Teacher's Perception on EFL Students' Engagement in Project-Based Learning

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to to find out the teacher perception on EFL student's engagement in project-based learning (PBL). Data were collected by using interview and students artifacts/ documents from the lecturer in English education department. Reflections were distributed using Google forms and using thematic analysis methods, then the data were analyzed qualitatively. After in-depth analysis, this study found that teachers' perceptions of EFL student engagement in project-based learning get many positive responses and produce changes in the student learning process. The study also confirmed that EFL student involvement in project-based learning makes students more active, enthusiastic, and in writing and speaking skills better and easier. Besides, the use of project-based learning in class is useful for increasing student motivation in the learning process.

*Keywords***:**, Students' Engagement; Project-Based Learning; Teacher Perception.

INTRODUCTION

The research on project-based learning (PBL) has taken place in the past ten years (Newman, 2005) even though it is still in the development stage (Bas, 2011). Project-based learning is an instructional method centered on the learner. It has an important role in the learning process. Thomas, Mergendoller, and Michaelson (1999) state that described projects within project-based learning as based on challenging questions and making students having a central role in design, problem-solving, decision making processes so allowing students to work relatively autonomously. Furthermore, students are exposed to a wide range of skills and competencies such as collaboration, project planning, decision making, and time management through project-based learning (Blank, 1997).

Based on evidence gathered over the past years, project-based learning appears to be an effective model for producing gains in academic achievement (Meyer, 1997; Gültekin, 2005; Chen, 2006; Çirak, 2006; Özdemir, 2006; Sylvester, 2007; Kemaloglu, 2006; Yalçin, Turgut & Büyükkasap, 2009), attitudes (Gültekin, 2005; Özdemir, 2006; Yalçin, Turgut & Büyükkasap,

2009), enhances the quality of learning (Blank, 1997; Bottoms & Webb, 1998), increases the motivation of students (Bottoms & Webb, 1998), and produce complex, high-quality work (Blumenfeld et al., 1991). In general, literature has been published on project-based learning used in second language learning (Fragoulis, 2009; Nguyen, 2011; Simpson, 2011). Fragoulis' (2009) article deals with implementing project-based learning in foreign language context proved that project-based learning method improved students' language skill (Fragoulis, 2009) because students engage in purposeful communication to complete authentic activities, they have the opportunity to use language in a relatively natural context (Haines, 1989) and participate in meaningful activities which require authentic language use (Duman & Yavuz, 2018). It is in line with Simpson's (2011) study that examines student's learning skills and their self-confidence during the application of project-based learning (PBL) in an EFL learning context. The study indicated that PBL enhanced students' skills such as language skills, high-order thinking, presentation skills, and teamwork also it increases students' self-confidence. Fried-Both (2002) says that the process leading to the end-product of project work provides opportunities for students to develop their confidence and independence also helps reinforce the relationship among students (Nguyen, 2011).

Furthermore, in some studies, an engagement scale measured the roles that people played in ensuring that the ESL learners played an active role in this communicative classroom. Engagement is an important aspect of learning in all fields, and language learning is not an exception (Cambourne, 1995; Moeller & Catalano, 2015; Shernoff & Hoogstra, 2001). Students' engagement refers to the students' deep meaningful involvement, in a task that results in higher concentration, interaction, enjoyment, and cognitive processing during the task (Egbert, 2003; Lee, 2012; Lutz, Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, & Kindermann, 2008). Engaged learners demonstrate enjoyment in learning, have a purpose for learning, believe in their capability, take responsibility for their learning, and seek to understand text (Cambourne, 1995; Parsons & Taylor, 2011). While Bakker and Leiter (2010) state that engagement is the presence of mental energy and effective connection with an activity. On the other hand, these numbers of researches are not specifically mentioned and explained further about the teacher perception that include into students's engagement in project based learning that experienced by the teacher during teaching learning process. Hence, to fill this gap, the present study aims to explore more the students' engagement in project-based learning.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses qualitative research methods to explore teachers' views on effective and desired teaching skills to elicit a wide variety of opinions. As a result, methods, analytical approaches, and other techniques do not exist in a vacuum; rather, they are theoretically grounded and applied within particular theoretical frameworks with different results. Based on the notions above, this study then reports the findings and discusses the result descriptive ways, which belongs to descriptive qualitative nature. The participant of this study is a lecturer from English education department in one of Islamic higher education at Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi who has given some project to the students in her classes. This study used two data collection interview and students' artifacts/documents. This interview process aims to find out the teacher perception of student involvement in project-based learning, during the interview the researcher used the recording to obtain data from the lecturer. Then, the researcher uses student artifacts/documents to provide evidence to the teacher/lecturer in project work about students' challenges. In student documents, the teacher can see whether the teacher perception matches the work of students.

RESULT

The finding of this study described about teacher's perception on EFL students' engagement in project-based learning. This study investigated teacher's perception on EFL student's engagement especially in accomplishing the project-based learning.

