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EXPLORING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH PROJECT-BASED LEARNING IN ONLINE ELT: CHALLENGES, STRATEGIES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

by

Farida Noor Rohmah

English Education, Universitas 'Aisyiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia

faridanoor88@unisavogya.ac.id

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Abstract:

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is recognised for fostering active learning; yet, its application in entirely online English Language Teaching (ELT) is still inadequately examined, especially from the viewpoint of educators in Indonesian higher education. This study fills the gap by analysing the experiences of four English instructors at a private university in Yogyakarta. Employing a qualitative descriptive methodology, data were gathered via semi-structured interviews and thematically analysed to investigate the obstacles, tactics, and possibilities associated with implementing PjBL in online environments. The findings underscore several impediments, including insufficient student participation, issues in tracking project advancement, and difficulties in evaluating both technical and interpersonal abilities. Educators implemented solutions such as consistent consultation-driven feedback, integration of digital tools, and modified assessment techniques to tackle these challenges. The study indicates that online PjBL can improve students' digital literacy, creativity, and soft skills; however, it acknowledges structural limitations, including unequal access to technology, which may impede its wider use. These findings offer pragmatic insights for enhancing online English Language Teaching practices and contribute to the expanding literature on the adaptation of PjBL for virtual learning settings, with implications for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking more inclusive and effective digital pedagogies.

Keywords: challenge, online, opportunity, project-based learning, strategy

Abstrak:

Pembelajaran Berbasis Proyek (PjBL) diakui karena mendorong pembelajaran aktif; namun, penerapannya dalam Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris (ELT) yang sepenuhnya online masih belum diteliti secara memadai, terutama dari sudut pandang pendidik di perguruan tinggi Indonesia. Penelitian ini mengisi kekosongan dengan menganalisis pengalaman empat instruktur bahasa Inggris di sebuah universitas swasta di Yogyakarta. Menggunakan metodologi deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan dianalisis secara tematik untuk menyelidiki hambatan, taktik, dan kemungkinan yang terkait dengan penerapan PjBL di lingkungan online. Temuan ini menggarisbawahi beberapa hambatan, termasuk partisipasi siswa yang tidak memadai, masalah dalam melacak kemajuan proyek, dan kesulitan dalam mengevaluasi kemampuan teknis dan interpersonal. Pendidik menerapkan solusi seperti umpan balik berbasis konsultasi yang konsisten, integrasi alat digital, dan teknik penilaian yang dimodifikasi untuk mengatasi tantangan ini. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa PjBL online dapat meningkatkan literasi digital, kreativitas, dan soft skill siswa, namun mengakui keterbatasan struktural, termasuk akses teknologi yang tidak merata, yang dapat menghambat penggunaannya yang lebih luas. Temuan ini menawarkan wawasan pragmatis untuk meningkatkan praktik Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris online dan berkontribusi pada perluasan literatur tentang adaptasi PjBL untuk pengaturan pembelajaran virtual, dengan implikasi bagi pendidik,

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pengembang kurikulum, dan pembuat kebijakan yang mencari pedagogi digital yang lebih inklusif dan efektif.

Kata kunci: tantangan, online, peluang, pembelajaran berbasis proyek, strategi

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift from traditional in-person instruction to online learning. Even two years after the pandemic, several institutions, especially higher education, still apply blended, hybrid, and fully online learning for several courses. According to Barbour et al. (2020), higher education institutions should not abandon remote instruction and stick solely to class activities once the pandemic threat has passed. Moreover, Singh et al. (2021) stated that higher education institutions around the world ought to explore various teaching strategies, such as online, hybrid, and blended learning techniques. Among these strategies, project-based learning (PjBL) has gained popularity due to its ability to increase student engagement, cooperation, and digital skills in online contexts. In response, a private institution in Yogyakarta incorporated PjBL into its online English classes. However, this shift has presented various issues for teachers, requiring them to adapt methods for maintaining student interest, monitoring progress, and conducting evaluations in virtual learning environments.

