, Yehuda, and Malkinson (2018), Eldiva and Azizah (2018), and Issa and Khataibeh (2021). Project Based-Learning (PBL) is a modern teaching method that connects students' experiences with school life and can improve critical-thinking skills (Issa and Khataibeh, 2021). Critical-thinking is one of the most important skills for students to develop, as it correlated with academic success, it is invaluable in the ever-changing workplace, and increases empathy (Eldiva and Azizah, 2018).

Increasing Media Research Skill

The interview data revealed that there were two students who agreed that Project-Based Learning (PBL) helped them to increase their media-research skill. It means that during the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) the students gained their media-research skill in order to support the project establishment.

The students' perceptions in this benefit have the similar notion to the research conducted by Tiwari, Arya, and Bansal (2017) and Shaffer (2018) that underlined Project-Based Learning (PBL) can increase students' media-research skill in its application. Project-Based Learning (PBL) can increase students' media research skill since it provides students with the opportunity to apply research methodology skills in a real world context (Tiwari, Arya, and Bansal, 2017). Through media research projects, students can learn how to gather and analyze information, evaluate sources, and present their findings effectively.

Increasing Problem-Solving Skill

From the interview results with the students, the results showed that Project-Based Learning (PBL) can increase the students' problem-solving skill. There had two students clarified this benefit on Project-Based Learning (PBL) implementation in the classroom.

This increasing problem-solving skill in Project-Based Learning (PBL) retrieved from the students' perception is in line with the research idea from Duch, Groh, and Allen (2001), McDowell (2009), and Nilson (2010) that shared the similar notion. Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a teaching method that promotes student learning of concepts and principles by using complex real-world problems as the vehicle, instead of direct presentation of facts and concepts (McDowell, 2009). As the result, McDowell (2009) added Project-Based Learning (PBL) can help students develop problem-solving abilities during its implementation. It derives the driving question from multiple contexts or multiple issues within a context. This helps students understand the problem from different perspectives and develop a more comprehensive solution (McDowell, 2009).

Enhancing Creativity

Based on the interview results, it can be inferred that Project-Based Learning (PBL) helps the students to enhance their creativity. There were two students who showed their perceptions on Project-Based Learning (PBL) that can enhance their creativity.

This is correlated with the research conducted by Putri, Sumiati, and Larasati (2019) and Ningsih et al. (2020) which emphasized on the role of Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a teaching and learning method that can foster creativity and innovation to students. It allowed students to choose their own topics or projects, or gave them some flexibility in how they approach a given project. This later can help students feel more invested in the project and can lead to more creative solutions.

Developing Self-Confidence

Based on the interview results, it can be seen that the students' perceptions on the benefit of using Project-Based Learning (PBL) led to their self-confidence development. There were two students as the research participants who stated their perceptions on this benefit. It implies that Project-Based Learning (PBL) gave the students to be confident in the teaching and learning process.

This is in line with the research conducted by Shaffer (2018) that had the notion to one of the benefits of Project-Based Learning (PBL) is that it can help students develop self-confidence. Moreover, Shaffer (2018) explained Project-Based Learning (PBL) allows students to take ownership of their learning by giving the opportunity to work on the project actively. This can help students feel more confident in their abilities to learn and succeed. In addition, Project-Based Learning (PBL) projects are often designed to address real-world problems or challenges, which can help students to see the relevance of what they are learning. This can boost their confidence by showing them that they are capable of doing such a real-life problem-solving. Then, Project-Based Learning (PBL) often involves collaboration with peers, which can help students develop social skills and build confidence in their ability to work with others (Capraro and Slough, 2013).

Developing Self-Motivation

The interview results taken from the students revealed that Project-Based Learning (PBL) made them more motivated in experiencing Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the classroom. There were two students who stated this benefit was beneficial for them. As a result, this idea brings to the students' perception after experiencing the English teacher's use of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in teaching reading comprehension.

The students' perceptions about this benefit have the same notion to the English teacher's use of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in teaching and learning process that can increase students' motivation (Garcia and Vazquez, 2021). Project-Based Learning (PBL) gives students control of their work in both a literal and figurative sense. In relation to Project-Based Learning (PBL) and self-motivation, a research by Shin (2018) showed that Project-Based Learning (PBL) had a positive influence on students' motivation and was able to enhance their cooperation skills as well. Therefore, Project-Based Learning (PBL) can be an effective way to motivate students and enhance their learning experience (Shin, 2018).

Being an Active and Independent Learner

The interview results taken from the students' perceptions showed that Project-Based Learning (PBL) helped the students to be an active and independent learner. Most of the students stated that Project-Based Learning (PBL) helped them in collaborative work, critical thinking skill, and problem-solving abilities, however, one of the students said Project-Based Learning (PBL) also helped in building an active and independent learner.

