

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THREE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES IN PROJECT BASED LEARNING

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Abstract: Researchers in the past have explored practices of Project Based Learning (PBL) in various educational contexts. Nevertheless, previous studies that examine project-based learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts are still limited in numbers particularly through the eyes of Indonesian university students. This study aims to look into meanings of PBL in learning Second Language Acquisition (SLA) at English Language Education Program, Dunia University Indonesia. The study specifically described how three students in the class felt about PBL as implemented in two main classroom projects, how they experienced doing it, and how they provided meaning to it. The students' experiences were recalled through an in-depth phenomenological interview. The results of the study were the experiences in the form of narratives and my interpretation of emerging themes in the narratives as the meanings of PBL in learning SLA. The study appeared to continue positive trends of PBL practices in English language teaching and learning specifically in content-based instructions.

Keywords: Project Based Learning, Projects, SLA, Phenomenological Study

INTRODUCTION

In the context of English Language Education Program at Dunia University Indonesia (ED-DU) (anonymous), project based learning (PBL) seems to become a common approach used by ED-DU lecturers in teaching their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. With an underlying assumption that PBL can benefit

students' learning (Stoller, 2002; Beckett & Slater, 2005, as cited in Foss, Carney, McDonald, & Rooks, 2007; Foss et al., 2007; Edutopia, 2008; Bell, 2010; Tamim & Grant, 2013), I am also the one who adapted PBL in teaching my students. In that case, I adapted the approach in designing two classroom projects and their related activities in my Second Language Acquisition (SLA) class at ED-DU. Unfortunately, "research articles that examine project-based learning in EFL contexts are still limited in numbers" (Guo, 2006, p.145). Besides, to the best of my knowledge, any attempt to conduct a detailed exploration of feelings, perspectives, and opinions on the implementation of PBL especially through the eyes of EFL university students in Indonesia is not yet done sufficiently.

Therefore, with these points in minds, this study is interested in investigating meanings of PBL in learning SLA at ED-DU as perceived by the students. More specifically, the study aims to answer the following research question: *what does PBL mean to the students in learning SLA?* These goals can be achieved by asking the students to reflect and explicate [1] how they felt about PBL as implemented in their classroom projects, [2] how they experienced doing it, and [3] how they provided meanings to it in learning SLA. In essence, as a process of critical examination towards experiences, reflection significantly helps teachers to obtain a better understanding of their teaching practices (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

On the one hand, I understand that the implementation of the project work may not be appreciated by all second language learners at all times due to their different cultural and linguistic belief (Beckett, 2002). I also consider the fact that some faculty members in Chinese higher education contexts were more comfortable with the traditional teaching approach that emphasizes more on the teacher-centered practices (Fang & Warschauer, 2004 as cited in Guo, 2006). They felt uncomfortable to lose their control when they implemented PBL that is, of course, more on student-centered.

On the other hand, I still expect that the practical description and interpretation of this study will be an interest of Indonesian EFL

teachers in particular, but may also be of use to EFL teachers with different educational contexts espousing similar teaching practices in a way that this study can help them reflect PBL implementation in their classes. The discussion of PBL in this study is also hoped to provide practical ideas to equip Indonesian EFL students with any required skills to perform their real-life tasks (Stoller, 2012), which are particularly stated in the specific descriptions of Indonesian Qualification Framework (IQF).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Project Based Learning

PBL is "an approach to instruction that teaches curriculum concepts through a project" (Bell, 2010, p.41) espousing principles of [1] learner-centered teaching, [2] learner autonomy, [3] collaborative learning, and [4] learning through tasks (Hedge, 2000). First, learner-centered teaching involves active learning in which students solve problems, answer, and formulate questions of their own. Students also discuss, explain, or brainstorm during their class (Felder, 2015) and are encouraged to share responsibility for their learning (Lingua Folio Network, 2014). In this learning process, a teacher offers support and guidance (Stoller, 2002). Second, learner autonomy is seen when students assume a maximum amount of responsibility for their learning" (Richards, 2015, p. 742), solve problems in small groups, and practice the language use outside their classroom (Brown, 2007). Third, collaborative learning is "an instruction method in which students at various performance levels work together in groups to achieve a common academic goal" (Gokhale, 1995, p.23). Gokhale also notes that in working collaboratively, students handle their own and team members' learning, so the success of a student can help the others to achieve their success. Besides, a collaborative work encourages students to explore and to apply their course materials as an attempt to search for understanding, solutions, or to create a product (Smith & MacGregor, 1992). Fourth, a task refers to an activity that enables students to achieve a particular learning goal

