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Student Perceptions of the Implementation of Project Based Learning (PjBL) in English Learning for Non-English Program Student

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Abstract

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is a learning model that emphasizes the use of projects as the central approach to teaching and learning. Although PjBL has been widely applied in language education, its effectiveness for non-English program students, who often face challenges in applying English to real-life academic and professional contexts, has not been sufficiently explored. This research is descriptive research. The instrument of this research is survey which developed by some indicators; motivation, interest, real-world, learn more lecture, very beneficial, and enjoyable. The survey distribute by using google form in collecting data. The sample of this research is economic education students of FKIP Jambi University batch 2023 who take English courses. The results of data analysis stated that students' perceptions of the implementation of project-based learning (PjBL) were very positive. These study shows that 62% of students respond strongly agree and 38% of students respond agree in conducting Project Based Learning (PjBL). Most students strongly agree that PjBL serve real-world project and it useful for their life. This aspect influence motivation, interest, and enjoyable in learning. These results conclude that Project Based Learning (PjBL) has a positive impact on the English learning process for non-English program students which providing real-life English project.

Keywords: Perceptions, PjBL, English Learning

Introduction

PJBL, or Project-Based Learning, is an educational approach gaining traction in Indonesia. It focuses on engaging students through projects that address real-world problems and challenges, encouraging them to apply their knowledge and skills. PJBL aligns with the Indonesian national curriculum, which emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. This approach helps students develop these competencies by working on practical projects. PJBL is seen as an effective way to equip students with skills needed for the modern world, including collaboration, communication, and digital literacy. These skills are crucial for Indonesia's growing economy and technological advancements. The method shifts the focus from teacher-led instruction to student-centered learning. Students take the initiative in their learning process, fostering independence and motivation. Projects often address local issues, making learning more relevant and meaningful. This helps students connect classroom learning to their communities and understand their role in society. Implementing PJBL can be challenging due to resource limitations, varying levels of teacher training, and the need for a shift in teaching and assessment methods. However, many schools and educators are actively

working to overcome these obstacles through professional development and support. PJBL in Indonesia represents a shift towards more dynamic and practical education, aiming to better prepare students for future challenges.

Students' perceptions of Project-Based Learning (PJBL) in Indonesia can vary, but several common themes emerge. Many students find PJBL more engaging than traditional teaching methods. They appreciate the hands-on, interactive nature of projects that allow them to explore topics of interest and see the real-world applications of their learning. Students often recognize the value of the skills they develop through PJBL, such as teamwork, problem-solving, and communication. These skills are seen as beneficial for future academic and career pursuits. PJBL encourages students to take more responsibility for their learning. This can be empowering for some students, as they have more control over the direction and outcome of their projects. Some students might feel overwhelmed by the open-ended nature of projects, especially if they are not used to this style of learning. They may struggle with time management, self-directed learning, and the ambiguity that can come with project work. Working in groups is a core component of PJBL, and students often value the opportunity to collaborate with their peers. However, group dynamics can also be a source of frustration if not managed well, particularly if there is an imbalance in participation or commitment among group members. Students appreciate constructive feedback during the project process, as it helps them improve their work. However, they may also feel uncertain about how their projects will be assessed, especially if they are used to more traditional forms of testing and grading. Briefly, while PJBL is generally perceived positively for its ability to make learning more relevant and enjoyable, students' experiences can vary depending on the support they receive from teachers, the nature of the projects, and their personal learning preferences.

Perception of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) refers to how individuals view and interpret this educational approach, which emphasizes learning through the completion of projects. This perception can vary depending on the experiences, roles, and beliefs of the stakeholders involved, including students, teachers, parents, and administrators. Perceptions of PjBL are influenced by individual experiences and the context in which it is implemented. While many see it as a beneficial and modern approach to education, others recognize the need for careful planning and support to ensure its success. Overall, understanding perceptions of PjBL is crucial for improving its implementation and outcomes. Positive perceptions can enhance motivation, collaboration, and engagement among students, while negative perceptions may hinder participation and achievement. Therefore, educators should continuously assess and address stakeholders' views to create a supportive environment that maximizes the benefits of project-based learning.

