

ENGLISH AT SMP NEGERI 35 MEDAN

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ABSTRACT

This study describes the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in teaching English at SMP Negeri 35 Medan, specifically focusing on its six syntaxes and its impact on student engagement. A descriptive qualitative design was employed, with data collected through classroom observations, analysis of student projects, and interviews with an English teacher and five students. The findings reveal that the teacher effectively applied all six PjBL syntaxes: fundamental questions, project planning, scheduling, monitoring, assessment, and reflection. This structured approach significantly increased student motivation and engagement, as it allowed students to take ownership of their learning through collaborative tasks, specifically in mastering personal pronouns. However, the implementation faced two primary challenges: constrained time management during the final presentation phase and unequal participation within student groups. These findings suggest that while PjBL is a powerful tool for fostering active, student-centered language learning, teachers must implement better task distribution and mid-project checkpoints to ensure equitable participation and efficiency.

Keywords: Project-Based Learning, Teaching English, Classroom Implementation.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menguraikan penerapan Pembelajaran Berbasis Proyek (PjBL) dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris di SMP Negeri 35 Medan, dengan fokus khusus pada enam sintaksisnya serta dampaknya terhadap keterlibatan siswa. Desain penelitian kualitatif deskriptif digunakan, dengan data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, analisis proyek siswa, serta wawancara dengan seorang guru bahasa Inggris dan lima siswa. Temuan tersebut menunjukkan bahwa guru tersebut berhasil menerapkan keenam unsur PjBL secara efektif: pertanyaan mendasar, perencanaan proyek, penjadwalan, pemantauan, penilaian, dan refleksi. Pendekatan terstruktur ini secara signifikan meningkatkan motivasi dan keterlibatan siswa, karena memungkinkan mereka untuk mengambil peran aktif dalam proses belajar mereka melalui tugas-tugas kolaboratif, khususnya dalam menguasai kata

ganti orang. Namun, pelaksanaan program ini menghadapi dua tantangan utama: keterbatasan waktu pada tahap presentasi akhir dan ketidakseimbangan partisipasi di antara kelompok-kelompok siswa. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa meskipun PjBL merupakan alat yang ampuh untuk mendorong pembelajaran bahasa yang aktif dan berpusat pada siswa, para guru harus menerapkan pembagian tugas yang lebih baik serta titik-titik evaluasi di tengah proyek guna memastikan partisipasi yang merata dan efisiensi.

Kata Kunci: Pembelajaran Berbasis Proyek, Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris, Penerapan di Kelas.

A. Introduction

In the contemporary globalized era, English has solidified its status as the primary international language, rendering proficiency in it crucial for academic, professional, and cross-cultural communication. In Indonesia, English is officially taught as a Foreign Language (EFL), which means that students generally have limited exposure to the language outside the educational environment, making the classroom the primary arena for language acquisition. Despite its significance, conventional English language pedagogy in secondary schools is frequently criticized for being overly teacher-centered, focusing heavily on passive rote memorization of grammatical rules and vocabulary lists. This traditional approach often results in low student engagement, minimal motivation, and severe anxiety when students are required to practice speaking or writing productively. Consequently, there is an urgent need to transition from passive learning paradigms to active, student-centered methodologies that can foster authentic language usage and meaningful collaboration in the classroom.

Theoretical frameworks strongly support this pedagogical shift through the integration of Project-Based Learning (PjBL), an instructional model rooted in constructivist learning theories. Constructivism posits that knowledge is actively constructed by learners through real-world experiences and collaboration rather than being passively received from an instructor. In the context of English language teaching, PjBL organizes learning around complex, authentic tasks, allowing students to acquire language skills by working over an extended period to

investigate and respond to engaging questions or problems. According to established educational frameworks, particularly the model adapted from the rely on the systematic execution of six essential syntaxes. These operational stages consist of starting with a fundamental question to spark curiosity, designing a project plan to establish collaboration, creating a systematic timeline or scheduling, monitoring project development to provide formative feedback, assessing the final outcome to measure language competence, and concluding with a collective reflection to evaluate the overall experience.