(Richards & Schmidt, 2010) using their available language resources and leading to a real outcome (Richards & Renandya, 2002). PBL is also social practice into which students are socialized through a series of group activities involving the simultaneous learning of language, content, and skills (Slater, Beckett, & Aufderhaar, 2006).

Benefits of Project Based Learning

In essence, PBL is thought to be fruitful for students' language learning. PBL helps students to achieve a greater understanding of a topic, increase their learning motivation (Bell, 2010), p.39) and enables them to gain knowledge and skills by doing various activities and in different domains (Tamim & Grant, 2013). Bell adds that PBL teaches some strategies to achieve success in the twenty-first century that encourages students to understand how to plan, build, and collaborate with their pairs or small groups (Davila, 2015). The century also provides students with an opportunity to be self-learners, which provides them with opportunities for their lifelong learning (Oxford University Press ELT, 2013). Also, PBL enables students to work together in solving real world problems and inspires them to obtain a deeper knowledge of a particular subject (Edutopia, 2008). PBL also has been "advocated as an effective means for promoting language and content learning in EFL classrooms" (Guo, 2006, p.147).

Further, Stoller (2002) posits that a project work leads to mirroring real-life tasks and provides opportunities for students to work cooperatively in a small group, in which they can share resources and ideas in completing a particular project. In Indonesia, specific descriptions stated in IQF can be an example of the real-life tasks that students have to perform after they finish their undergraduate study and obtain their Bachelor Degree. In brief, IQF is a national framework in Indonesia to equalize and integrate an educational field, work training, and work experience that every Indonesian citizen has (Kementrian Pendidikan Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2012). IQF technically consists of nine qualification levels

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(see Figure 1), in which each level has specific descriptions to perform.



Figure 1. Nine qualification levels in IQF (taken from Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2012, p.6)

One of the specific descriptions states that all Indonesian citizens with a Bachelor Degree (level 6) should be able to:

“Take a right decision based on information and data analysis, provide directions to choose alternative solutions independently and together, be responsible for their work, and be able to be given responsibilities for organizations’ work achievements” (Mnistry of National Education, Republic of Indonesia, 2012, p.14).

Some international studies also report other benefits of PBL. Beckett and Slater (2005), as cited in Foss et al. (2007) held a three-week project involving fifty-seven university upper-level English language learners. A project-based framework was used to assess and to track the students’ language learning in the content-based English education program. The data of the study suggested that projects made the students feel impressed because the projects helped them to achieve their language-learning goal. Another study by Foss et al.

examined the effectiveness of the project-based teaching approach that was employed in a short-term intensive English program for Japanese university EFL students. The theme of the program was mostly related to the relationship between science and ethics. The program implemented four different projects, namely the Wikipedia project, the newspaper project, the small-group video project, the whole-group video project. The study appeared to prove that project-based instruction becomes a viable alternative to traditional intensive English coursework. Then, in a more recent year, Tamim and Grant (2013) conducted a case study to explore definitions of PBL and accounts on the meaning of PBL as perceived by six in-service teachers. Each of them taught different subjects in a different level of education ranging from the fourth to the twelfth grade in public and private schools. The study indicates that the teachers positively define PBL as a teaching method that supports, facilitates, and improves the learning process.

METHOD

This study aimed to look into meanings of PBL in learning SLA at ED-DU as perceived by students. Specifically, the study was to answer the following research question: *what does PBL mean to the students in learning SLA?* It was evident that I needed to delve detailed students' personal experiences with PBL. This situation indicated my limited control over the exploration (Malilang, 2013).

