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IMPLEMENTING PROJECT-BASED LEARNING (PBL) IN ESP COURSE: REVIEW ON SYLLABUS DRAFT

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Abstract

Adopting project-based learning (PBL) in English for Purposes (ESP) is believed to equip university graduates with English skills effectively. The current Indonesian Education Ministry's Merdeka Belajar policy also highlights the importance of PBL in vocatipnal higher education. One challenge in implementing PBL in ESP courses is English teachers' limited content knowledge. The research reported in this paper aims to draft and review PBL-based ESP syllabi drafts at a government Polytechnic in Indonesia. The data set includes questionnaires from nine English lecturers and notes from focus group discussions (FGD) with three content lecturers and five English teachers. This study uses a descriptive approach using mixed data collection and analysis methods. Excel program analyzes questionnaire data and content thematic analysis to process qualitative data, namely the FGD transcript and drafts. The survey and FGD are used as the basis for the draft framework for the ESP syllabus design. The article ends with a critical review of the drafts.

Keywords: Merdeka Belajar Policy. ESP, PBL, Vocational Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

One of the strategies to realize the national development goals is to increase the development of Indonesia's human capital. In the globalization era, one essential skill necessary for Indonesian university graduates is English communication, especially skills to communicate in the areas of their study using the English language in the global context. It is reported, however, that the English communication skills of vocational and higher education graduates are considerably limited (Renandya et al., 2018).

The objectives of teaching English in Indonesia have been stated in the Decree of the Indonesian Education and Culture Minister No. 096/1967 dated December 12, 1967, namely to develop students' English communicative abilities, which include the four language skills such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking. At the higher education level, students are expected to know English structure and can then apply this knowledge in communicating and interacting in life (Hamidah & Yanuarmawan, 2019). Teaching English so far needs more focus on the skills of using the English language for communication purposes and more on knowledge of how to use syntactic and lexical rules in the English language (Author 2).

In Indonesian vocational education, teaching English at school and higher education levels are expected to emphasize developing communication skills in specific fields of study. Then it is ideally expected that students have knowledge of the English language and can use it

in real workplace situations. They should use their knowledge of English to learn their discipline or subject matter in English. Knowledge of the language can be beneficial in understanding English texts in specific fields that are somewhat different from general texts. The difference is not in the knowledge of the language but in the knowledge of the text. Hence, improving teaching strategies and the quality of English language learning is crucial.

Learning English through specific purposes is one effective way to improve the quality of language learning. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) argue that learning English for a specific purpose, or ESP, is an approach designed based on why the learner wants to learn English. ESP is an approach to teaching and using English for particular fields of study that follow the needs of the fields of knowledge and professions that use English. Hence the fields of science and professions are realized in English for Business, Engineering, Economics, and other fields of study.

Three main characteristics of ESP proposed by Robinson (1990), namely 1) ESP is goal-oriented learning. In this sense, learners learn English not because they want to know the language as a language and the culture it contains, but learners learn ESP because it has specific goals in academic and professional fields with one. 2) ESP substance is designed and developed based on a needs analysis study. The concept of needs analysis aims to specialize and relate and bring closer what students need in both academic and professional terms. 3) Rather than at children or adolescents, ESP is specifically targeted at adult learners because ESP is generally taught at the secondary academic and work professional levels. Seeing the understanding and characteristics of ESP learning, there are many benefits that students may attain from this particular approach to learning.

To meet students' specific needs, Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) proposed a comprehensive approach that combines English for the needs of the academic environment, or English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and English for the needs of the world of work, English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). EAP helps students practice basic language skills in class, i.e., they can listen to instructions and lectures, take notes, and communicate between students and students and their lecturers during discussions, for instance. The skills in an EAP environment are transferrable (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998) to a broader context. The EOP equips them to be productive by introducing specific terms and expressions in occupational settings.

Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning (PBL) has been recommended in Indonesian vocational higher education. Current arrangement in the Indonesian Ministry of Education (Regulation of Vocational Education General Director No 27 2022) provides some technical terms and guidance to adopt in the implementation of PBL in vocational higher education institutions. This regulation is to support the Merdeka Belajar policy. PBL is a learning model that focuses on projects or tasks where the task is based on real questions or problems in everyday life (Thomas, 2000). PBL allows students to collaborate in finding solutions to problems through investigation and discussion activities to produce a "realistic product" or a "presentation".

