

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study attempts to investigate the implementation of Project-Based Learning for Grade 2 students in Bali Kiddy Primary School. As an introduction to this study, this chapter starts by describing the background of the study, problem identification, limitations of the study, research questions, research objectives, and significance of the study.

1.1 Research Background

The majority of nations utilize English as their native, second, or foreign language. As a universal language, English is used by people all over the world to communicate. As a result, learning English is necessary for anyone who wants to communicate effectively. From elementary school to graduate school, English is one of the courses that must be taught in Indonesia. Students need to be proficient in four fundamental English skills: speaking, reading, writing, and listening.

As Indonesian has a wide variety of local languages with distinct dialects from numerous ethnic groups, the success of teaching English in Indonesia cannot be separated from the cultural backgrounds, values, and traditions of the students. Based on this circumstance, it can be claimed that Indonesian languages are challenging by nature due to the fact that the nation has used a variety of vernaculars and dialects for communication purposes. Regarding this situation, it can be challenging to teach English to young learners in Indonesia.

Since the country was declared independent, the curriculum for teaching English has undergone more than four changes (Suryanto, 2014; Majid, 2014). However, these changes have not significantly affected the students' learning outcomes (Zein, 2017; Nababan, 1991). This situation occurred as a result of the students' cultural backgrounds and the hostile linguistic environment having an impact on their language learning. Ineffective classroom interactions are also influenced by other factors relating to the performance of the teachers and class preparations.

The Merdeka Curriculum, which is currently being implemented in Indonesia, aims to provide students with a more flexible and student-centered learning experience. In this case, the curriculum focuses on the development of competencies where the students are expected to be more independent and active in their learning. The curriculum also provides more flexibility for the teachers to teach their students, and the students are allowed to learn based on their interests and abilities (Husna, 2023). This curriculum also believes that meaningful and relevant learning experiences could help the students to develop their full potential. It matches the needs of 21st-century education, where the students are expected to have 4C skills, such as communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking (Pardede, 2020). These four skills are highly considered essential for students to face the challenges in the globalization era. For that reason, the Merdeka Curriculum expects the teachers to implement innovative learning methods that could develop the students' 4C skills, especially in English classes for young learners.

To support this goal, Cator (2010), cited in Karyawati and Ashadi (2018), also agrees that teachers should offer strategies on how to prepare students' careers in the future by enhancing their critical thinking and interpersonal communication abilities. This will help students succeed in the 21st century. Therefore, teachers should integrate the 4Cs into their teaching and learning activities to assist students in gaining these abilities. Teachers also require a suitable learning model to incorporate the 4Cs into the teaching and learning of English, which is better accomplished from a young age.

In connection with this, English has become a crucial requirement in this era, also known as the 4.0 industrial revolution, in which every person in the world is connected and engaged in industrial sector competition. Since English is not the Indonesian students' first language, and will be challenging to understand, learning English in Indonesia will be more demanding. In light of this, teachers need to innovate their methods for teaching English as a foreign language to meet the needs of their students. In this case, the teachers can teach the students using various strategies that could promote students' English competencies. Project-Based learning (PjBL) is one method that can be applied to assist the teaching and learning so that the students can show improvement in their English competencies.

Studies on implementing PjBL in English classes have been widely discussed. Several studies have been carried out to investigate the effect of PjBL on the students' English skills (Aghayani & Hajmohammadi, 2019; Alotaibi, 2020; Ismuwardani et al., 2019). The studies found that PjBL significantly affected the

students' English ability. Moreover, it was found that PjBL could increase students' participation, creativity, and self-reliance.

Regarding the effectiveness of PjBL in English classes, the students need to be at the center of the learning process so that they can independently create new information concerning the difficulties in teaching English. This is related to the constructivist method, which is thought to be compatible with achieving student-centered learning. Hoover (1996) stated that constructivism consists of two key ideas. Learners firstly build new understandings on top of what they already understand. What new or modified information they will generate from the new learning experiences depends on their prior knowledge. Second, learning is not passive; it is active. In light of what they experience in the novel learning environment, students negotiate their understanding. Students' understanding may change to consider the context additional experience if what they encounter conflicts with what they already know. All during this procedure, learners are engaged. As a result, constructivism has significant educational implications.

In this case, Project-Based Learning can be defined as one of the effective teaching and learning methods if it is based on constructivist learning theory (Essien & Bekeh, 2018). The implementation of PjBL is commonly characterized by the use of projects to help students learn through doing and solving real problems. As a method, PjBL helps students achieve specific learning goals and improve important 21st-century skills like teamwork, critical thinking, and creativity (Harun, 2020). Project-based learning, which moves away from rote learning and memorization, draws on personal strengths and enables learners to explore their

interests and abilities. Through the integration of students' knowledge, attitude, and skills, project-based learning offers the chance to establish a productive and engaging classroom environment.