With this in mind, I carried out a qualitative study. It aims to understand the subjective world of human experience (Stickler & Hampel, 2015), see real-world situations as they are (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009), and hear silenced voices about particular issues (Creswell, 2007), so it could help me to understand social phenomena as perceived by human participants who were involved in the study (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). Further, the qualitative study attempts to capture a particular experience and can result in a richer description and a deeper understanding of the experience (Stickler & Hamper). In this study, the social phenomena were related to the

students' in and out of class activities with their group mates in completing the projects in SLA class.

To conduct an in-depth exploration of the phenomena, I specifically approached the study using a phenomenological inquiry. The investigation was based on a theoretical stance of constructivist, "where meaning is said to be constructed from the interactions between subject and object" (Hickman & Kiss, 2013, p.99) and "which allows one to identify prevalent themes that emerge from individuals who share a particular lived experience" (Kline, 2008, as cited in Henfield, Woo, & Washington, 2013, p.124). The key points of the inquiry are the life world, which is "the world that is lived and experienced respectively" (Gee, Loewenthal, & Cayne, 2013 p.53), and the concept of intentionality, which shows that "human consciousness is always and inevitably related to and directed towards something beyond itself. Therefore, there are always a subject, an object as a well as a process connecting them that we call as consciousness" (Deurzen, 2014, p.55).

The intentionality led me into a phenomenological standpoint in which I could achieve a viewpoint by focusing not on any ordinary and everyday ways of experiencing the world, but more on ones' consciousness of things and experiencing the world (Science Encyclopedia, 2010, as cited in Gee et al., 2013). In this study, the interactions were between the research participants as the research subject and the PBL activities in completing the projects in the class as the research object. I entered the study with the explicit intention of asking questions (Henfield et al., 2013) and of entering the life world that focused on the participants' conscious experiences on their PBL activities in completing the main projects in SLA class.

Context of the Study

This section explains SLA class and the main projects that the students completed. SLA is a fourteen-meeting elective course at ED-DU and situated in an EFL setting, a situation in which people learn English in a formal classroom with limited opportunities to use the

language outside their classroom (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). The course discusses how people and the students as English learners learn and acquire a second language (L2) other than their mother tongue. It also reviews research findings of previous SLA studies (e.g., Bellingham, 2004; So & Dominguez, 2004; Shoabib & Dornyei, 2004; Mali, 2015a), which are still being continued up to this moment, and great linguists' opinions on many aspects that influence the L2 acquisition, both from learners' internal and external factors. Moreover, the course deals with some keys of success in SLA that the students can adopt in their learning and acquisition of English. At the end of the course, the students are expected to be able to [a] explain how people learn and acquire a second language, [b] describe various factors affecting the second language acquisition, and [c] conduct a small-scale SLA study in the form of academic paper.

Reaffirming that "all the program instructors in their PBL learning program are free to design their individual class projects as long as they fit within the framework of the course" (Foss et al., 2007, p.6), I developed two main projects in my SLA class. The first project to complete was a group presentation project while the other one was a group paper project. Both projects were a group work that encourages broader skills of cooperation and negotiation, enables various contribution from group members (Harmer, 2007), and promotes responsibility to do an action and to progress upon each member of the group (Brown, 2001). Doing a group work is also said to "improve motivation and contribute to a feeling of cooperation and warmth in the classroom" (Ur, 1996, p.232). The projects required the students to do their outside classroom activities in which they could meet and discuss important things with their group mates to complete the projects.

The group presentation project was done in a step-by-step fashion. Initially, the students were asked to work in a group consisting of four to five students. Then, the group had to read a chapter of SLA theories to answer some questions that I prepared. The questions (see Appendix 1) guided the students in reading the

chapter and helped them to focus on certain parts that, in my consideration, they needed to understand more. Then, they had to discuss and answer the questions, summarize their answers in PowerPoint slides, which would be presented in a thirty-minute in-class presentation. After the presentation, other classmates might ask the group members to clarify certain ideas they presented in their slides. I asked my students to support their discussion with, at least, five supporting references. Before their class presentation, the group might meet me to consult problems they encountered in preparing their presentation. The final product of the project was a presentation file summarizing the particular parts of the chapter.