PjBL is an effective educational method in typical classroom settings, where it increases student-centered learning, academic achievement, motivation, and self-efficacy (Grant, 2011; Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2006). Yuliani & Lengkanawati (2017) found that PjBL promotes learner autonomy through self-instruction and personalised learning experiences. Bell (2010), Filippatou & Kaldi (2010), and Kokotsaki et al. (2016) have all found that PjBL improves critical thinking, engagement, and deeper subject understanding. However, this research primarily focuses on PjBL in conventional face-to-face settings. As Kuntarto (2017) points out, online learning environments present fundamentally different conditions, with cooperation occurring without direct teacher presence and relying significantly on digital communication. Despite this trend, there has been little research into how PjBL works in fully online English Language Teaching (ELT) environments. This gap highlights the need for additional research into the implementation and modification of PjBL concepts in online platforms.

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Although the use of PjBL in conventional face-to-face classrooms has been thoroughly studied, there is an increasing need to investigate the perspectives of teachers who use PjBL in the context of online English classes, as this combination of two strategies is quite new in ELT. Switching to online learning environments presents unique difficulties and opportunities that merit further investigation. Recent research, such as that conducted by Doghonadze et al. (2020), has highlighted the challenges of maintaining student enthusiasm and engagement in online contexts, which are critical components of effective PjBL. Furthermore, Mishra et al. (2020) discovered that monitoring and measuring student progress in online learning is challenging due to the lack of direct engagement and the need for novel assessment methodologies. Despite these obstacles, Saavedra & Opfer (2012) remark that online learning can provide significant benefits, such as learning flexibility and the opportunity for students to build digital literacy skills.

Nevertheless, limited research has investigated how teachers modify PjBL strategies specifically for online ELT environments. This study empirically contributes by documenting teachers' actual experiences and addressing the research gap in online PjBL techniques. It provides insights into ways for maintaining student interest, delivering appropriate feedback, and creating assessments tailored to virtual environments, assisting educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers in enhancing online English instruction through PjBL.

Multiple studies have investigated PjBL in traditional classroom settings. However, the majority have focused on outcomes such as student involvement, motivation, or topic mastery as the primary variables (e.g., Bell, 2010; Kokotsaki et al., 2016). These studies used primarily quantitative or mixed-methods methodologies, frequently involving large groups of students in face-to-face settings. Surveys and standardized exams were frequent data-gathering tools, with an emphasis on monitoring academic outcomes rather than teacher experiences. Furthermore, many of these studies focused on statistical findings rather than rich, narrative insights. As a result, few studies have documented in-depth teacher perspectives using qualitative approaches such as interviews, particularly on their strategies and obstacles in online environments. Most findings have focused on the success of PjBL in physical classrooms, with little emphasis paid to the challenges teachers experience while implementing PjBL in online ELT contexts. It emphasizes the need for research, such as the

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current study, that focuses on teachers' lived experiences, employs qualitative design, incorporates online learning contexts, and investigates broader dimensions beyond just learning outcomes, such as the practical adaptations and innovations teachers must implement.

This study is grounded on the theoretical framework of PjBL, a student-centered instructional model that promotes active inquiry, collaboration, and real-world relevance (Grant, 2011; Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2006). In the context of English language education, PjBL encourages students to develop their language skills through relevant, project-based tasks that replicate authentic communication. However, online learning settings provide extra levels of complexity, notably in terms of student autonomy, technological fluency, and reduced teacher presence (Kuntarto, 2017). This study was undertaken at a private institution in Yogyakarta, where English lecturers used PjBL in totally online classes. The thinking framework guiding this study conceptualizes teachers' experiences as a process, starting with the identification of challenges encountered during online PjBL implementation, followed by an examination of strategies used to address these challenges, and finally an exploration of opportunities that emerged from navigating the online environment. This paradigm provides a comprehensive understanding of PjBL's implementation in online ELT environments.