The rapid development of educational innovation has encouraged the use of learner-centered approaches, one of which is Project-Based Learning (PjBL). This model emphasizes students' active involvement through projects that integrate knowledge and real-world experiences, fostering deeper understanding and practical competence (Thomas, 2000; Wena, 2009). However, in many higher education contexts, particularly in English learning for non-English majors such as Economic Education students, teaching practices often remain dominated by traditional, lecture-based approaches. As a result, students' engagement, motivation, and communicative competence in English tend to be limited.

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has increasingly been recognized as a powerful pedagogical approach that promotes active, meaningful, and student-centered learning. Ideally, PjBL allows learners to construct knowledge through authentic tasks, integrating theory with real-world application (Thomas, 2000; Wena, 2009). This aligns with the principles of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) curriculum in Indonesia, which emphasizes creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication as essential 21st-century skills. In the ideal condition, English learning within higher education, especially in

non-English programs, should also reflect these competencies, connecting language learning to students' disciplinary fields and real-life experiences. However, the reality in many higher education institutions reveals a substantial gap between these ideals and actual classroom practices. English courses in non-English departments, such as Economic Education, often remain dominated by lecture-based, teacher-centered methods that emphasize grammar drills, vocabulary memorization, and textbook exercises. As a result, students frequently experience English learning as abstract, monotonous, and disconnected from their academic and professional needs.

This discrepancy indicates that while the curriculum encourages contextual and experiential learning, implementation in the field has not fully aligned with its objectives. Many students struggle to see the relevance of English to their future careers in economics or entrepreneurship, leading to low motivation and engagement. Furthermore, assessments in these courses often focus on written tests rather than performance-based tasks that reflect authentic language use. In contrast, the PjBL model offers opportunities for students to engage in projects that integrate English communication with economic and entrepreneurial contexts, such as creating business proposals, presenting marketing ideas, or writing persuasive texts related to economic issues. However, despite the potential of this approach, limited empirical research has investigated how Economic Education students actually perceive the application of PjBL in English courses. Understanding these perceptions is essential to identify whether PjBL effectively addresses the motivational and contextual gaps that exist in traditional English instruction.

In the context of Economic Education, English proficiency is essential not only for academic purposes but also for professional communication, entrepreneurship, and global collaboration. Yet, students often perceive English courses as abstract and disconnected from their field of study. Project-Based Learning offers a potential solution by linking language learning with real-life applications, thereby increasing motivation, interest, and relevance (Santos et al., 2018; Rambocas & Sastry, 2017). Through contextual projects, students can develop communication skills while engaging with authentic materials related to economics and entrepreneurship.

Previous studies have demonstrated that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) can effectively enhance students' motivation, creativity, and learning satisfaction (Jalinus & Nabawi, 2017; Syahril, Nabawi & Prasetya, 2020). Furthermore, when projects are contextualized within local settings, PjBL can strengthen students' awareness of local wisdom and promote active community engagement (Syahril, Nabawi & Safitri, 2021). However, despite these recognized benefits, there remains limited research on how students in non-English programs, particularly those in Economic Education, perceive the implementation of PjBL in English courses. This gap is significant because English, as a medium of both oral and written communication, plays a crucial role in enabling students to express ideas effectively across contexts. As noted by Dini, Ramadhan., and Tressyalina (2017), writing functions as a form of indirect communication where writers and readers interact through the written text rather than face-to-face. Therefore, exploring students' perceptions of PjBL in learning English, especially in producing different types of texts such as narrative, descriptive, persuasive, and argumentative, provides valuable insight into how this learning model supports language development and meaningful learning among non-English program students.

Therefore, this study aims to describe the perceptions of Economic Education students toward the implementation of Project-Based Learning in English courses. By examining indicators such as motivation, interest, real-world, learn more lecturer, very beneficial, and enjoyable, this research seeks to reveal how far PjBL meets students' learning expectations and bridges the gap between ideal pedagogical goals and classroom realities. The findings are

expected to contribute to improving English language pedagogy in non-English programs and to support the broader agenda of learner-centered education in Indonesian higher education.

Literature Review

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is an instructional model that engages students in meaningful projects designed to solve real-world problems. According to Thomas (2000), PjBL provides opportunities for teachers to manage learning activities that center on complex tasks based on questions and problems, requiring students to design solutions, make decisions, and conduct investigations. Similarly, Wena (2009) and Jalinus & Nabawi (2017) emphasized that PjBL encourages students to work collaboratively and independently in constructing knowledge through active learning experiences.