The group paper project was completed in similar ways to those of the previous project. Working in the same group, the students conducted a small-scale SLA study the form of academic paper. At the start of this project, I showed them a paper written by their seniors as a frame of their reference. The groups also had opportunities to meet me and consult their problems in conducting the study. At the end of the semester, they had to report their study in the form of 1.500-2.000 word academic paper with, at least, eight supporting references. I encouraged every group to write the paper well, to send it to a national undergraduate conference in Indonesia (see, for instance, <http://uc-pbi-usd.blogspot.co.id/> & <https://www.facebook.com/FLLStudentConference/>), and to present it in the conference, as the follow-up of the project.

Research Participants

I considered some criteria to recruit participants in a phenomenological study. A research participant has experienced an intended phenomenon, is intensely interested in understanding natures and meanings of the phenomenon, and willing to be involved in a lengthy interview (Moustakas, 1994). In the study, it is also necessary that a researcher find one or more individuals who can articulate their lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). To delve the lived experience of doing PBL deeply, I deliberately limited the number of

participants to involve in this study (Kastuhandani, 2011) and recruited purposeful samples (Fletcher & Cox, 2012) of 3 students in SLA class who met the criteria as mentioned above. More specifically, they were representatives of three different groups in the class. For a noble purpose, all the participants were pseudonyms: *Nita*, *Vian*, and *Lian*. In essence, recruiting the students who could provide detailed descriptions of the experiences they had undertaken was more beneficial for the study, from which their descriptions were purposely non-generalisable than recruiting participants randomly (Hickman & Kiss, 2013). Therefore, I could acquire in-depth information specifically from those who were in a position to give it (Cohen, Manion, & Morisson, 2007).

Data Collection

The students' experiences were recalled through an in-depth phenomenological interview. It is a topical-guided and an informal interview asking open-ended questions to interviewees (Moustakas, 1994). Further, it has an explicit intention of asking questions focusing on their experiences (Henfield, Woo, & Washington, 2013) and encourages them to think of situations, persons, or events for it asks what the experiences are like (Van Manen, 1990).

As an ethical consideration, I met the participants to explain purposes of the study and to ask them to sign a consent form before I started the interview session. After obtaining the approval, I explained ideas about the PBL practices, to give an open-ended questionnaire consisting of questions to be asked in the interview based on interview protocols I have prepared, and to ask them to write their answers. This activity was done for I assumed that the participants could have some time to reflect their learning experiences in a less anxious way (Mambu, 2014), so they could tell detailed descriptions of their experiences in the interview session.

The interview was conducted in the participants' first language, *Bahasa Indonesia* (L1), to ensure that they could provide clear and profound responses to all interview questions. Most of the

questions (see Appendix 2) were developed from Van Manen (1990); Utami (2010), and the relevant literature discussed in the introductory part. The rest was “probing questions I raised either in-situ as I was interviewing the participants or before a follow-up interview” (Mambu, 2016, p.166). Essentially, understanding students’ experience as a lived and perceived phenomenon is also related to how students interpret their classroom tasks and the influence of experiences in their past classrooms to their present classes (Prentiss, 1995). Therefore, during the interview session, I encouraged the students to recall their experiences with PBL chronologically, so that they could provide as much about the experiences as possible (Hickman & Kiss, 2013). I also let the students see their written responses on the questionnaire and provide further clarifications on what they have written (Mali, 2015a). Each interview lasted for 30-45 minutes and was recorded using a voice recorder. Then, the recorded information of the interview was transcribed and analyzed.

Creswell (2007) clearly states that “checking for any possible misinformation that stems from distortions introduced by a researcher and an informant” (p.207) can help to ensure a trustworthiness of research. Therefore, within a month period after the interview session, I met each participant to show the interview transcription, let him/her read it and add information towards his/her responses. It was done to ensure whether s/he still had a particular response to clarify further. Before interviewing the participants, I piloted the interview to “assess the appropriateness of the data-collection methods and make changes if necessary” (Ary et al., 2010, p.95). In that case, one student in the class was interviewed to try out the questions, so I could ensure that all the issues were understandable before the data collection step.