EFL Students' Engagement in Project-Based Learning

This study investigate teacher perception on EFL student's engagement, especially in working the project-based learning. In this research, the participant was interviewed eleven questions related to student engagement in working on a syntactic challenge project. The results of the interview regarding student engagement in working on a syntactic challenge project will be shown in the table.

Table 1. The Result of the Interview

No	Questions	Transcript	CODES
1.	Q1	The syntax of learning is done so that students are truly reflective of completing assignments.	C1: To make students more effectively complete assignments
2.	Q2	Students are very interested and help each other work on project challenges and make students more independent learning.	C2: Students interested and student learn more self-learning
3.	Q3	It makes students easier to understand and helps them write better based on grammar.	C3: Students understand more easily
4.	Q4	The positive impact students get in completing the syntax challenge project is to improve their development in learning English.	C4: Improving student development
5.	Q5	With the Project Syntax Challenge, students can easily arrange sentences in a good way.	C5: Makes it easier for students to construct sentences well
6.	Q6	Students will find it difficult to complete syntax challenges such as difficulty managing time and lack of self-confidence.	C6: Students' lack confident

7.	Q7	The syntax challenge project can increase students' social interactions by driving around the city of Kendari and interacting with others.	C7: Can improve social interaction
8.	Q8	Students can correct mistakes in writing and help students be more critical in correcting mistakes.	C8: Helping students write
9.	Q9	Students experience an increase in skills and motivation.	C9: Increased skills
10.	Q10	The problem in completing the syntax challenge project for students is the lack of time management making it difficult to complete assignments.	C10: Student difficulties like solve management
11.	Q11	The visible change in the documents evidence of student work is the reduction in errors in writing sentences.	C11: Students can reduce writing errors

Interview sessions in this study were taken as preliminary information so that researchers get some in-depth information about teacher perceptions about student involvement in PBL (Project Based Learning). This interview involved one teacher and answered as many as eleven questions. Based on the results of the interview, from the work of students the teacher checks that almost all students complete the project well and they feel interested in completing the project challenge. Then, some of them find it difficult due to their lack of confidence and lack of motivation. Moreover, teacher grasps that by implementing project-based learning, students have increased both in writing and speaking skills.

DISCUSSION

This study investigates teacher's perception on EFL students' engagement especially in working the project-based learning. Project-based learning (PBL) is a model that organizes learning around projects. According to the definition found in PBL handbooks teachers, projects are complex tasks, based on challenging questions or problems, that involve students in design, problem-solving, decision making, or investigative activities; give students' the opportunity to work relatively autonomously over extended periods; and culminate in realistic products or presentations (Jones, Rasmussen, & Moffitt, 1997). Project-based learning intended to help students' become proficient at conducting inquiry activities.

In this line, Student engagement is essential to the learning environment, the use of PBL can positively influence student engagement (Ravitz, 2010). It has the potential to increase cognitive engagement. Schools should consider implementing PBL as a way to improve students'

cognitive engagement. This in turn may improve students' academic performance. The idea behind PBL is to engage students in their learning by encouraging them to investigate their passions and "create projects that result in meaningful learning experiences" (Wurdinger et al., 2007, p. 151).

Regarding that, the result shown the positive effects of project-based learning for students as the development of positive attitudes toward their learning process, work routines, abilities on problem-solving, and self-esteem. Besides, project-based learning can approach on language proficiency. Project-based learning can offer students memorable ways to learn the language in an integrated, holistic way. Motivation was a common thread mentioned in this study by the teacher, which in turn can improve learner autonomy.

After analyzing the interview, the researcher found that students were very interested and enthusiastic to work on and complete the syntactic challenge project. Most students agree that the syntax of the Challenge project can develop the way of speaking and writing students in English, this is evident from the results of interviews between researchers and teachers, that the project syntax challenges provide a positive for students. Meanwhile, some students did not complete their syntactic challenge projects that had problems with themselves such as lack of motivation and self-confidence and those who could not manage their time well.

Subsequently, the students' documents show the results of student work on syntactic challenge projects. From the results of student documents, it can be seen that they have completed the challenge project very well. Students are very excited and enthusiastic about completing the syntactic challenge project because this challenge makes them get changes in terms of writing and gain a lot of experience. The results of the researcher interviews with the syntactic lecturer provide evidence that the implementation of the challenge project provides a good change for students.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative study aims to find out the teacher perception on EFL student's engagement in project-based learning (PBL) The results of the study revealed that teacher's perceptions of EFL student engagement in project-based learning get many positive responses and produce changes in the student learning process.

Regarding that, the results showed there was an increase in students in line with their positive responses about project-based learning implemented by syntax lecturers. Besides, in project-based learning, there is a syntax challenge project that makes students more active. This activity makes students more independent learning. Every student has written, talked, and revealed information. Based on the results of the researcher interview with the lecturer, the researcher can know that the students feel interested and enthusiastic to work on and complete the syntax challenge project.

Therefore, conclusions from research on teacher perceptions about EFL student involvement in project-based learning provide a positive response. In EFL student involvement in project-based learning makes students more active, enthusiastic, and in writing and speaking skills better and easier. Besides, the use of project-based learning in class is useful for increasing student motivation in the learning process.

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