Ramadhan et. al (2019) describe PjBL as a comprehensive instructional model adaptable to all fields of study. This adaptability makes it suitable for both science and humanities disciplines, including English language learning. Previous studies (Santos et al., 2018; Rambocas & Sastry, 2017; Jalinus & Nabawi, 2017; Syahril, Nabawi & Prasetya, 2020) have demonstrated that PjBL positively impacts several aspects of learning, such as student motivation, interest, enjoyment, and perceived relevance to real-world contexts.

Project-Based Learning generally involves three main phases: planning, creating, and processing (Mahanal, 2009).

a. Planning includes defining learning objectives, identifying real-life phenomena as problem sources, and designing collaborative project activities (Hasni et al., 2016).
b. Creating involves implementing project ideas, combining group input, and developing tangible products or artifacts for presentation (Shin, 2018).
c. Processing includes presenting project outcomes, communicating findings, and reflecting on the learning process (Krajcik, 2007).

During these phases, teachers act primarily as facilitators, guiding students' inquiries and evaluating learning outcomes authentically (Balemen & Keskin, 2018; Hasanuddin & Ramadhan, 2020). This shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning supports the development of independence and critical thinking skills.

Incorporating local wisdom within PjBL strengthens students' connection to their cultural and community heritage. Syahril, Nabawi, and Safitri (2021) highlight that educational institutions should use local values as learning topics to encourage students' interaction with their environment. When projects are rooted in local issues, traditions, or community challenges, students develop a deeper understanding of their culture while applying traditional knowledge to modern contexts. This approach fosters identity, pride, and a sense of responsibility in preserving cultural sustainability.

PjBL can be effectively integrated into language learning, especially English, through projects that involve the creation and presentation of texts. Ramadhan et al. (2020) assert that teaching materials, especially text-based materials, significantly affect learning quality. Arianto et al. (2018) identify four main text types that students should master: narrative, descriptive, persuasive, and argumentative. Each type serves a communicative purpose in fostering students' language proficiency and critical thinking.

a. Narrative texts stimulate imagination and moral reflection.
b. Descriptive texts build the ability to portray people, places, or objects vividly.
c. Persuasive texts aim to influence readers through appeals and suggestions.
d. Argumentative texts train students to construct logical reasoning and evidence-based arguments (Guci et al., 2016; Talebinezhad and Matou, 2012).

In the field of Economic Education, mastery of these text genres supports the development of entrepreneurial and communicative competencies. For instance, persuasive and descriptive texts can help students present their business ideas, while argumentative and procedural texts strengthen their ability to justify strategies and explain production processes. Thus, integrating PjBL in English courses enables students to link language use with entrepreneurial contexts, making learning more authentic, relevant, and meaningful.

Methods

This study employs a quantitative descriptive approach with a survey method. According to Ramadhan et al. (2017), descriptive research encompasses survey and fact-finding activities of various types. The main purpose of descriptive research is to describe existing phenomena objectively as they occur, often referred to as ex post facto research. In this study, there is a single research variable, namely students' perceptions of the application of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in English courses within the Economic Education program. The indicators of perception include motivation, interest, real-world, learn more lecture, very beneficial, and enjoyable. These indicators were adapted from previous studies that examined the impact of PjBL on students' engagement and learning experiences (Santos et al., 2018; Rambocas & Sastry, 2017; Jalinus & Nabawi, 2017; Syahril, Nabawi & Prasetya, 2020). Each indicator represents a distinct aspect of students' affective and cognitive responses toward PjBL. Motivation and interest reflect students' emotional drive and enthusiasm for participating in learning activities. Real-world indicates the extent to which students perceive the learning process as meaningful and applicable to real-life contexts. Learn more lecture describes students' willingness to explore, discuss, and complete project tasks collaboratively. Very beneficial measure students' understanding of the usefulness of PjBL for academic and professional development, while enjoyable reflects the pleasure and satisfaction experienced throughout the learning process. Therefore, the indicators used in this research are theoretically grounded in prior empirical studies and adjusted to the context of English language learning in higher education.

