



## IMPLEMENTING PROJECT BASED LEARNING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AS SMAN 1 GEDANGAN: INSIGHTS FROM STUDENTS

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### **Abstract:**

This article explores the use of project-based learning (PjBL) in English language teaching at SMAN 1 Gedangan through students' insight. Using a qualitative research design, data collected through interviews, observations, and a survey of students. The findings showed that PjBL improved students engagement, language proficiency, and critical thinking skills despite challenges such as limited resources, time, and assessment. The study also found that students were more confident when using English in academic and social contexts. PjBL improved their ability to write and speak in a more structured manner and increased their understanding of vocabulary and grammar. This study recommends professional development, resource allocation, curriculum integration, flexible scheduling, and assessment training to optimize PjBL and improve English language acquisition. This study emphasizes that continuous support from schools and educators is essential to ensure PjBL is successful. With the right method, PjBL can be an acquire better language skills and skills that fit the modern world.

**Keywords:** *Educators, English Language Teaching, Project Based Learning, Student*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As globalization demands the ability to communicate in international languages, English language skills are increasingly needed by students in today's educational world. However, many students still face difficulties in mastering English, especially in classroom learning. Making English learning more interesting and engaging for students is one of the challenges often faced. Previous research has shown that traditional learning approaches are often less effective in improving students' English language skills. To improve students' and critical thinking skills in English, a more contextualized and interactive learning approach is needed. Conventional learning methods usually center on memorization and written exercises, which are often insufficient to increase students' engagement in the learning process. As a result, it is necessary to find a more contextual and interactive approach. As a result educators must look for the alternative method that are more creative and engaging for students. Project-based learning (PjBL) is an increasingly popular learning approach. Previous studies have shown that PjBL can improve students' critical thinking skills, language proficiency, and desire to learn.

The development of students' life skills has become very important in modern education, especially in English language learning. According to research, project-based learning (PjBL) can help student to participate in the learning peocess actively and work together, which enables them to solve real problems and develop important interpersonal skills (Wahbeh et al., 2021 & Guo et al., 2020). The PjBL process, which includes implementing, planning, investigation and reflection, improves students' speaking ability (Kusmaryani, 2022). English language learning can be improved with PjBL in rurual schools (Kemaloglu-Er & Sahin, 2022). PjBL also serves to build intercultural knowledge among students (Kim, 2019). By incorporating PjBL into the



English curriculum at SMAN 1 Gedangan, it is expected that students can not only improve their English proficiency but also gain deeper insight into cultural diversity and relevant life skills in the modern world.

The Project-Based Learning (PjBL) approach is anticipated to enhance the quality of English education at SMAN 1 Gedangan. This method not only helps students learn English, but also helps them learn to think critically, cooperate, and work together in teams. PjBL connects lessons to the real world and encourages problem solving in daily life by involving students in the active learning process. PjBL has been shown in several studies to increase students' participation in learning, improve their communication skills, and teach students to work together and complete projects. Moreover, students are directly involved in learning a topic they are passionate about, which allows for deeper learning (Guo et al., 2020 & Kusmaryani, 2022). In addition, PjBL allows students to speak and interact in English in a more real context. As a result, students feel more confident in conveying ideas and interacting in the language. Therefore, students have the opportunity to learn very important life skills, which are invaluable in the modern era. This study is important to understand how PjBL can be effectively applied in the context of schools in rural areas, as well as how students' learning experiences can be enriched through diverse project activities.

Against the background, research into the use of PjBL at SMAN 1 Gedangan will provide a useful understanding of students' experiences and how it impacts on their English language learning. This study was to find answers to the three main questions: 1) How does PjBL affect students' engagement in English language learning process? 2) Can PjBL improve students' English language proficiency? 3) Can PjBL improve students' critical thinking skills? This research focuses on students' perspectives, this study pays attention to students' views on the implementing of PjBL. This is important to understand the effectiveness of PjBL from the learners' perspective. This study aims to explore students' experiences in project-based learning at SMAN 1 Gedangan and improve the quality of English language learning. By using a qualitative approach, this research aims to contribute to the development of a more creative and student-centered approach to English language learning. The results of this study are expected to help educators and policy makers make teaching more interesting and meet students' needs. Schools in both rural and urban areas can adopt PjBL to improve the quality of English learning by understanding how this method can be used effectively. As a result, this research not only helps students improve their skills, but also helps build more inventive teaching methods for the education system.