Research Bias

In a phenomenological research, a researcher must refrain bringing his/her personal views except those stated by the participants (Henfield et al., 2013). This action refers to the concept of

bracketing. More specifically, the concept “involves researchers intentionally setting aside their experiences and suspending their beliefs to take a fresh perspective based on data collected from persons who have experienced the phenomenon” (Ary et al., 2010, p.473). I wrote down all my pre-understandings (Hickman & Kiss, 2013) concerning the PBL activities (e.g., PBL activities enhance students’ communication skills through meaningful interactions in their group) before I started to interview the participants and analyzed the data. This action helped me to be more aware of the pre-understandings that would possibly affect the responses given in the interview session and the way I analyzed the data.

Data Analysis

After collecting the students’ lived experience materials through the interview, I followed data analysis guidelines (Creswell, 2007, p.159) to analyze the data. The first step was to describe personal experiences with the phenomenon under the study. I began with a full of description of the students’ experiences in doing PBL. The second step was to develop a list of significant statements. I read the interview transcriptions and found statements about how the students experienced their PBL. Then, I underlined and listed the statements. The third step was to take the statements and then to group them into larger units of information, called meaning units or themes. I perceive themes as “the sense we are able to make of something, in which I try to put into words what something means to me then I produce theme-like statements” (Van Manen, 1990, p.88). To do this step more quickly, I utilized QDA Miner, qualitative data analysis software. The last step was to describe what and how the students experienced the phenomenon and to include verbatim transcriptions extracted from the interview data (INW). For the purpose of the study, I translated excerpts of INW into English as I conducted the interview in the students’ L1. Importantly, “phenomenological inquiries cannot be claimed as general reality

though they produce in-depth understanding and interpretations of data" (Van Manen, as cited in Pratt, 2012, p. 14).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The students' experiences extracted from the interview data registered four major themes as the meaning of PBL, as implemented in the classroom projects, to learn SLA at ED-DU. The themes are constructive communication, helping others, learning strategy, and sense of responsibility. Table 1 details the themes.

Table 1. The themes extracted from the interview data

Themes	Sub-themes	Cited Responses
Constructive Communication	With group mates	To share learning resources
		To discuss what group members have to do
		To discuss time to meet
		To negotiate different perspectives
		To clarify ideas
	With the lecturer	To obtain feedback
		To know what to do in finishing the project
		To join a conference
		To discuss concepts
		To understand SLA theories
Helping Others		To share workloads
		To check contents of PowerPoint slides
		To read previous related studies
Learning Strategy		To read learning materials before group discussions
		To find more sources
Sense of Responsibility		To finish assigned tasks

Constructive Communication

PBL reflects the essence of constructive communication among the students to finish their projects. They communicated with their

group mates to share learning resources they had and to discuss what each group member had to do to complete the project. Also, they discussed which parts of their academic paper that they had to write and asked each other to find supporting references for their projects.

Excerpt 1

"We have met and discussed with all group members that we have to find two previous studies and some books related to our paper project. When we meet, we can share and discuss them. In writing the paper, we also agree to share the tasks. One of my group mates and I are assigned to write the introduction part while the other members deal with the discussion part. Then, we can edit what we write together"
(Nita/INW1/COM/translated by the researcher).

Excerpt 2

"When we meet, we discuss which parts of the paper that we write. At that time, I said that I would write the introductory part of the paper. My group mates, Ita and Asti, agreed with me, but they also asked me to find previous related studies. I did it. Then, they decided to write the discussion part of the study"
(Lian/INW2/COM/translated by the researcher).

To facilitate their communication, all the students also utilized supporting technologies, which can help to enhance students' learning motivation (Stanley, 2013), such as Facebook and WhatsApp. For instance, Nita and Lian informed that they utilized Facebook Chat (FC) to communicate with their group members during the completion of the projects. More specifically, they created an FC group in which their group members could make an appointment when they met to discuss their projects and share any related learning sources for their projects.

Excerpt 3

"I told my group mates to create a group chat on Facebook. The group chat enables us to discuss the classroom assignments and to communicate with friends. We also use it to share related learning materials that we have. After we have the group chat, we can plan the time to meet. We usually post some comments

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asking a possible time for us to meet"
(Nita/INW3/COM/translated by the researcher).

