

# Technology Based Learning in EFL Speaking Class

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**Abstract:** The challenges of world globalization demand a great deal of effort to transform the need of education nowadays. The advanced technology and the urgency of English communication skill as part of the challenges required English teacher to provide EFL students in particular with a set of tools and teaching method which can accommodate those two priorities in the classroom. This paper shares the idea of how the implementation of project-based learning concentrating on the technology-based project as a selection of the method to enhance EFL students' oral communication skill. The result shows that not only communication skill, but PBL also improve students' creativity and collaboration skill.

**Key Words:** project based learning, ICT, EFL speaking skill

**Abstrak:** Tantangan-tantangan globalisasi dunia membutuhkan usaha yang besar untuk mengubah arah kebutuhan dunia pendidikan sekarang ini. Kemajuan teknologi dan pentingnya kemampuan untuk berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris sebagai bagian dari tantangan tersebut, mengharuskan guru bahasa Inggris untuk memberikan siswa yang belajar bahasa Inggris sebuah rangkaian alat dan metode belajar yang mampu mewartai kedua prioritas tersebut di kelas. Artikel ini membagikan ide tentang penerapan pembelajaran berbasis proyek difokuskan pada proyek berbasis teknologi sebagai satu pilihan metode untuk meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara siswa yang belajar bahasa Inggris. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa tidak hanya kemampuan berkomunikasi, PBL meningkatkan kemampuan kreativitas dan kolaborasi siswa.

**Kata kunci:** pembelajaran berbasis proyek, TIK, keterampilan berbicara EFL

## INTRODUCTION

The 21<sup>st</sup>-century advancement exposes ubiquitous connection and access to knowledge and information instantaneously powered by technology. This era of development, commonly known as "digital era", provides a prominent interaction between technology and world communication on the way people use, create, develop, and distribute knowledge as well as information in society. To be able to fully partake in this development, students as the young generation have to possess skills needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning simultaneously with the ability to use technology (Pheeraphan, 2013). Therefore, the teaching and learning process in school should make an attempt to integrate information and communication technology (ICT) and the 21<sup>st</sup>-century competencies to maximize the preparation for long-life success for students (Ghavifekr & Rosdy, 2015).

Transporting ICT as well as promoting 21<sup>st</sup>-century competencies into today's teaching and learning process in the classroom is exceedingly possible as students and teachers in this generation live everyday digitally. They are already accustomed to assessing internet, operating a smartphone or computer, and creating a multimedia presentation. This use of ICT is also proven by the escalating studies on how ICT promotes 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning and projects its successful integrations in the classroom, specifically in English teaching and learning. These studies have similar conclusions that integrating ICT in English language classroom brings advantages for teachers in producing and modifying instructional materials to be more effective, exciting and relevant to the students' needs (Drigas & Charami, 2014). The result of the studies also reported that the integration gives students the authority to organize digital resources, promotes learning autonomy, motivates and encourage students' po-

tential, develops their communication, creative thinking and collaboration, and engages positive attitudes toward learning (Gonzalez-Acevedo, 2016; O'Hara, 2011).

Eady and Lockyer (2013) state that the integration of technology will be more meaningfully employed in classroom learning if the students can convey what they have known before and what they have learned in class purposefully in different contexts. Besides, enabling students to communicate effectively through oral language is also one of today's language teaching and learning purposes. This statement is in line with what Richards and Rodgers (2001) who point out that history has disclosed new direction for methods of *language* teaching on students required skill which focuses on speaking ability as the priority of language learning. Having the students to speak allows them to comprehend and explore information, associate knowledge to their experience, and communicate their ideas (Lucanus, 2017). As a result, the deployment of any particular method in teaching and learning language has transformed from focusing solely on the word to focusing more on the students' need to be able to communicate and interact using the target language. Hence, as English is taught as one of a compulsory subject in school, being a competent speaker of English is the primary concern of teachers and students to meet the challenge of the global world.