This study addresses these deficiencies by examining the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) by English lecturers at a private institution in Yogyakarta within completely online English Language Teaching (ELT) sessions. Utilising a constructivist and process-oriented perspective, the study investigates teachers' lived experiences with online Project-based Learning (PjBL), concentrating on: (1) the challenges they encountered, (2) the strategies implemented, and (3) the opportunities recognised in adapting PjBL to virtual education. This study contextualises the exploration within the framework of Indonesian higher education, providing substantive insights into the enhancement of PjBL for digital settings, thereby informing teacher training, curriculum design, and policy formulation. To guide this investigation, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What challenges do Indonesian tertiary-level English teachers face in implementing project-based learning in online environments?
2. What strategies do these teachers employ to address those challenges?

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3. What opportunities emerge from integrating project-based learning into online English Language Teaching?

METHOD

Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach to investigate the challenges, strategies, and potential outcomes that teachers encountered when implementing PjBL in English online classes. This approach seeks to comprehend the subjective realm of human experience (Stickler & Hampel, 2015) and see actual circumstances as they are (Fraenkel et al., 2012), with the hope that it will aid in researchers' understanding of social phenomena as experienced by study participants who were actual people (Ary et al., 2010). Additionally, a qualitative study tries to capture a specific experience, which can lead to a richer description and a deeper comprehension of the experience (Stickler & Hampel, 2015).

Participant

This study was conducted within the context of online English classes in one of the private universities in Yogyakarta. Those online classes implemented PjBL in an entirely online 14-meeting class, where students were asked to complete a project in groups. Four English teachers with prior exposure to online PjBL were chosen using a purposive sampling technique (Creswell & Guetterman, 2020). The selection criteria included at least three years of experience teaching English, prior experience applying PjBL in an online setting, and using online educational technologies. The four teachers, one male and three female, had five to twelve years of teaching experience. This sample, although small, was deemed suitable for obtaining thorough qualitative insights into the implementation of PjBL in online ELT. Table 1 provides a summary of the participants:

Table 1. Summary of Participants

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Name of participants (pseudonyms)</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Years of teaching</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>TJM</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>DM</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>SR</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>4</i>	<i>DI</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>12</i>

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Instrument

This research employed semi-structured interviews to gather qualitative data. The interview guide, structured around four overarching themes—background, difficulties, strategies, and opportunities—facilitated participants in articulating their experiences, perceptions, and reflections with flexibility. Open-ended questions directed the discussions, but the interviewer kept attentive to participants' narratives, perhaps posing follow-up or probing inquiries to investigate emergent themes. This method facilitated profound, genuine discourse while guaranteeing the inclusion of essential aspects pertinent to the study questions. The interviews encouraged participants to elaborate on their unique approaches and perspectives regarding online PjBL within their specific teaching environments, rather than strictly following a script. Participants were inquired about their instructional backgrounds, particular obstacles faced in online PjBL, strategies employed to address those challenges, and the perceived advantages for both educators and learners. This balance between structure and openness enabled the generation of comprehensive, nuanced data that mirrored participants' lived experiences. We sought comprehensive responses to our semi-structured interview questions and the opportunity to formulate more inquiries based on the interviewees' responses and their openness to share their perspectives (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Data collection technique

To discover about the participants' experiences with online PjBL, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The interview methodology was conducted after a thorough analysis of the body of research on online PjBL, and it covered important topics of obstacles, strategies, and potential. Using video conferencing systems, the interviews were performed remotely, providing flexibility and convenience while ensuring a one-on-one, engaged dialogue with each participant. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, giving participants plenty of time to express their opinions and go into detail about their experiences. The interviews were conducted in English or Bahasa Indonesia, depending on participants' preferences, to enable them to articulate their beliefs comfortably and genuinely. Since some participants showed greater proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia, providing this choice mitigated language obstacles and facilitated more comprehensive, precise responses. The need for English may have constrained participants' capacity to thoroughly express their experiences,

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thereby impacting the depth and validity of the findings. This adaptable methodology enhanced the validity and inclusivity of the data collection process, more effectively capturing participants' opinions.