Eight essential elements of PBL, designed by Buck Institute for Education, are adopted by Indonesian vocational higher education. They are as follows:

a. Key knowledge and understanding, and critical success skills. In the project, students can apply their knowledge to solve problems and train skills necessary for their future careers.

b. Challenging problems or questions Selecting questions is vital to help students to be critical.

c. Sustained inquiry

Asking or seeking information is an act of investigating. A challenging question is essential to allow students to ask even deeper questions so they may get a solution.

d. Authenticity

The meaning of being authentic is related to the "real world". So problems are taken from real life.

e. Student voice and choice

Having students' voices in PBL creates a sense of students' ownership of the project. One way of having their voice and choice is through a mini-survey asking them about their interests.

f. Reflection

Reflection can be done in both informal and formal ways. Informally, teachers nurture Reflection as a part of classroom culture through dialogues and student discussions. Another medium is journals or logbooks.

g. Feedback and revision

Students should be taught how to give and receive constructive feedback from others, including their classmates. In this sense, teachers must provide templates, models, or protocols for giving feedback.

h. Product Publication

The publication of the project's products may significantly add to students' motivation and improve the quality of the product. This publication effectively communicates to the community members, from students' parents to a broader scope (Regulation of Vocational Education General Director No 27 2022).

Some benefits of the PBL approach for the students include engaging in problem-solving activities, developing valuable information, reasoning skills, effective self-directed learning techniques, learning motivation, and collaboration skills (Evensen & Hmelo-Silver, 2000). Particularly in language classrooms, PBL may help meaningful classroom participation take place. It is because students dealing with real-world situations and difficulties find learning more relevant and authentic. PBL entails more learning activities, such as prescribed role-plays or dialogue repetition.

In addition to the benefit of PBL in meaningful learning in language classes, Markham, Larmer, and Ravitz (2003) further suggests other benefits of implementing PBL, First is improving academic performance. Through projects, PBL enables students to have hands-on experience with the subject matter they study. Students can be given chances to make connections between the project's extensive expertise and the subject of their study. Next is increasing independent learning. As PBL allows students to choose and establish their learning objectives, it provides them with complete autonomy. They develop knowledge of the issue by completing self-directed goals and assuming greater responsibility for the learning activity.

Another advantage of PBL is acquiring essential life skills. Through a project, students engage in various tasks that may include fieldwork, speaking directly with an expert, completing various observations, and gathering materials for the project. In addition, PBL can improve students' higher-order thinking. Students have the chance to evaluate and interpret data and engage in other cognitive processes that lead to advanced knowledge, which is one of the primary advantages of PBL. Lastly, PBL can increase motivation. As students select their projects and establish their objectives, they would see that their effort is essential to answering the issue, resolving the problem, or benefiting the community. They are intimately involved in the project and are exposed to hard work.

In summary, the PBL approach allows students to experience hands-on learning, and ESP would maintain students' interests because of the connection with their field of study (Noom-ura, 2013).

Some studies on PBL-based ESP have been done. Indrasari (2016) sought to investigate English pre-service teachers implementing PBL of course designs. Her study found that teacher-students encounter challenges. One is capturing language and content focus on integrating into the course. Through guided supervision, the pre-service teachers could better grasp the notion of ESP through the involvement of both theoretical and practical manner, which is using a project.

Next, Kultsum et al. (2021) researched examining the impacts of PBL-based ESP courses. Forty students in the faculty of Law participated in their research. The instruments were students' vocabulary learning assessments and interviews. Positive impacts are primarily on reading skills and the student's motivation. They assert that PBL enhances the integration of ESP and other disciplines, allowing students to work on projects using English-specific vocabulary. As a result, students may encounter modest challenges in learning the language due to its relevance to the materials of their respective areas.

Despite the relevance of ESP to meeting vocational students' needs, studies show that ESP lecturer encounters some challenges. First is designing teaching materials due to their need for knowledge regarding the main content of their students' study programs, such as Informatics

Engineering, Accounting, Architectural Engineering, and many other fields of study. Another challenge is the collaboration between English lecturers and subject matter teachers. Such collaboration is recommended based on some studies (Author 1, 2023; Weinberg & Symon, 2017). Realizing such collaboration is challenging but is possible. The research reported in this article aims to facilitate this potential for collaboration, especially at the stage of syllabus design for ESP courses. The research attempts explicitly to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the lecturers' perspectives on
a. students' needs for English proficiency skills?
b. What are the lecturers' understandings of the applicability of PBL in ESP courses?

METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a descriptive approach utilizing mixed-methods tools, which area survey and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Participants included in this study are lecturers at the Pontianak State Polytechnic. They are five content lecturers from five study programs: Informatics Engineering, Business and Accounting, Mechanical Engineering, and Architectural Engineering, and five English language lecturers.

The questionnaire development adopted three main categories of the PBL framework by Slater & Beckett (2019): elements of language, content, and skills. Multiple skills are needed to finish a project, including various learning and communication skills. All the ESP and PBL framework characteristics developed by Beckett and Slater (2005) were the basis for developing questionnaires and Focus Group Discussions (FGD).

The survey was administered to all 12 English language lecturers in the research context, and nine of them completed the surveys. Following the survey was a focus group discussion (FGD). A purposive sampling method was used based on the relevance and potential of the information obtained from the participants of this applied research (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Eight lecturers agreed to the invitation of the FGD, and six of them were a couple of ESP and discipline lecturers. They were English for Architecture, English for Mechanical Engineering, and English for Accounting. The other two participants were ESP lecturers in each field of study in Information and Technology and Civil Engineering. The FGD was conducted to discuss ways to implement PBL-based ESP and initiate syllabus drafting of ESP courses based on the PBL approach. The completion of the draft was done virtually via a social media group. A review of the drafts presented in this article was based on the course description and learning goals of the ESP courses.

Drafting the syllabus took the procedures proposed by Wiers et al. (2011). Due to the time constraints within the project, out of ten, five stages were discussed during the project. First is to examine the course's contextual information. Examining the course's contextual aspects began with determining the location's compatibility with the course. The characteristics of the class, such as the students, the class size, and the duration of the course, are also examined. Next is to determine course objectives. Before reviewing the course, its aim must be clearly stated. In ESP, the objective is to acquire English fluency in the relevant field. The third stage is to identify the learning outcomes. This stage is an estimation of students' learning performance. This process is to help the learning course become more focused and efficient, for instance, an ESP learning course with a PBL approach for bank teller students. The course will be adopted as the actual action at the information desk, such as greeting, providing information, or responding to customers' needs. Therefore it must be closely related to the actual event.

Step Four is to plan the procedures and activities during the course. This stage will help to maintain the quality of the course. The last step is to conduct the assessment. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the outcome of the learning process. The primary purpose of assessment is to determine how the success of a course has taken place and how it might be further enhanced.

RESULTS

The findings indicate the lecturers' support of using the PBL approach in ESP courses.

Figure 1 shows lecturers' perception of English language skills that students need to master to support their skills and professions.

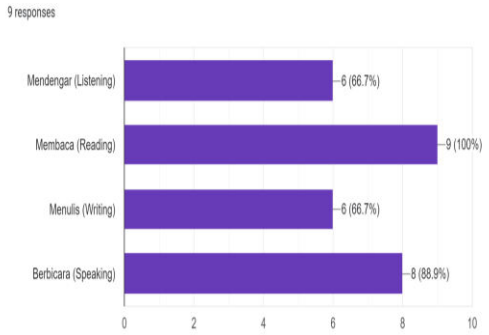

Figure 1. English language skills to support students' skills and professions

Based on Figure 1, four English skills include listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Here, the respondents (English lecturers) can choose multiple options. It is worth noting that all English lecturers (100 %) choose reading, six English lecturers. This figure is followed by speaking with eight English lecturers (88.9 %) who selected productive oral skills. Then, listening and writing skills are similar, with six English lecturers (66.7 %) selecting these two language skills. This finding suggests that the most dominant English skill which needs to be mastered by students related to their profession is reading skills.

Tables 1 and 2 indicate the lecturers' perspectives on the importance of each English skill and their beliefs on PBL.