## 2. METHOD

This study chose a qualitative research design to gain a deeper understanding of students' experiences when using project-based learning (PjBL) at SMAN 1 Gedangan. Qualitative design allows researchers to study students' subjective perspectives, understand their social and cultural contexts, and discover details in learning intersections. Qualitative methods were chosen because they allow researchers to thoroughly study students' experiences, which are difficult to measure with quantitative approaches. This method also allows researchers to study the various social and



emotional components that can influence the effectiveness of project-based learning. This study combines various data resources to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information. The triangulation approach offers the researcher the opportunity to endorse results using multiple viewpoints and increases the credibility of study results. The researcher was able to understand students' perspectives on the application of PjBL in the English course at SMAN 1 Gedangan by employing various techniques such as discussion, classroom observation and document review.

This research used a variety of methods to gather detailed information. Students were randomly interviewed to obtain their personal experience of the PjBL program, including the obstacles they faced and the evolution of their language skills. A total of 15 students were purposively selected based on their English proficiency level. This was done to get a more diverse view of their experience of using PjBL and to ensure that the result of the study reflected the wider classroom experience. Over the course of the project, the researcher was able to observe first-hand student interactions, group dynamics and English language use through classroom observations. The researcher also organized face to face interviews and group discussions with several students, with the aim of enriching their collective experiences. These group discussions encouraged students to share their views, difficulties and successes during the PjBL process. This method helped the researcher understand how students cooperate, share ideas, and solve problems in groups, which are important component of socialization skills.

The researcher used the thematic analysis method to analyze the data collected. In this step, a thorough coding process of the data was conducted to identify the main topics that emerged from the interviews, observations, and focus group topics. Thematic analysis helped in finding common patterns, students' perceptions of PjBL, and the impact on their language skills and critical skills. Qualitative analysis of all data was conducted with a focus on in-depth understanding of students' subjective experiences. The researcher asked students for feedback on the results of the study after data collection and analysis. This helped to ensure that the researcher's interpretation of the students' experiences matched their own opinions. Validation also aims to strengthen the credibility of the research results and provide space for students to provide additional comments.

### 3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The result of this study show that implementing project-based learning (PjBL) increases students' engagement in learning. PjBL improves students' social and academic skills by providing more authentic and meaningful learning experiences. The study showed that the PjBL process in the classroom consisted of four stages: enquiry, planning, implementation, and reflection. Students were seen actively co-operating in groups, talking and creating their own project. The result of interviews and observations conducted with fifteen purposively selected students showed that students' level of engagement in PjBL varied depending on their academic background and their confidence in English. Students with better English proficiency tended to be more active in project discussions and presentations, while students with lower English proficiency initially had difficulties, but gradually showed improvement. This suggests, as previous research has shown, that PjBL can accommodate different levels of student



ability and help all participants (Guo et al., 2020). Each student felt more values in the learning process when the task was assigned to their group “we learn a lot by working together, everyone had a role, and we helped each other,” said one student.

### 3.1 Student Engagement

The result showed that students’ engagement increased significantly during the project-based learning process. For example, only a small number of students actively asked questions and gave opinions when PjBL started. However, as time went by, most students became more courageous to speak up and engage in group discussions. The increased confidence of students in conveying concepts and discussion results in front of the class also shows an increase in student engagement. In addition, students were very interested in seeking additional information about their projects. They did this by reading books and other sources. This shows that PjBL can create a fun and challenging learning environment that encourages students to actively participate. The outcomes of this study revealed that PjBL is good for students’ collaboration skills in addition to increasing active participation. Group work teaches students to communicate well, organize their respective roles, and respect each other’s opinions. Not only in group discussions, students also began to take initiative in managing their tasks, such as dividing tasks fairly and making plans to better complete the project. In addition, the group discussion process helps students to support each other and solve problems together. The experience of working in groups makes students feel more responsible for their projects. In particular, the observation results showed that students who were previously passive began to participate more actively in the learning process. These results show that PjBL can help students overcome difficulties to participate in classroom learning. This shows that PjBL increases students’ participation and helps them work well together, which is beneficial for daily life.

### 3.2 English Proficiency

PjBL improves students’ English language proficiency. One example is when students delivered their project presentations fluently and confidently, using a variety of vocabulary and complex sentence structures. Not only that, students also showed improvement in English pronunciation and intonation, which made their communication clearer and easier to understand. The analysis of students’ writing also showed improvement, especially in grammatical accuracy and the use of linking sentences. Not only in terms of speaking, but also in terms of writing, students become more able to improve their own writing and more sensitive to grammatical errors. Even more than what the teacher expected, some students were able to produce creative writing. This improvement shows that PjBL not only improves students’ theoretical understanding of grammar, but also helps them apply it in real life through real tasks. During the PjBL process, students’ listening skills also improved. In addition, students’ listening skills get better as they get used to hearing different accents and ways their friends speak in English, which helps them



understand the meaning more quickly and precisely. Students were taught to listen to their peers' ideas and opinions in discussions, as well as understand the lessons given in English. There were some students who initially had difficulty understanding spoken English, but as the project progressed, they became more accustomed to it and were able to speak in English better. In that case, students become more confident when speaking in English outside of class, such as talking to friends or teachers. Thus, PjBL improves students' academic skills in English in addition to increasing their confidence in using the language in various situations. Therefore, PjBL improved students' language production skills as well as their receptive skills in the general understanding of English.