Project-Based Learning as a teaching method expects the students to be more independent in the learning process when this method is implemented in the classroom. The students are required to participate in the process. One of the constructivist teaching methodologies, project-based learning (PjBL), is becoming more and more popular in education and allows students to solve problems through active engagement (Frank & Barzilia, 2004; Kızıkan & Bektaş, 2017; Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2005; Doppelt & Barak, 2002)

PjBL is an effective teaching method to increase students' participation and achievement in learning English, according to numerous studies (Aghayani & Hajmohammadi, 2019; Alotaibi, 2020; Ismuwardani et al., 2019). Kimsesiz et al. (2017) also investigated the effectiveness of project-based learning while teaching young English learners EFL vocabulary. The study discovered that PjBL training had a positive impact on student motivation and gains in EFL vocabulary. The natural use of language, implications during the exercises, and conversations between the teacher and the students were all noted as rich inputs supplied by PjBL. Additionally, PjBL enhanced students' motivation and cooperation while encouraging children's active participation. According to the observational findings, children behaved more actively in PjBL classes.

Another investigation was also carried out by Essien & Bekeh (2018). The investigation showed the impact of PjBL on students' English language proficiency

and their impressions of this method. The investigation was conducted in both quantitative and qualitative ways. Positive impacts of PjBL on students' English language proficiency were found using data from the T-test and the questionnaire form. Compared to only 20% of students who performed well on the pre-test, 80% of students performed well on the post-test. The significant majority of the participants said that PjBL had enhanced their ability to think critically, independent study, personal and societal responsibility, and effective communication. The study's findings are an important reminder for ESL teachers to use project-based learning as a teaching strategy to improve students' English language proficiency. Thus, it can be stated that PjBL is defined as one teaching method that can be effectively applied in teaching young learners to improve their English ability as well as their 21st-century skills like teamwork, critical thinking, and creativity, as what has been stated by Harun (2020).

Despite the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning that has been proven by research all over the world, nowadays, the system of education in Indonesia also requires and expects the students to master not only academic subjects but also important life skills for the 21st century. These include critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity, which are often called the 4Cs (Wongdaeng and Hajihama, 2018). Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is one method that supports the development of these skills. It encourages students to be active in learning by solving real-life problems and working together on meaningful projects (Bell, 2010; Harun, 2020). Instead of only memorizing information, students learn

by doing and thinking critically, which helps them understand the material more deeply.

PjBL is also considered suitable for young learners, especially when learning English as a foreign language (Kimsesiz et al., 2017). They found that children learn best through hands-on activities and social interaction. PjBL gives them a chance to use English in real situations, which makes the learning more natural and fun. This study also found that using PjBL with young learners helped them improve their vocabulary, motivation, and classroom participation. PjBL helps students learn a language better because they use it for real purposes during the project (Apriliani & Listyani, 2021; Somani & Rizvi, 2018).

In line with this, Bali Kiddy Primary School is one example of a school that regularly uses Project-Based Learning, especially in the lower grades, for young learners. This primary school applies this method to support young learners in improving their English and developing 21st-century skills. Based on preliminary observation and school documents, PjBL is used as a method in teaching English classes to create student-centered and engaging learning experiences. For this reason, Bali Kiddy Primary School was chosen as the research setting in this study. This research focuses on how PjBL is applied in Grade 2 English classrooms and how it supports students' learning outcomes and skills.

Bali Kiddy Primary School is located at Teuku Umar Barat Street No. 235, Kerobokan, Bali. It is one of the national plus schools in Bali, which uses the Indonesian curriculum but offers education beyond the minimum requirement of the national Indonesian accreditation authorities. It is caused by the additional

subjects that the students should learn, which are called international basic subjects. The preliminary observation showed that the surrounding school's community considers that project-based learning is an effective teaching method to be applied in the teaching and learning process. As a result, the grade 2 English teachers who applied Project-Based learning in this school participated as research subjects.

In addition to the potential for PjBL to improve student learning, it is critical to investigate the problems that teachers encounter during implementation. Prior research (e.g., Cintang et al., 2018; MacMath et al., 2017) has demonstrated that, while PjBL has potential, its success is typically dependent on teachers ability to manage time, resources, student variety, and evaluation processes. Understanding these issues is critical for making practical recommendations for more effective PjBL implementation in primary school settings, particularly in Indonesia.

As Bali Kiddy Primary School has implemented Project-Based Learning as a teaching method in teaching English for their Grade 2 students, in this case are considered young learners (Bland, 2015), the researcher is highly interested and motivated to conduct research entitled "The Implementation of Project-Based Learning for Grade 2 Elementary School at Bali Kiddy Primary School". In this case, the study investigated how Project-Based Learning was applied by the teachers for young learners by identifying types of projects, the procedures of PjBL implementation, and the difficulties faced by the English teachers during the implementation of Project-Based Learning.

1.2 Problem Identification

As a result of its global significance, English has become a required subject in Indonesian primary schools. However, teaching English to Indonesia's young learners remains significant undertaking difficulty. Several previous research have found that typical educational techniques, such as a heavy emphasis on translation, grammar exercises, and teacher-centered practices, lead to low student enthusiasm and classroom engagement. Students frequently find English classes uninteresting, lack focus, and, in some cases, express resistance to learning English by labelling it as a "difficult" or "scary" subject.