Furthermore, integrating this six-step framework is highly relevant when teaching abstract grammar components, such as English personal pronouns, which young learners often struggle to internalize through isolated drills. By conceptualizing grammar within PjBL, students can anchor linguistic rules to concrete, visual project artifacts such as creative poster presentations or structural charts on cardboard. This approach bridges the gap between theoretical syntax rules and practical communicative competence, allowing students to apply personal pronouns naturally in collaborative writing and speaking. While previous literature extensively validates the general benefits of PjBL on student autonomy and motivation, there remains a noticeable empirical gap regarding how these six specific syntaxes unfold in real-world lower secondary school classrooms in Indonesia. Most existing research focuses on the general outcomes of PjBL rather than providing a detailed, stage-by-stage analysis of its classroom implementation.

To address this empirical gap, this study examines the practical execution of the complete PjBL framework at SMP Negeri 35 Medan. The study focuses on documenting how the six essential syntaxes are managed by the teacher and experienced by the students during an English unit on personal pronouns. By mapping out each pedagogical stage in real time, this research aims to provide a nuanced, qualitative description of classroom dynamics. Ultimately, this introduction sets the stage to uncover not only the observable benefits of the method—such as enhanced comprehension of grammar and improved interpersonal collaboration—but also the systemic challenges, including rigid time constraints and unequal individual participation, that educators must successfully navigate to optimize Project-Based Learning in an EFL setting.

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate and provide an in-depth depiction of the classroom dynamics during the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL). A qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate for this investigation as it allowed the researcher to capture naturally occurring phenomena in a real-world educational setting without manipulating any variables. The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 35 Medan, focusing on a specific classroom environment where English was being taught using the project-based framework. The primary subjects of this study consisted of one English teacher who designed and facilitated the lessons, along with five selected students who actively participated in the project. These student participants were selected to provide diverse perspectives on the benefits and challenges encountered throughout the structural execution of the learning activities.

Data collection was carried out through triangulation to ensure the validity, credibility, and comprehensiveness of the findings. The primary data collection instruments involved structured classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. The classroom observations were conducted using a detailed observation checklist meticulously designed around the six operational syntaxes of Project-Based Learning, allowing the researcher to document how each pedagogical stage was executed in real time. Following the observations, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both the teacher and the five students to gain deeper insights into their personal experiences, perceived learning outcomes, and the specific difficulties they faced. To support and enrich the primary datasets, secondary data were gathered through artifact analysis, which involved examining the physical projects produced by the students, specifically their creative cardboard displays focused on the mastery of English personal pronouns.

The gathered qualitative data were systematically analyzed using the interactive model framework proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. This analytical process comprised three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. During the data reduction phase, the raw notes from classroom observations, interview transcripts, and project artifacts were selected, focused, simplified, and transformed to isolate the information directly relevant to the six PjBL syntaxes and classroom challenges.

narrative profiles and matrices to map out the patterns of implementation clearly. Finally, during the conclusion drawing and verification stage, the researcher interpreted the displayed configurations to formulate explicit conclusions regarding the efficacy of PjBL at the school, verifying the emergent findings against the empirical field notes to ensure accuracy and objectivity.

C. Result and Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in teaching English personal pronouns at SMP Negeri 35 Medan successfully followed the six operational syntaxes framework. Based on classroom observations and artifacts analysis, the six steps fundamental question, project planning, scheduling, monitoring, assessment, and reflection were methodically structured by the teacher. The first syntax, the fundamental question, was executed by presenting contextual, real-world prompts related to the students' daily lives and social circles to spark immediate interest. This was followed by project planning, where students actively organized themselves into small groups, brainstormed thematic poster concepts, and divided roles for gathering materials. In the scheduling phase, the teacher and students collaboratively established a rigid three-week timeline to structure the project phases systematically. During the execution phase, the teacher conducted intensive monitoring, walking around the classroom to deliver formative language feedback and resolve group management issues. The implementation concluded with a comprehensive assessment of both the cooperative process and the physical cardboard poster products, followed by a reflection session where students evaluated their own performance and identified linguistic difficulties. The structural configuration of these observed steps is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Structural Syntax Matrix of PjBL Implementation