To facilitate EFL students to be successful speakers of English in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning, English teachers have to employ useful tools and methods which combine both technology and oral communication skill in the process of language teaching and learning. Education and Culture Ministry of Indonesia (2017) offers Project Based Learning (PBL) as one learning method to help the teacher in maximizing the employment of technology and oral communication skill in the classroom. PBL also reported as a method to embrace the development of attitudes domain, knowledge domain, and skills domain that are needed to utilize the teaching and learning in the digital age concurrently with the development of its new digital information and technology.

Regarding the issues above, this article is intended to disclose on ideas on how to implement project-based learning focusing on technology (ICT) based project in English Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. This learning method helps students in enhancing their speaking achievement at the school.

### The EFL Students' Speaking Skill

The success of learning English is often measured in terms of the ability to speak the language (Richards, 2008). Moreover, since English has changed into a prime necessity to meet the requirement in the workplace for many people, the main urgency of second or foreign language students is how well they carry out English as the spoken language. In this context, speaking can be defined as the ability to convey meaning, an interactive process of producing and receiving information (Harmer, 2001). The students who perform good ability to speak English have a better chance in public relation, can actively engage in conversation, have more exposure to incredible information through published media and internet, and have more job opportunities in the future. For those reasons, teachers should give speaking skill sufficient significance as the output of English language teaching and learning process.

However, speaking still seems to be a difficult skill to foster in the EFL. The complexities of speaking may arise at the beginning or the process of the speaking performance in a classroom setting. First, most students are not confident enough to speak in English. As a consequence, it leads them to have difficulty in expressing their idea and taking part in the discussion. They also feel enough pressured to speak English that frequently corrected by the teacher (Thornbury, 2005). Consequently, they speak more using their mother tongue than using English (Ur, 2012)

Second, teachers tend to use conventional models of teaching in every learning process in the classroom where they dominate the classroom activities. They put less attention on promoting students' interaction and communication, nonetheless merely focuses on repeating and drilling grammar knowledge (Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2013). The English-speaking activities were restricted only for practicing how to pronounce words or sentences correctly, answering the teacher questions to confirm reading and listening comprehension, and presenting homework on rare occasion. It makes the students unwilling to participate actively in the lesson since there is not enough support for them to speak. Furthermore, Harmer (2001) argues the vital factors required by students in speaking are having motivation and willingness to communicate. By possessing bravery and eagerness to participate in speaking activities, students will have the chance to practice real-life speaking in classroom circumstance.

Another difficulty of a formal classroom setting in learning a foreign language is a shortage of opportunities to practice English (Thornbury, 2005). Formal language classroom has the limited time required by students to learn English where they necessarily get the most exposure of the language from this environment (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). For example, in the Indonesian context, English is taught only a few hours a week. Students gain inadequate opportunity not only to be exposed to use English in their live setting but also to native English speaker since the teacher is often the only native or proficient speaker that the students come in contact with. To deal with all the complexities, English teachers need to employ an appropriate English teaching and learning methods that establish a learning environment in which students are exposed to authentic activities and experienced real-life communication that promote the oral language.

### Implementation of PBL in Speaking Class

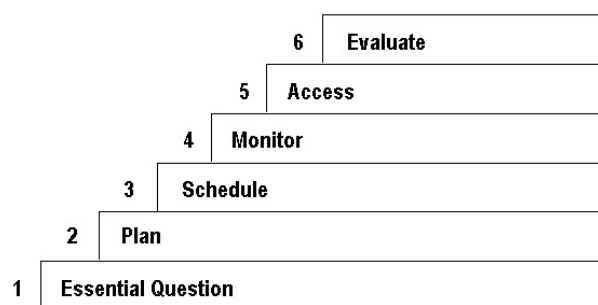
As the 21-century learning required today's learner to master not only four competencies including communication, creativity, critical thinking skill, but also skill to operate and employ technology, PBL is regarded to be a useful tool to apprehend those skills. González, Molina, and Cardona (2017) report that by facilitating students with the technology-based project as the final product of PBL increased students' accomplishment in English speaking activities. In their study, the students were assigned to produce three kinds of projects which involved technology-integrated product as their final project. The students were encouraged to construct podcast using a mini-radio program, short film containing a small audio-visual production, and digital storytelling including an images presentation to narrate a story in English as final projects. The result of the study portrayed that students had positive accomplishment in their communication skill, creativity, collaboration as well as their affective aspects.