### 3.3 Critical Thinking Skill

In addition, this study showed that PjBL successfully improved students' ability to think critically. In designing the project, students were able to analyze data, draw conclusions, and evaluate their project result. Students' critical thinking skills are also seen in the way they find problems during the project and look for solutions on their own or with friends. This shows that PjBL has helped students develop critical thinking skills that are very important in the real world. This process not only improves students' analytical skills, but also teaches them to think more logically and systematically in dealing with academic challenges and daily life problems. The study also shows that PjBL helps students communicate with others. Through group work on projects, students also learn to negotiate, express opinions, and understand different perspectives, which helps them better communicate with others. Students are trained to convey their ideas clearly and convincingly both orally and in writing during each stage of the project. Students not only learn to make presentations but also learn to write project reports in a more systematic and structured way. This improves their ability in academic writing. Once the project is completed, students can not only more confidently present their project result, but they can also freely receive criticism and suggestions from their classmates. Students not only learn to accept criticism and suggestions, but they also begin to learn how to give constructive feedback to their peers. This results in a more collaborative and helpful learning environment. As a result, PjBL not only improves students' critical thinking and communication skills, but also makes them more confident, open, and ready to face real-world challenges. This ability is essential to foster self-confidence and the ability to communicate well in various situations outside the classroom environment.

The study indicates that implementing PjBL at SMAN 1 Gedangan has improved students' desire to learn and their English proficiency. As the themes of the projects relate to everyday life, the majority of students feel more motivated and value the learning process. Deva commented "PjBL stimulates my interest in finding information and acquiring new knowledge". PjBL also teaches students critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Overall, this study shows that PjBL makes learning more rewarding for students. Not only do students participate more



actively in learning activities, but this method gives them the opportunity to discover English lessons in new ways and stimulates their desire to learn. As a result, students are better prepared to take on challenges outside the school environment.

The study shows that the implementation of PjBL at SMAN1 Gedangan resulted in improved students' participation and oral skills. This result is consistent with the previous research showing that PjBL can improve students' motivation and communication skills (Wahbeh et al., 2021 & Kusmaryani, 2022). In addition, this study is in line with the findings from Kemaloglu-Er & Sahin (2022) who showed that PjBL can improve students' speaking skills by giving them the opportunity to use language in real situations. Through project-based learning, students become more accustomed to speaking in English naturally and are more confident in expressing their ideas. This result is consistent with previous studies showing that PjBL not only increases students' motivation to learn, but also helps them improve their communication skills. PjBL gives students the opportunity to communicate in real-life situations and helps them confident in using English. According to research conducted by Kim (2019), PjBL helps students develop intercultural competence because they interact more frequently with different points of view and understand the social context in the use of English. As a result, PjBL not only improves students' speaking skills but also helps them understand language use in various academic and professional contexts. What's more, the project-based learning process enables students to apply learned concepts to real-world situations, resulting in deeper, more meaningful learning. This supports the idea that PjBL is an effective learning method for improving language skills, particularly in the areas of speaking and presentation. PjBL not only improves students' speaking skills, but also helps them in writing better. Kusmaryani (2022) found that PjBL helped students compose texts with more structure and improved their grammatical accuracy. This shows that the positive impact of PjBL is not limited to improving speaking skills but also to improving other language learning skills.

PjBL increases students' engagement by encouraging them to actively participate in real-world projects, making learning more meaningful. In addition, interaction within groups helps students develop critical thinking and social skills. This is also in line with the findings in earlier studies that highlighted the importance of collaboration in project-based learning (Guo et al., 2020). This result also indicates that PjBL can improve students' social skills by supporting group work. Students will be trained better at interact, collaborate and share tasks at every stage of the project. These interpersonal skills are essential to the needs of modern workplaces, where collaboration and communication skills are important. In addition, the ability to work together in teams and communicate well are essential skills in the modern world of work (Guo et al., 2020). Therefore, implementing PjBL from the beginning can help students prepare themselves to face challenges in the world of work that increasingly demand good cooperation skills and interpersonal skills. Students with improved social skills also become more open and respectful of other opinions. This is important for developing a more tolerant and empathetic attitude.