Data analysis technique

The researchers downloaded and analyzed the interview recording from the Zoom repository. The interview video generated a large amount of data in the form of text. Data analysis was conducted using the six stages of thematic analysis as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006). Initially, the researchers acquainted themselves with the data by reading and re-reading the transcriptions to comprehend the content. Secondly, the initial codes were generated manually by labelling key segments of text that captured recurring concepts, such as "students' engagement" and "assessment." Third, the codes were organised into more general themes, such as "student engagement," which encompassed related concepts like motivation and participation. Fourth, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure that they accurately represented the data, with a focus on coherence. Fifth, the themes were clearly defined, with each theme being labelled and described. For instance, "students' engagement" was defined as the challenges teachers encounter in sustaining motivation in online PjBL settings. Sixth, a report was produced to support the findings with direct quotations from participants and to illustrate them.

In doing so, the researchers guaranteed a consistent analysis in the identification of crucial themes. Figure 1 illustrates the coding scheme. This diagram illustrates the coding scheme of interview results, representing how teachers apply strategies to address the obstacles faced in implementing project-based learning in online English classes, leading to various opportunities for enhanced learning experiences.

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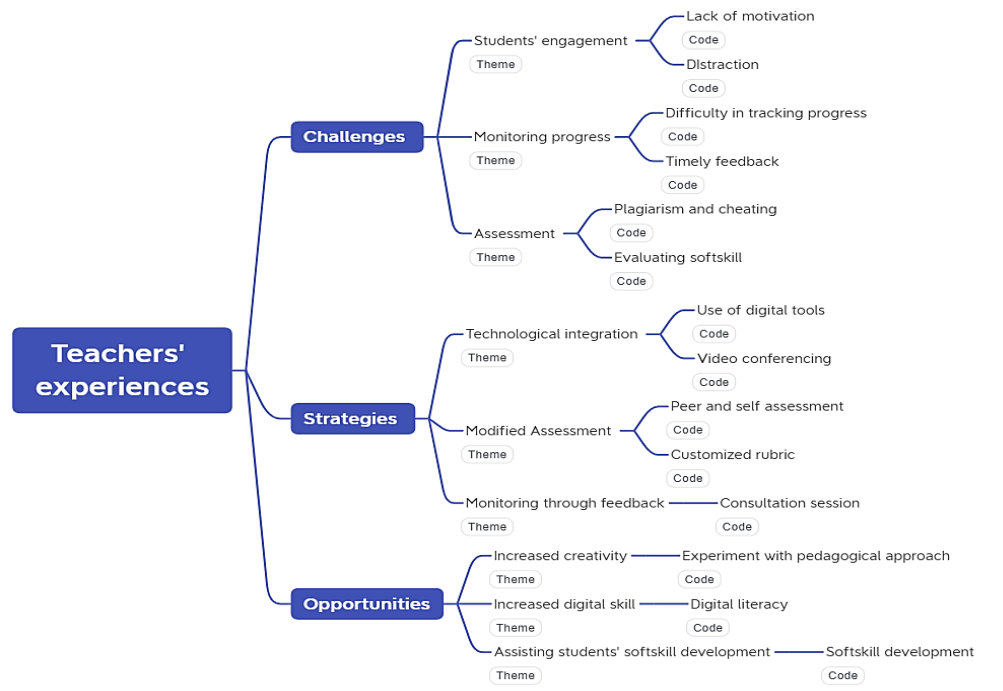


Figure 1. Coding scheme for thematic analysis

The researchers utilized member checking to establish credibility and ensure the reliability and accuracy of the results drawn from the data collection. According to Creswell & Guetterman (2020), validating findings includes the researcher determining the reliability or accuracy of the findings, utilizing procedures such as member verification. Member checking was employed, allowing participants to examine the findings to confirm the precision of the interpretations and ensure the analysis appropriately represented their experiences. Member checks are critical because "the level of trust one has in the person telling the tale has much to do with the degree of trust attributed to the telling." (Stahl & King, 2020). In other words, it provides a decent way for others to confirm and assess the storyteller's reliability.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The data provided in this section is based on interviews conducted with four participants, as described in the procedure section. The results are categorized based on the research questions presented in this study.