Excerpt 4

"We usually chat in our Facebook group and upload some materials needed to make the PowerPoint slides. My friends sometimes also ask one another to find particular learning materials dealing with motivation. We help one another. As soon as we get the materials, we directly upload them in the group chat" (Lian/INW4/COM/translated by the researcher).

Obtaining the permission from Lian, I instance the communication done by her group (e.g., it was the one initiated by Gris (anonymous)). For the purpose of the study, I translated her first language (L1) communication into English:

- Gris : Friends, Pak Deska (anonymous) asked us to prepare the presentation for we probably have the make-up class next week.
Gris : These are the articles. I got three articles.
Gris : (uploaded three materials)
Gris : please download them.

The students also communicated with their group mates to negotiate different perspectives that they had during the completion of their projects and to look for their best solution, as an example of solving real-world problems (Edutopia, 2008). Vian recalled his experiences in his English Language Teaching Management (ELTM) class. He worked in a group consisting of 5 students. They had to finish a project designing an English course, in which they had to calculate a budget to open the course, to consider numbers of teachers to be employed, to find a strategic location for the school, and to think about potential clients for their course. He once had different opinions with Vira, one of his group mates, when they discussed a location for their school. Nevertheless, the communication process, among his group mates helped Vian to deal with the situation.

Excerpt 5

"I prefer Semarang (a city in Central Java, Indonesia) as the location because I find many companies that can become our potential clients. Vira regarded Salatiga as the best location due to her economic considerations. We ask our friends' opinions about this. We decide to look for a win-win solution. We, eventually, decide Semarang to become the best location that can provide more benefits for us. In that situation, we have to be open-minded so that we can learn from other people. I can view the different perspectives as a way to enrich my group's perspectives" (Vian/INW5/COM/translated by the researcher).

The communication was also done with their lecturer who provided some feedback on their projects and suggested them practical things that they needed to do to finish the projects.

Excerpt 6

"My group met our lecturer in his office to consult our paper. At that time, he considered the feasibility of our topic, and he suggested us to read previous related studies dealing with our topic." (Nita/INW6/COM/translated by the researcher).

Excerpt 7

"My lecturer also helped my group to prepare our presentation. We met my lecturer to show the presentation slides we had made. Our lecturer read them and asked our group to add some ideas to the slides. He told us not to include all detailed theories in the slides" (Vian/INW7/COM/translated by the researcher).

Further, Ryan mentioned that his lecturer was the one who always encouraged his group to write the paper seriously, so his group could present their paper at a conference, which made him more motivated to finish the project (Ryan/INW8/COM).

The communication process in negotiating different perspectives that the students had during the completion of their projects (as detailed in excerpt 5) illustrates the social practice (Slater et al., 2006) and provides some evidence that they can practice

performing the specific descriptions stipulated in IQF, as their real-life tasks (Stoller, 2012). The tasks require them to be able to take a particular decision based on information they have and to choose a solution together with their group (Kementrian Pendidikan Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2012). Possibly, the communication enhances the students' learning autonomy because they can solve the problems in their group (Brown, 2007). In addition, the fact that the students communicated with their teachers who monitored the progress of their work (as detailed in excerpts 6, 7) and who encouraged Vian to present his paper at a conference (INW 8) could instance how a teacher, as a facilitator, offers support and guidance for his/her students to complete a particular project (Stoller, 2002).

Helping others

The students helped one another in completing their classroom projects. Lian mentioned that when she had difficulties in understanding meanings of particular SLA theories to include in the Power Point slides, her group mates helped her to explain the theories (Lian/INW9/HLO). Vian also experienced a similar thing. Once, he had difficulties in understanding the linguistic background of behaviorism to include in the slides. During his group discussion, one of his group members, Amel, helped to explain the ideas. He felt comfortable with the situation, as he could obtain constructive inputs to understand the theories. (Vian/INW10HLO).

Further, PBL enables the students to share their workloads in completing their projects. Nita and Vian recalled their experience, which clearly instances the concept of learner-centered teaching that encourages students to share responsibility for their learning (Lingua Folio Network, 2014).