Data were collected using a closed, 4-point Likert questionnaire (SA=4, A=3, D=2, SD=1) addressing six perception indicators (motivation, interest, real-world, learn more lecture, very beneficial, enjoyable). The instrument contained 12 items (2 items per indicator), was reviewed by subject experts, and pilot-tested with 12 students. Data collection occurred on March 2024 with 82 students of the 2023 Economic Education program who had taken the English course. Questionnaires were checked for completeness. Data were entered into SPSS 26, item responses coded 1–4, reversed where necessary, and scale scores calculated as the mean across valid items. Reliability was assessed with Cronbach's alpha. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) were computed to describe student perceptions; perception levels were interpreted using the following bands: 3.50–4.00 = Very High, 2.50–3.49 = High, 1.50–2.49 = Low, 1.00–1.49 = Very Low.

Result and Discussion

This study aims to describe the perceptions of 2023 Economic Education students regarding the application of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in English courses. The findings reveal that students generally responded positively to the implementation of PjBL. Most students perceived this learning model as motivating, engaging, and beneficial for improving their understanding of English materials. They also viewed PjBL as relevant to real-world applications and helpful in developing communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. These results indicate that students appreciate learning approaches that provide opportunities for active participation, creativity, and authentic experiences in using English.

The implementation of the project-based learning (PjBL) model showed positive results. A total of 51 students (62%) rated the application of PjBL as very good, while 31 students (38%) rated it as good. The very good category indicates that students strongly agreed with statements describing PjBL as engaging, motivating, and beneficial for their learning process. In other words, most students perceived that PjBL helped them better understand course materials, increased their participation in class, and made learning English more enjoyable and relevant to real-world situations.

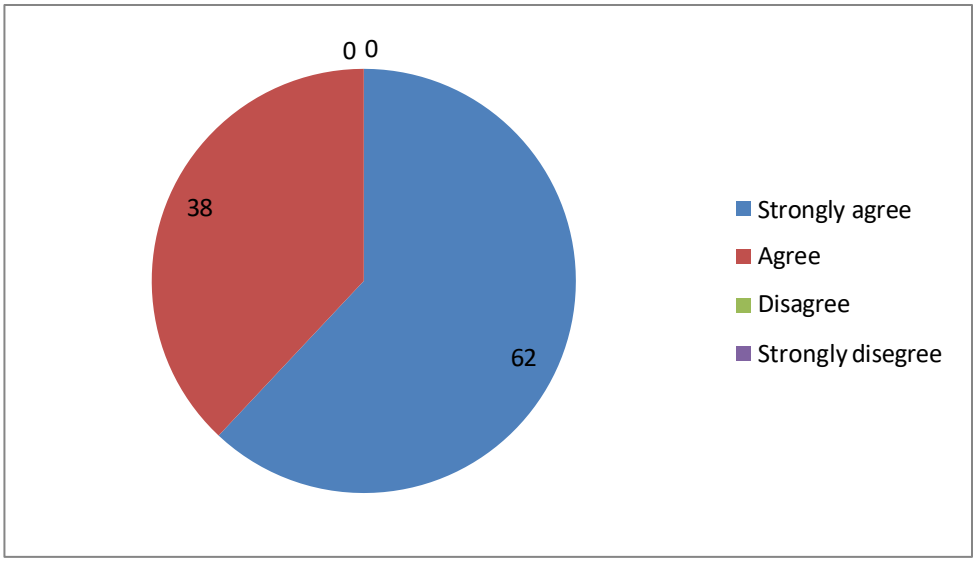


Figure 1
Tendency Distribution of Students' Perception Mean Score

From Figure 1 above, it can be seen that the average response of students' perceptions on the survey through a questionnaire on the implementation of Project Based Learning and Blended Learning approaches at the level of answers strongly agrees. Based on these calculations, it can be concluded that the perception of students of Economics Education class 2023 on the application of project-based learning models in English subjects is in the good category.