From a pedagogical perspective, such issues highlight a mismatch between young learners' needs and the teaching strategies applied. The Merdeka Curriculum encourages the use of innovative student-centered learning approaches like Project-Based Learning (PjBL). Despite governmental support, the actual classroom implementation of PjBL in Indonesian elementary schools remains undocumented and unclear, particularly at the early grade levels.

Preliminary observations at Bali Kiddy Primary School highlight the opportunities and difficulties of applying PjBL in English lessons. While the school encourages active and creative learning, practical difficulties remain, such as time constraints, varying student abilities, and classroom management concerns. These difficulties highlight the gap between PjBL's theoretical expectations and the realities of classroom application.

As a result, this study addresses an important need to investigate how English teachers apply PjBL among Grade 2 students, identify the types of projects

implemented, evaluate procedural applications, and examine the difficulties faced during implementation. This study assists in filling the gap in understanding the real-world application of PjBL in early primary education in the Indonesian EFL context.

1.3 Research Limitation

The study was limited to investigating the implementation of Project-Based Learning in teaching English to young learners, in this case was the Grade 2 students, at Bali Kiddy Primary School. A variety of considerations influenced the decision to enrol in Grade 2. First, students at this level are in the early primary age (7-8 years old), when they are developing foundational skills in communication, creativity, and collaboration, all of which are essential 21st-century skills. Second, based on preliminary observations, Grade 2 teachers were already using PjBL into their English lesson, making it an appropriate and relevant framework for this study. Third, Grade 2 students are cognitively prepared for structured and semi-structured project activities, allowing us to observe the complete implementation of PjBL method. As a result, this study was specifically developed to focus on the dynamics, challenges, and classroom practices of PjBL as implemented in Grade 2.

1.4 Research Questions

Regarding what has been described in the research background, the research problem will be formulated as follows:

- 1.4.1. What types of projects are implemented by the teachers in applying Project-Based Learning to teach English to Grade 2 students at Bali Kiddy Primary School?
- 1.4.2. What procedures of Project-Based Learning are applied in teaching English during the implementation of each project?
- 1.4.3. What difficulties are faced by the teachers in teaching English using PjBL in the classroom?

1.5 Research Objectives

The purposes of the study are as follows:

- 1.5.1. To analyze the types of projects implemented by the teachers in applying Project-Based Learning to teach English to Grade 2 students at Bali Kiddy Primary School.
- 1.5.2. To describe the procedures of Project-Based Learning applied in teaching English through each project.
- 1.5.3. To describe the difficulties faced by the teachers in teaching English using PjBL in the classroom.

1.6 Research Significances

This study is expected to give significance to the following parties theoretically and practically, as follows.

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study can enrich knowledge and information for education development. Thus, it will be beneficial to enhance the theoretical foundation of English Language Teaching, especially in the implementation of Project-Based Learning that is used by English teachers in teaching English.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

Practically, these research findings are expected to be beneficial for students, teachers, and other researchers.

a) For the Students

Project-based learning is intended to successfully assist the students in the classroom during the teaching and learning process. Additionally, it is expected to foster a more positive attitude toward learning English and have an impact on how successfully they learn the language.

b) For the Teachers

This study is expected to help teachers by giving them a deeper grasp of the best and most efficient methods for carrying out the teaching and learning process when teaching English. The teachers will also benefit from this study in terms of creating lesson plans and teaching materials. As a result, teachers are able to assess students' academic progress in the classroom. Finally, the teachers will have the option of selecting a suitable strategy for the teaching-learning process.

c) For other Researchers

This study is expected to serve as a primary source for future investigations into Project-Based Learning in general and EFL teaching and learning in particular. Additionally, it is anticipated that the other researchers would construct a more thorough study by looking into additional moderators and intervening variables.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Some key terms of the current study are described in terms of conceptual and operational in the following explanations.

1.7.1 Young Learners

a) Conceptual Definition

Young Learners are typically defined as those under the age of 18 or between the ages of 5 and 12 (Ellis & Gruenbaum, 2014; Kimsesiz et al., 2017).

b) Operational Definition

In this study, young learners refer to Grade 2 students at Bali Kiddy Primary School who are between the ages of 7 to 8. This age range is in line with the general classification of young learners and correlates to the developmental time in which children begin to develop critical thinking, creativity, and language acquisition abilities. Therefore, the subjects involved in this study fall within the typical young learner category.

1.7.2 Project-Based Learning

a) Conceptual Definition

Project-based learning is a student-centered method of instruction in which students work independently, in pairs, or collaboratively as a group to complete meaningful projects over time. The term "project" refers to a group of interconnected activities that are based on problems that students have encountered, planned over a set amount of time, and produced real-world products that may take the shape of a presentation, exhibition, publication, or another format (Stoller, 2006; Thomas, 2000).

b) Operational Definition

Project-based learning is a type of group learning that the English teachers of grade 2 at Bali Kiddy used during the teaching and learning process. In the study, the assignments that students completed were on their own. The assignments were in the form of a project. The students were asked to create a miniature of the city and then present the result. Six meetings were given to finish the projects (i.e., doing preparation, designing a plan for the project, creating a schedule, conducting the project, presenting the results, assessment, and evaluation).