Excerpt 8

"I can reduce my workloads as I can share them with my group mates. For instance, a chapter of theories that we have to read consists of some subtopics. Every member is assigned to read a particular subtopic, to understand it, and to summarize what

s/he has read. After that, we include it in our slides. My group members also agree to share workloads in writing the paper. A student writes the introductory part of the paper, and the other students complete the discussion and conclusion parts of the paper” (Nita/INW11/HLO/translated by the researcher).

Excerpt 9

“My group members work cooperatively and share our workloads to finish the project. For instance, two of my group mates and I focus on writing introductory theoretical review parts. Meanwhile, Rendy and Jojo, my other group mates, are willing to write the discussion part and collect references from books and articles to support the discussion” (Vian/INW12/HLO/translated by the researcher).

Moreover, experience students have (INW9, INW10, excerpt 8, excerpt 9) tends to prove that PBL equips them with the required strategy in the 21st century that encourages students to understand how to plan, build, and collaborate with their small groups (Davila, 2015).

In doing PBL, the students can assist one another in completing their classroom projects. The data clearly illustrates how Lian and Vian’s group mates help them to understand particular SLA theories that they still do not understand (see INW9, INW10), and how Vian and Nita can share their workloads in completing their projects (see excerpts 8,10). This finding corroborates advantages of doing group work that encourages cooperation skills from group members (Ur, 1996; Harmer, 2007) and promotes responsibility to do action and progress upon each member of the group (Brown, 2001). The finding also illustrates how students, by working collaboratively, handle their individual and group members’ learning, so all their group members can be successful (Gokhales, 1995).

Moreover, What Lian and Vian have experienced would seem to show that PBL provides the students with opportunities to do their outside classroom learning, in which they can obtain inputs from their classmates and do not completely depend on their teacher who

is assumed to be the only source of their learning. Therefore, constructive collaboration among teachers, students, and people outside a classroom during students' EFL learning process is necessary. The collaboration enables the students to receive more inputs for their EFL learning as they cannot always regard their teacher as the one who handles their particular learning outcomes (Mali, 2015b).

Learning Strategies

Second language learning strategies are described as particular actions or techniques that students utilize to enhance their learning (Oxford & Ehrman, 1998, p.8 as cited in Brown, 2007) and as behavior and techniques that students adopt in their effort when they learn a second language (Troike, 2006). It can be inferred from the narratives that the students came up with some learning strategies to complete the projects. The strategies included reading SLA learning materials and previous related studies before they did their group discussion. The strategies can be categorized as the resourcing strategy in which the students use target language reference materials to enhance their learning (O' Malley et al., 1985b as cited in Brown) and provide them with inputs to complete their projects.

Excerpt 10

"In completing our presentation project, for example, my group agrees that every group member has to read SLA theories used for the presentation. It helps us to have ideas to discuss and to write in the presentation slides before we meet. We also agree to find and to read two previous studies related to our topic, demotivational factors in Critical Reading Class, before we meet. We start to find the studies from the SLA book provided by our lecturer. Then, we usually visit Google and type some keywords to find the studies. We also browse some educational websites, such as Ebsco and Academia.edu from which we can obtain more resources. I feel that the studies become examples that provided us ideas on how to write our paper. Reading the studies also enriches our understanding of the SLA topic, we

were discussing at that time." (Nita/INW13/SLR/translated by the researcher).

Excerpt 11

"Initially, every group member is assigned to find as many supporting references as possible, to read, and to understand them. After that, we meet and discuss sources that we obtained. In our meeting, we usually bring our laptop, books from the campus library, journal articles we printed, and the book provided by the course, and we share what we have read." (Vian/INW14/SLR/translated by the researcher).

As detailed in excerpts 10 and 11, Nita and Vian, without their teacher's control, have applied their learning strategies to complete their projects, particularly by reading SLA learning materials and previous related studies before they did their group discussion. This finding appears to prove that they have possessed their learning autonomy (Richards, 2015) as they assume responsibility for their learning by reading and looking for their learning materials. In this point, the lecturer must play a role as a source (Harmer, 2007) who suggests some SLA resources that the students could access outside the classroom and other learning strategies based on his/her experiences that can help them to complete their projects. Importantly, how the students communicated with and helped one another as reflected in the previous themes also corresponds socio-affective strategies (O' Malley et al., 1985b as cited in Brown, 2007) in which the students worked with their group mates and the lecturer to obtain feedback and collect information to complete their projects.