Furthermore, the successful implementations of PBL in speaking classroom, in particular, are proven by Zare-Behtash and Sarlak (2017) and Vaca Torres and Gomez Rodríguez (2017) who assert that the implementation of PBL increased students' speaking ability in the different level of education. From the result of those previous studies, PBL can be described as an autonomous learning model, which students are the focus of instruction with real-life question and problem as the starting point to engage students' creativity

to communicate, investigate, solve, and complete group project in order to gain their personalities, knowledge, and skills.

PBL model also presents some particular characteristics that influenced the accomplishment in improving students speaking ability. Characteristics of PBL, in general, can be stated as follows: First, PBL initiates learning by doing approach where learning is most effective when students put theory into practice (Faturrohman, 2015). Second, PBL engages students in real-world learning experiences as well as to solve real-world problems. Third, as a student-centered learning approach, the role of teachers in PBL is as a guide and as a facilitator. Fourth, PBL promotes collaborative work and group works (Kokotsaki, Menzier & Wiggins, 2016). Through collaboration, students learn to exchange of many different ideas and opinions, support the establishment of common goals, and enhance peer learning as they help each other to overcome difficulties (Papanikolaou & Boubouka, 2010). The last characteristic is PBL place significant emphasis on the end-product of the project. It involves small group interactions and draws on the strength of each participant to produce a successful product in the end (Kwak & Price, 2012).

However, PBL can be performed in several steps of application in speaking class. Harun (2006) mentions that there are six steps of implementing PBL in the classroom. The learning stage of PBL adopted from Harun (2006) is illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Project-based Learning Stages (Harun, 2006)**

Start with the essential question, where learning begins with an oral question that can assign the students to do an activity. Teachers offer topics that are in line with real-world reality as well as considered to be relevant for the students and start with an in-depth investigation. Furthermore, the question given should be open-ended. It means that the question poses a problem or a situation, which opens any possible an-

swer or solution from students. In this case, the students will offer different answer orally and explain how the answer is reasonable and appropriate for the project.

**Design the project plan.** This stage involves the rules of the game for example what the final project is, how the students do the project, the criteria of the good final product, and how long the project should be carried out. It also includes the selection of activities that can support to answer the essential questions and to know the tools, materials, and resources that can be accessed to assist in project completion. In this stage, the teacher divides the students into several groups to complete the project. Teacher forms students' groups to have mixed proficiency level in one group consisting of students with good, average, and low ability in English. This group arrangement is expected to have a maximum result of collaborative group work as they can share ideas and get peer feedback from their group member.

**Arrange schedule.** This stage is a stage where teacher and students create a timeline for completing the project, make project deadline, guide students when they are off the track of the project and help the students to stay on course without setting any limitation upon the project. Students are required to be involved in planning within groups for example what projects they will have, what they have to prepare, what places are going to visit to have the data, when they start their exploration, what transportation to take, and when they start to work on the final project. The teacher can also give a set of documents to record and report the activities they have done in completing the project with their groups. The document should include the shared responsibilities on group work, the goal, the accomplishment, the steps, and their questions or problem related to the project every week. Those documents will help the students also the teacher to give feedback and check the completion of the project.

**Monitor the progress of students and the project** by facilitating students in each process. This step requires the teacher to facilitate the process and ask students to enjoy what they are doing. The teacher also put more emphasis on engaging the students on how to work collaboratively within the group and designate the flow roles for group members. The students have their responsibility and interactivity for another group role, as it needs their total involvement as a group to finish the project.

**Assess the outcome.** This stage helps the teacher measure standard achievement of the students

work. Students compose or present the product of the project. In this step, students presented the product of the project in groups. Each group finishes their task on time, and they are ready with their oral project presentation as one of the speaking-based activity. The teacher can prepare a scoring rubric for the product presentation involving speaking ability and the multimedia presentation to measure the students speaking achievement as well as the creativity in using technology.