Table 1. The Importance of English Skills Toward Students' Needs

No	Statements	Responses (percentage)			
		SA	A	D	SD
1.	Students need English language skills in speaking such as making presentations, discussing in meetings, etc.	77.8	22.2	-	-
2.	Students need English language skills in writing such as letters, messages/emails, reports, etc.	66.7	33.3	-	-
3.	Students need English language skills in reading, such as instructions, messages, manuals, and guides.	66.7	33.3	-	-
4.	Students need English language skills in listening, such as instructions and messages via telephone or video calls.	33.3	66.7	-	-

As shown in Table 1, all lecturers both 'strongly agree' and 'agree' to the importance of all language skills of English for their students (Statement 1). So all the lecturers perceive the need for English language skills in speaking such as making presentations and discussing in meetings, in writing like writing letters, messages/emails, and reports, in reading such as reading instructions, messages, manuals, and guidelines, and in listening like listening to instructions, and messages via telephone, or video calls.

Table 2. English Lecturers' Beliefs On PBL

No	Statements	Responses (percentage)			
		SA	A	D	SD
1.	Project-based learning (PBL) method can be applied in ESP class	77.8	22.2	-	-
2.	Project-based learning (PBL) method can improve students' English skills in ESP class	77.8	22.2	-	-
3.	Project-based learning (PBL) method can increase student	66.7	33.3	-	-

	learning motivation in the ESP class	

Next, the figure of English lecturers' opinions on the method of Project-based Learning is presented in Table 2. The figure is similar to their perceptions of the importance of English skills for their students. All participants 'strongly agree' and 'agree' to the three items of their perceptions of PBL. Thus, all English lecturers believe that the PBL method can be applied in their ESP classes, that the PBL method can improve students' English skills, and that the PBL method can increase student learning motivation in the ESP class. More elaboration on the lecturers' perspectives on implementing PBL into ESP courses was done in the focus group discussion. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Lecturers' perspectives on PBL-based ESP implementation

Themes	Course description	Quotes
Ways	Selecting projects requiring English language skills	"I have to identify which content is relevant to my syllabus" (ESP lecturer for Mechanical Engineering)
		"I think making a manual for machine maintenance is the. Most relevant" (Content lecturer in Mechanical Engineering)
	- Preparing students with basic language skills	"I used presentation skills, especially in presenting a property design" (ESP lecturer for Architecture).
		"Half semester, I set for drilling the students' basic English."
Challenges	- Students' mixed English proficiency	"students from the city are ok, but those from the interior." (ESP in Civil Engineering)
	- Limited credits set for ESP courses	"After 17 years, we just have ESP in two semesters, before we had one semester only" (ESP lecturer in Mechanical Engineering)
		"the time gap between ESP 1 and ESP 2 is too far. One is in Semester One, the other is Semester Six" (ESP lecturer in Civil Engineering)

As seen in Table 3, lecturers voiced their ways of implementing PBL-based ESP in some ways. Whether their understanding is reflected in the syllabus design can be seen in the following section. Next, the lecturers' understanding of the applicability of PBL in ESP was evaluated in the syllabus drafts.

Table 4. The Importance of English Skills Toward Students' Needs

ESP Course	Course description	Course Goals: Students are expected to be able to:
English for Information and Technology (IT)	This course includes theory and practicum aspects. It focuses on drafting a website design for product	1. comprehend the theory of process 2. identify the features of language aspects of procedural texts 3. actively listen

	packaging.	to oral presentation materials 4. actively communicate with peers 5. perform oral presentation effectively
English for Architecture	English for Specific Purposes (ESP) by adopting a project-based approach that relates to techniques in Architecture Communication	1. Identify images in English 2. perform an oral presentation of design ideas in the design studio 3. create an architecture profile 4. design a poster for Master Plan and Site Plan.
English for Civil Engineering	An advanced English course requiring students to have basic English skills in the English 1 course. The course includes a project done in a group to do field work observations using the use of IT media	1. use a mobile travel application like *Traveloka* 2. analyze engineering reading material 4. analyze the quality of the building structure 5. practice their marketing skill on housing and apartment 6. collaborate to find a solution
English for Mechanical Engineering	English for machine maintenance. Students practice demonstrating measurements, calibrating measuring instruments, and producing maintenance schedules for a machine tool.	1. identify machine process 2. decide an instrument for measuring 3. conduct a calibration 4. create a schedule for machine maintenance
English for Accounting	This course focuses on using English in communication in the workplace and in completing financial report tasks.	1. comprehend reading texts about Accounting 2. make finance report 3. apply software like *MYOB, Accurate*