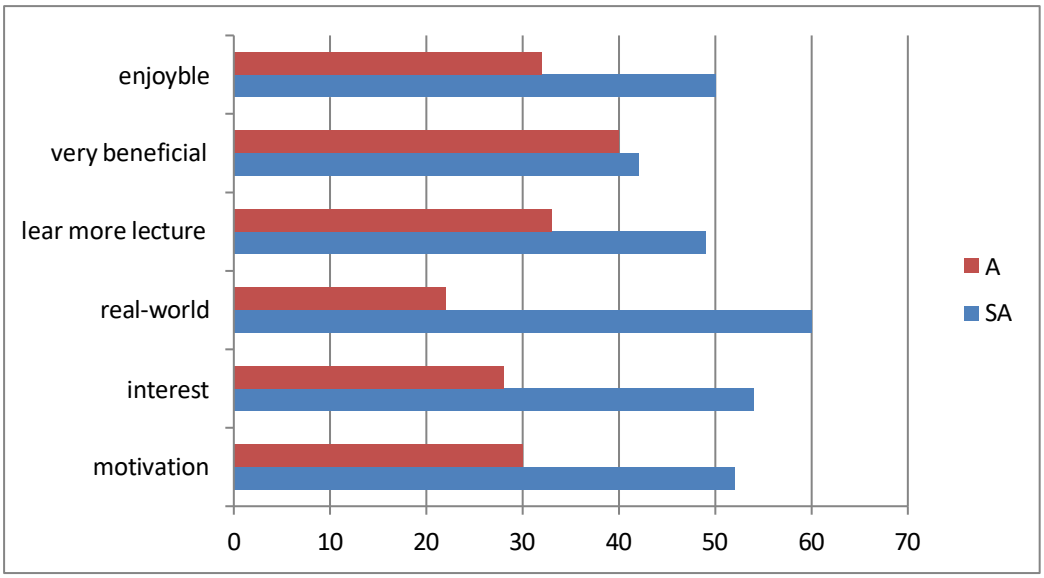


Figure 2
Diagram indicators of perception

The results indicate that respondents generally expressed a highly positive perception of the application of the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model in English courses. Across all indicators, the proportion of students who selected Strongly Agree (SA) exceeded those who chose Agree (A), suggesting a strong overall endorsement of the learning model. Based on the data presented in Figure 2, students' perceptions are dominantly positive across all indicators, demonstrating that PjBL effectively enhances both their cognitive and affective engagement in learning English. The highest level of agreement is found in the real-world relevance indicator (60 students, 73.2%), implying that learners recognize a strong connection between project activities and real-life applications. This aligns with Thomas's (2000) view that PjBL provides meaningful, problem-oriented learning experiences linked to authentic contexts. Similarly, a large number of respondents strongly agree that PjBL is motivating (52 students, 63.4%), interesting (55 students, 67.1%), and enjoyable (50 students, 61.0%), reflecting the model's capacity to sustain student enthusiasm and participation. Furthermore, 45 students (54.9%) perceive PjBL as very beneficial, while 50 students (61.0%) report that it encourages them to learn more beyond regular lectures. Overall, these findings highlight that students view PjBL as an engaging and relevant learning approach that not only promotes deeper understanding of course material but also fosters motivation, interest, and enjoyment in the learning process.

The high score on the real-world indicator suggests that students recognized the practical value of PjBL in enhancing their ability to apply English in professional and everyday situations. Likewise, the strong responses for interest and enjoyment reflect the motivational aspect of PjBL, consistent with findings by Rambocas and Sastry (2017), who noted that project-based tasks increase learner engagement and satisfaction. In contrast, indicators such as motivation, learning more from lectures, and perceived benefits, while still positive, show slightly lower but still supportive levels of agreement. Overall, the data confirm that students perceive PjBL as not only beneficial but also relevant, engaging, and enjoyable, reinforcing its effectiveness in promoting meaningful and contextualized English learning experiences.

It can be seen that most of students strongly agree (SA) with PjBL that trains them to learn English for real-world and it make them interest. Interest in learning English by using PjBL improve their motivation and it make them enjoy in learning. Lecture only give material, instructions and problems to solve by the students, so PjBL giving more learning than lecture. By involving students in projects from real life and in active inquiry, they will be fostered to learn actively, think critically, and have problem-solving skills (Uziak, 2016). Learn actively means that the students have motivation, interest and enjoy in learning. Many factors affect student participation in the learning process and two (2) most dominant factors are interest and learning motivation (Sudirman, 2022). Real-world learning from implementing PjBL create active learnning for the students which have been interested and motivated and the athmosphere of teaching leraning become enjoyable.

Conclusion

Based on the results of research and discussion, it can be concluded that students' perceptions of the application of project-based learning in English courses are included in the good category with an average score (mean). The focus of PjBL is the learning from real life learning needs to face real life situation in learning. This aspect build interest, motivaton, enjoyable, and become more beneficial learning. PjBL enables active learning for students who interseted and motivated from real-world learning. PjBL is important to do and trains the students face and solve their problems in their real life. PjBL also invite the students to colaborate with others about the project. Finally, PjBL is one of method that should be give for the students, especially university students as independent laerners.

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