NO	PjBL Syntax	Classroom Implementation	Description
1	Fundamental Question	The teacher gives questions related to students' daily life	Consistent with theory

2	Project Planning	Students discuss in groups and divide tasks	Active participation
3	Scheduling	The project is divided into several stages (weekly plan)	Well-organized
4	Monitoring	The teacher observes and gives feedback during the process	Properly conducted
5	Assessment	The teacher evaluates both process and final product	Comprehensive
6	Reflection	Students share experiences and difficulties after the project	Effective

The empirical data gathered from semi-structured interviews and observations further revealed several distinct benefits of this PjBL application. First, there was a substantial enhancement in language comprehension regarding English personal pronouns. Rather than memorizing pronoun charts in isolation, creating physical cardboard displays allowed students to actively manipulate and correctly apply subject, object, and possessive pronouns (e.g., distinguishing between *he*, *him*, and *his*) within contextual sentences. Second, learning motivation increased dramatically; moving from standard textbook exercises to hands-on, creative poster designing made the English lessons highly engaging and enjoyable for the students. Third, the project successfully fostered interpersonal collaboration, as group work forced students to share responsibilities, negotiate design ideas, and collectively solve linguistic problems, thereby reinforcing their communication confidence.

Conversely, the qualitative analysis also uncovered three primary challenges that emerged during the classroom execution. The most prominent obstacle was rigid time limitations. Because the hands-on project creation and language execution demanded significantly more time than traditional lecture-style classes, the final presentation phase became highly compressed, leaving insufficient time for extensive peer feedback. Additionally, the teacher encountered unequal group participation, where certain passive students tended to rely heavily on their peers, leaving the workload to be dominated by a few active group members. Lastly,

varying language proficiency levels among the students created communication friction within the groups. Students with lower initial vocabulary and grammar baselines experienced difficulties keeping pace with the project's communicative guidance and direct support.

In discussing these outcomes, the results align with constructivist principles, showing that when language structure is embedded within a collaborative task, it bridges the gap between abstract grammar rules and meaningful communication. The six-step syntax framework provides a secure operational structure for lower secondary school environments; however, the challenges identified indicate that PjBL is not without systemic difficulties. The compressed presentation phase highlights the need for more flexible classroom time allocation in Indonesian EFL schedules. Furthermore, the presence of passive learners and proficiency gaps suggests that while PjBL inherently promotes autonomy, it requires teachers to implement explicit cooperative structures, such as mandatory role rotations and individual mid-project checkpoints. By actively addressing these participation imbalances and time constraints, educators can mitigate the challenges and fully maximize the pedagogical affordances of Project-Based Learning in secondary English classrooms.

D. Conclusion

Based on the qualitative findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in teaching English personal pronouns at SMP Negeri 35 Medan was executed successfully. The English teacher methodically and effectively integrated all six operational syntaxes—fundamental question, project planning, scheduling, monitoring, assessment, and reflection—into the instructional design. The empirical evidence demonstrates that this structured framework significantly enhanced the students' language comprehension, shifted the classroom dynamic from passive learning to active engagement, and fostered critical interpersonal collaboration through the creation of visual project artifacts on cardboard. However, the study also highlights that the operationalization of PjBL is accompanied by systemic challenges, specifically rigid time limitations that compressed the final presentation phase, unequal participation workloads within student groups, and communication friction stemming from varying

individual language proficiency levels. optimize the future application of Project-Based Learning in EFL contexts. For English teachers, it is highly recommended to continue utilizing PjBL for contextual language modules, but with the inclusion of explicit cooperative learning structures—such as mandatory role rotations and individual mid-project checkpoints—to ensure equitable task distribution and prevent passive student behavior. For school administrations, providing more flexible classroom time allocation or block scheduling would grant teachers and students the necessary structural space to conduct extensive presentation and peer feedback phases without time constraints. Lastly, for future researchers, it is suggested to expand upon this study by investigating the efficacy of the six-syntax PjBL framework across different grade levels or by utilizing quantitative methods to measure its specific impact on distinct macro language skills, such as listening or speaking competencies.

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