Table 4 indicates several aspects of the syllabus. First, from the course description, most PBL-based ESP courses incorporate the real-workplace setting into the project. For example, IT students have a project of drafting a website, Architecture has to design a poster for a Master Plan and Site Plan, Civil Engineering uses an analysis of the quality of building structure, Mechanical Engineering sets creating a schedule for machine maintenance, and Accounting students have a project the application of Accounting software, i.e., *MYOB.* Another aspect that can be grasped from the syllabus is consistency between the lecturers' responses to the language skills needed to support the students' future work: reading skills and the learning outcomes set for each course. Four courses, but English for IT state it. The latter course can be considered to have the reading skills learning outcomes even though it is not literally written by using "comprehend the theory of process" and "identify the features of language aspects of procedural texts". It is worth noting that English for IT is the only ESP course with limited elicitation of the incorporation of real-work setting in the learning goals. The other counterparts state it clearly. For example, English for Mechanical Engineering can "conduct calibration" as one of the course's learning outcomes. Another interesting point that can be grasped from the syllabus drafts is that English for Architecture and English for Mechanical Engineering are courses that implement order-thinking skills from the low to the high category. These two courses commence with "identifying"

objects towards 'designing' or 'creating" something.

DISCUSSION

In Indonesia, particularly at the vocational higher education level, the government suggested the inclusion of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in teaching-learning. English for Specific Purposes, or ESP, is one English language teaching approach adopted mostly by lecturers in Indonesia's vocational higher educational settings. ESP emphasizes the central role of learners and their needs and interests. ESP has steadily evolved into a multilayered language strategy centered mainly on the learners' profession-specific language demands (Basturkmen, 2010).

Thus, the findings of the reported research lend support to the importance of ESP in meeting students' needs. The English lecturers in the research state that their students need English language skills in 1) speaking, such as making presentations and discussing in meetings, 2) writing skills, such as writing letters, messages/emails, and reports. 3) reading skills such as reading instructions, messages, manuals, and guides. 4) listening skills such as listening instructions, messages via telephone, or video calls. They also believe that the PBL method can be applied in ESP classes, improve students' English skills, and increase student enthusiasm in ESP classes.

Therefore, this research provides support for the relevance of the PBL approach to the ESP approach proposed by Noom-ura, (2013). On the one hand, using an actual project in their field of study, PBL encourages students to grow and enhance their English language proficiency while simultaneously building personal characteristics and abilities such as self-assurance, problem-solving, decision-making, and teamwork (Beckett & Slater, 2005). On the other hand, ESP emphasizes its primary purpose: to build the student skills necessary for effective communication in occupational settings.

ESP requires a certain level of English to allow students to participate in the learning. Students' limited English is one challenge that implies a need to modify the project's design, as seen in ESP in Civil Engineering. In comparison, a project's relevant skills for civil engineering, like calculating materials for a property, can be incorporated into the course. Instead, a simpler project using a traveling app is used to meet the students' English lelThe lecturer needed to adapt the project to meet students' English proficiency and interests.

In using the PBL method, teachers/lecturers need to consider several aspects, namely the needs of students, according to the curriculum and majors of the student. Designing materials must be based on analyzing student needs so that students learn Indonesian effectively (Sari et al., 2021). In addition, it should be aligned with the curriculum, as mentioned by some lecturers in this reported research.

CONCLUSIONS

The reported research aims to investigate the perspectives of the ESP lecturers on implementing PBL in ESP courses. Perceiving the importance of English skills to the students, ESP lecturers view that students need all aspects of English language skills, highlighting that reading skills such as reading instructions, messages, manuals, and guides are relevant to all fields of study in this reported research. Lecturers also believe in the applicability of PBL in vocational education settings and its function to improve student's English skills and learning motivation. Implementing PBL into ESP is believed to benefit students' learning and call for a solid mix of learning designs. Lecturers also indicate some challenges to implementing PBL-based ESP, which needs a review of the current curriculum in the context of the reported project. Findings also show there is uniformity among the lecturers, especially when arranging the learning outcome using PBL. Hence, a recommendation for professional development for the lectures is highlighted in this reported research. As the main activity of the teaching and learning process, in the combination of PBL and ESP characteristics, the project should be made as guides for students to grasp specific terminology and expressions and future work skills that are contextually relevant to practical English language skills.

This research has some limitations. First, the syllabus draft needs further research to

examine its applicability in the classroom. Also, the research was done in several fields of study in one vocational institution. Some approaches in drafting syllabi can be varied when implemented in another field of study in different vocational higher education institutions settings.

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