A sense of responsibility

The sense of responsibility becomes the last emerging theme. Nita's experience illustrated that the sense was resulted from strong motivation to help other students in the class and her lecturer to understand her group presentation. Also, she was aware that doing the presentation well enabled her group to obtain a good score. Therefore, it was essential to do the project seriously.

Excerpt 12

"It is necessary that my group check, discuss, and edit the content of our presentation slides, as we will present them to our classmates and lecturer. We try our best not to present wrong information to them. Otherwise, they will be confused and find it difficult to understand what we will discuss. I also believe that checking the slides carefully also enables my group to achieve a satisfactory result for the presentation. A good result is for all members of my group, so we have to do this project seriously" (Nita/ INW15/ROS/translated by the researcher).

Meanwhile, Lian reflected her sense of responsibility to finish an assigned task in her group. In completing the paper, she mentioned that her group mates always set a deadline to complete the paper.

Excerpt 13

"My group mates always set a deadline when we have to finish writing our assigned parts. The deadline successfully forces us not to delay doing our work, as we are fully aware that we also have many assignments from other classes. Therefore, when we agree to finish writing the parts, for instance, on Monday, we do it. Working in a scheduled time makes the flow of our work easier." (Lian/INW16/ROS/translated by the researcher).

The data clearly shows how Nita understands that doing the project seriously will enable her and group members to obtain a good score (see excerpt 12) and how Lian's group agrees to set the deadline to complete the paper (see excerpt 13). These findings may be a demonstration that PBL potentially helps the students to be able to perform the specific descriptions stipulated in IQF, a corroboration of their real-life tasks (Stoller, 2012), that requires them to be responsible for their work (National Ministry of Education, Republic of Indonesia, 2012).

CONCLUSION

The most encouraging finding from the study is that PBL, as implemented in the classroom projects, gives positive meanings to the students, appears to verify benefits of PBL discussed in the literature, and continues the positive trends of PBL practices in English language teaching and learning specifically in content-based instructions. The PBL practices situated in Indonesian contexts and discussed in this study should not be translated in isolation, as they are open to necessary modifications based on specific situations that EFL teachers are now dealing with. In essence, I encourage future studies to explore other potential of PBL practices particularly from more diverse perspectives and settings to justify the work of PBL to enhance EFL students' language learning.

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APPENDIX 1 Some guided questions to discuss the chapter

(shown for a brevity's sake of the research)

Topics : Key Issues in SLA and The Role of the First Language
Instruction : After reading the theories on “key issues in second language acquisition” and “the role of the first language,” please answer these questions:

1. What is SLA?
2. Please explain two key issues that SLA researchers could possibly focus on.
3. How are the roles of learners' first language to their second language acquisition (SLA)?
4. What are key notions to explain the idea behaviorist learning theory? Please explain the notions; How do the notions relate to SLA?
5. What does behaviorist-learning theory predict?
6. What does the term interference in SLA mean?
7. Please explain definitions and their related ideas on Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis. Provide examples to support your answer.
8. In brief, please some explain empirical research covering aspects to explore the role of L1 in L2 learners' performance.

APPENDIX 2 Lists of interview questions (The English translation versions)

Reflect and tell your experiences in your SLA class when you did your [a] presentation and [b] academic-paper projects

- What is the topic of your presentation?
- What is the topic of your academic paper?
- How did you complete the projects?
- How did you cooperate with your group mates during the completion process of the projects?
- Who did what?
- How did you feel about cooperating with them to complete the projects?
- What are the advantages of doing the projects?
- Can you give some examples?
- What are the challenges of doing the projects?
- Can you give some examples?
- How did you cope with the challenges?
- How do you define roles of your lecturer during the completion process of the projects?
- What did your lecturer do in that process?
- Can you give some examples?
- How did the projects help you to understand SLA theories?