The student's perception about this benefit is correlated with the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in teaching reading comprehension stated by Chard (2007) to help the students to be an independent and active learner. Chard (2007) clarified to be an active and independent learner in Project-Based Learning (PBL) students should take control of their learning. They should know how and when to use technology, choose the most appropriate tool, and search media for the task. Students should become engaged builders of a new knowledge base and become active and lifelong learners. They should set goals and work towards achieving them independently, which helps set them up for success in the teaching and learning outcomes, as well as preparing them for their future (Mannion, 2020).

The Students' Perceptions on the Difficulties of Doing Project-Based Learning (PBL) Task

The last theme reports the students' perceptions on the difficulty of doing Project-Based Learning (PBL) task. In this research, the researcher found the difficulties on the English teacher's use of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in teaching reading comprehension experienced by the students. The difficulties discussed in this research namely paraphrasing for the project's result, having different ideas with other teammates, and lack of motivation. For further descriptions, paragraphs below will discuss each difficulty in the following parts.

Paraphrasing for the Project's Result

The interview results revealed that there were three students experienced this difficulty in Project-Based Learning (PBL) application. It can be concluded that paraphrasing for the project's result becomes a serious difficulty for those students.

The students' perceptions about this difficulty have a similarity to the research idea of paraphrasing that was done in the Project-Based Learning (PBL) application by Lee et al., (2016). Paraphrasing seems to be a challenge in Project-Based Learning (PBL) application when students do not comprehend the project material well (Lee et al., 2016). In Project-Based Learning (PBL) implementation,

students read the passages of materials, identify the main idea and details, and rephrase the content in their own words to put on their work (Chu, Li, and Mok, 2021). Therefore, Lee et al. (2016) added it can be categorized as a complicated process when students had limited access to the language used to carry the passage itself. Students should first stick to the text taught and have to understand the basic of the language.

Having Different Ideas with Other Teammates

Based on the results of the interview with the students as the research participants, it can be inferred that having different ideas with other teammates can be a difficulty in doing Project-Based Learning (PBL) task. There were four students who shared their experiences that have different ideas from other teammates can be challenging in the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL).

The similar notion about having different ideas in a group with other peers had been shared by Maslyk (2016). When Project-Based Learning (PBL) can be an effective way to engage students and promote deeper learning, there is also its difficulty associated with diversity perspectives among students in group work into Project-Based Learning (PBL). Hussein (2021) argued Project-Based Learning (PBL) can be challenging due to a small conflict between students in the same group regarding to collaboration of the project work to reach the best project assignment result. The implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in group work can be challenging when students have different ideas inside their own teamwork (Davies, 2009). To help reduce or mitigate this difficulty, Davies (2009) added it is recommended to encourage group members to share their viewpoints and allow for a diversity of responses prompted by different backgrounds or orientations of each group member's opinion.

Lack of Motivation

The interview data results with the students showed that lack of motivation becomes one of the difficulties of doing Project-Based Learning (PBL) task. It means that lack of motivation can be the reason why the students experienced a difficulty in implementing Project-Based Learning (PBL). In this research, there were three students who shared their perceptions on this challenge.

The students' perceptions about this difficulty are in line with the research conducted by Beres (2011) and Shin (2018). Lack of motivation can be a significant issue for students in the classroom, and there was evidence that lack of motivation is related to the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in

teaching and learning process (Shin, 2018). It had been shown to have a positive influence on students' motivation and self-efficacy. However, implementing Project-Based Learning (PBL) can be challenging for teachers, and there are several dilemmas that they may face when trying to foster students' motivation (Ramos and Nicolas, 2022). One of several challenges faced by teachers in applying Project-Based Learning (PBL) is students may appear to be unmotivated and have below-grade performance during the whole project process (Beres, 2011).

Conclusion

The students' perceptions revealed their responses towards the English teacher's use of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in teaching reading comprehension. The students' perceptions showed that there were five aspects in relation to the implementation Project-Based Learning (PBL) applied by the English teacher.

The students' perceptions on the English teacher's use of Project-Based Learning (PBL) can be reviewed from the students' perceptions on the English teacher's overview in explaining the application of Project-Based Learning (PBL), the students' perceptions on the English teacher's explanation about the meaning of Project-Based Learning (PBL), the students' perceptions on the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the classroom, the students' perceptions on the benefits of using Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the classroom, and from the students' perceptions on the difficulties of doing Project-Based Learning (PBL) task. All these aspects were prepared to answer to the prior research question. Therefore, these five aspects were investigated to perceive the students' perceptions on the English teacher's use of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in teaching reading comprehension.

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