However, the difficulties encountered when implementing PjBL need to be taken into account. Difficulties in time management difficulties and students abilities indicate the need for additional support from teachers in planning and managing projects. It is important to overcome these difficulties so that all students can contribute effectively and reap the full benefits of this learning method. In addition to time management issues and differences in ability, this study also revealed that some students lacked the confidence to express their opinions at the start of the PjBL process. This may be because they were awkward in English or afraid of making mistakes. The teacher's role as a facilitator is very important in creating a supportive environment and increasing students' confidence in problem-solving. By giving students constructive feedback and motivating them to keep trying, teachers can remove psychological barriers and facilitate students' active participation. Constructive feedback is also part of teacher support, which can help students be more confident in conveying their ideas (Wahbeh et al., 2021). Teachers can create a more inclusive learning environment and encourages all students to actively participate in the project with the right approach.

Consequently, this research argues that PjBL could be an effective method for learning English, while requiring a balance that takes into account potential difficulties in its application. This research demonstrates that PjBL offers multiple benefits for optimizing students' daily abilities and English skills. In addition to improving students' language skills, this method helps the learn to think critically, solve problems, and cooperate, which are essential for academic and professional success. According to Wahbeh et al. (2021), PjBL encourages students to think more analytically and reflectively when completing project-based tasks. They do this by giving them the opportunity to learn the topic thoroughly, which makes the learning environment more interactive and enjoyable. However, the successful use of PjBL largely depends on the quality of the teacher's role in designing and guiding the project. To ensure that each stage of the project goes well and meets the needs of the students, the teacher has an important role. According to Guo et al. (2020), the success of PjBL depends on the teacher's ability to provide clear directions and create an environment that supports cooperation and exploration. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to be trained in optimally implementing PjBL strategies. In addition, the success of PjBL depends on the school's support in providing adequate resources, such as access to learning materials and technological facilities. School support includes providing a good learning environment, both in terms of facilities and policies, which allows PjBL to be incorporated into the curriculum on an ongoing basis. Kusmaryani (2022) found that access to technology and adequate learning resources are essential to increase the effectiveness of project-based learning. PjBL can be a sustainable approach and have a greater positive impact on student development if it receives adequate support. For this reason, further research should investigate methods that teachers can use to overcome problems that arise during the PjBL process. Thus, the PjBL model can be better utilized in various educational environments. Further research can be conducted to find the best way to overcome the problems that arise when implementing PjBL and to find out how effective this method is in various educational contexts. Kim (2019) showed that PjBL



can be adapted to various educational environment by changing the project theme and teacher mentoring strategies. Thus, PjBL can continue to grow as an innovative and relevant learning method in education.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

At SMAN 1 Gedangan, the implementation of Project-based learning has shown the potential to improve the overall quality of learning and encourage students' interest in learning. Not only do students gain better academic knowledge through project that are relevant to the real world, but they also learn 21st century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication. Nevertheless, continuous efforts from various parties are needed to maximize the potential of PjBL. All parties, including teachers, students, schools, and even parents, should be committed to the sustainability of PjBL implementation. With consistent support from various stakeholders, the learning environment can become better for students to acquire academic and non-academic skills. First and foremost, the quality of projects must be continuously improved. Students will be more motivated to actively participate in the learning process if the projects match their interests and life context. In addition, the difficulty level of the projects should be adjusted to the students' ability so that they feel challenged but still able to complete them. Second, successful implementation of PjBL requires continuous and in depth training on PjBL learning strategies from project planning to implementation and evaluation. As stated by Guo et al. (2020), teachers with adequate PjBL training can be more effective in helping students understand concepts more deeply. Effective project-based learning methods, approaches to guiding students, and how to objectively evaluate project results should all be part of this training. Thus, teachers can help students learn and provide constructive feedback. Finally, schools must provide adequate facilities, such as laboratories, libraries, and internet access, as well as various learning resources relevant to the project theme. The availability of adequate resources, both in the form of infrastructure and learning materials, is very important to support the implementation of PjBL. PjBL can be a useful learning model to improve education at SMAN 1 Gedangan and prepare students to face future challenges with support from various parties. In addition, this study found that PjBL increased students' motivation and engagement and helped them develop skills such as teamwork, problem solving, and communication (Kim, 2019). Therefore, to maximize the benefits of PjBL for all students, it is imperative to continue exploring the best ways to implement it. PjBL can be an inventive and successful learning model if there is continuous support from various parties and quality improvement in project planning and implementation. This method not only improves students' academic understanding but also provides them with essential 21st century skills to face future challenges. As a result, PjBL should be continuously developed in the education system to benefit students and the education world as a whole.



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