**Evaluate the experience.** Teacher and students make a reflection on the activities and outcomes of projects that have been implemented. Students are asked to express their feelings and experiences during project completion and discussed what works well and what needs to change to make the next project better. The teacher then gives some general comment and feedback for students' project they had presented. This step finish after teacher and students concluded the lesson they had performed.

### **The Benefits and Challenges of Employing PBL**

PBL is not a new method of teaching and learning. Recently, numerous studies on PBL have been effectively performed in various backgrounds of studies with diverse purposes. Based on the results of those several studies, it is believed that the application of PBL has brought numerous beneficial and satisfactory advantages for students. PBL gives contextual and meaningful learning for students (Goldstein, 2016). Students develop their communication, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, problem solving and technology skills required for 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning (Devkota, Giri, & Bagale, 2017). PBL also enhances the students' interest, motivation, engagement, and enjoyment to be involved and take their ownership in the learning process as students are allowed to propose a project based on their interest and passion (Dole, Bloom, & Doss, 2017).

PBL also results in a positive outcome in improving students' speaking achievement in particular. By employing variety speaking activities offered in six stages of PBL, students experienced with many prospects in communicating using English. It also exposed the students in a learning setting where they can speak comfortably as most of the speaking activities required them to focus more on content than the structure. Students are also assisted with positive feedback given by the teacher and their peers during

the speaking activities (Vaca Torres & Gómez Rodríguez, 2017). In this case, the PBL aids students to minimize their fear and anxiety to express themselves in English orally since they are provided a conducive learning environment where students work in teams to produce spoken utterances within communicative purposes (Dooly & Sadler, 2016). In other words, PBL also provides real assistance for the teacher to promote students' interaction and communication in the classroom.

However, the success of the implementation of PBL learning stages in the speaking classroom also reveal some challenges needed to be highlighted by the teacher. In the beginning stage of PBL, students tend to experience difficulty in generating questions that will lead them to understand and meet the idea of the lesson material. To help them to get the overall concept of the project and avoid to let the project got off track, the teacher provides students with a driving question as learning goal which leads them to the projects yet still encourages them to explore their critical thinking to solve the question. The teacher also supports them with an inquiry step which can be followed by students in directing their inquiry to conduct data collection and construct their knowledge. The inquiry step provided by the teacher will still allow students to decide their ideas on the final arrangement product, the collection of resources, as well as the exploration on the material, and media to be put on the final project. In this case, giving an appropriate and challenging driving question and setting up the inquiry steps are part of teacher's role to facilitate the students to obtain the correct result but foster them to seek their answer and maintain their inquiry.

Another challenge arises on the stage of monitor the students and the progress of the project when they start to build their project. The teacher may have difficulties in controlling the flow of students' progress and in completing the project outside the classroom. A set of documents as PBL instruments are distributed to the students and asked them to report the shared responsibilities on group work, the goal, the accomplishment, the continued steps, and their questions or problem related to the project in a weekly basis. These instruments will help the teacher in reviewing the students' activities, the distribution of work within a group and the development of the project every week and then provide oral feedback as needed to ensure that they are in the right track to complete the project.

Also, students tend to be ineffective when working with technology. The teacher expects that all of

the students are used to work with the computer and the application to create their final product. It is still possible that some students still have difficulty in working with the computer or only a few students equip themselves with their computer and laptop. This ineffectiveness will likely affect whether they will finish the project on time or not. Therefore, it is important for the teacher to ensure that all the accommodations are fulfilled before starting the project.

## CONCLUSION

Taking points on the benefits and beyond the challenges concerning the application, it can be said the implementation of PBL focusing on technology-based project exposes the contribution of the method to the improvement of students' speaking ability. English teacher can consider PBL as one of an alternative selection in teaching speaking by applying six stages of PBL in teaching and learning process in the classroom. The integration of technology will also facilitate students in accelerating not only their speaking achievement as part of their communication skill but also their creativity and collaboration skill needed in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, to maximize the implementation of PBL in the classroom, English teachers should have adequate knowledge and understanding on the procedure of PBL, the application of PBL in class, the problem commonly occurs and the control towards the problem to make a good preparation before applying PBL. The teacher also needs to make sure that the students have the same understanding about how to apply PBL in the classroom to complete the process of PBL successfully.

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