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RQ 1. What challenges do Indonesian tertiary-level English teachers face in implementing project-based learning in online environments?

The predominant challenge, cited by all participants (100%), was sustaining student engagement. Teachers encountered challenges in maintaining constant student engagement and motivation. Seventy-five percent of the teachers highlighted two additional significant challenges: overseeing students' project advancement and evaluation. Teachers indicated that the virtual environment constrained their capacity to monitor students' continuous progress and deliver prompt formative comments, while also complicating the creation of equitable and thorough assessments for collaborative assignments.

Table 2. Challenges (n=4)

<i>Types of challenges</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Students' Engagement</i>	4	100%
<i>Monitoring Project Progress</i>	3	75%
<i>Assessment</i>	3	75%

RQ 2. What strategies do these teachers employ to address those challenges?

Teachers implemented various techniques to tackle the recognized issues. All participants (100%) reported that the most common strategy was maximizing technological integration. Then, seventy-five percent of participants reported providing feedback during consultation sessions and utilizing modified evaluation methodologies. Individual or small group consultations provided tailored direction. At the same time, assessment procedures were modified to accommodate the online and collaborative aspects of the projects.

Table 3. Strategies (n=4)

<i>Types of strategies</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Maximizing technology integration</i>	4	100%
<i>Feedback in the consultation session</i>	3	75%
<i>Using a modified evaluation technique</i>	3	75%

RQ 3. What opportunities does project-based learning present for the practice of online ELT?

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Notwithstanding the obstacles, participants saw significant opportunities presented by the implementation of PjBL online. The predominant advantage cited was the enhancement of students' soft skills, as expressed by 75% of respondents. Teachers noted enhancements in students' teamwork, communication, and time management skills. Fifty percent of participants reported improved digital abilities and heightened creativity, underscoring PjBL's capacity to foster technology proficiency and stimulate inventive thought in project endeavours.

Table 4. Opportunities (n=4)

Types of opportunities	Frequency	Percentage
Assisting students' soft skill development	4	100%
Development of practical digital competence	3	75%
Teachers' creativity in pedagogical design	3	75%

Discussion

This study attempts to answer three research questions related to teachers' experience in implementing PjBL in online English language teaching. Using a qualitative descriptive lens, the researcher constructs this inquiry by capturing the real-world experiences of the study participants. Thus, difficulties faced by teachers are examined, solutions to these difficulties are offered, and ultimately, the advantages of online project-based learning are discussed as well.

RQ 1: What challenges do Indonesian tertiary-level English teachers face in implementing project-based learning in online environments?

1. Students' engagement

The initial question focuses on teachers' challenges when conducting their online English classes using PjBL. The first challenge identified is related to students' engagement and motivation. In online PjBL, it can be more challenging to keep students engaged and motivated. As a participant revealed:

"It can be difficult since I have to maintain the students' interest during a discussion when I cannot see them directly because they frequently close their webcams" (P1).

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In addition, they reported that they were unable to determine whether the students were still engaged during the classes, particularly in subjects that required more practice, such as the speaking class.

"It is challenging to get them involved and active in a discussion. In my speaking class, where I often asked students to practice speaking, and in my writing class, where I encouraged them to consult on their work, I found it essential to observe their gestures to gauge their interest. (P3)

"When I asked a student to answer a question or take part in a discussion, some of them chose to ignore me. (P4)

"Since some students needed to carry out other tasks, including household chores, they were not attentive during discussions. I had trouble capturing their attention because some of them seemed to be there merely to register their attendance. Everyone acted deaf and did not listen when you shared a PowerPoint presentation, followed by a little pause to ask a few questions. There were numerous justifications for their behavior, particularly when they arrived late or were absent." (P2).

Technical difficulties, limited in-person engagement, and home distractions can all have a detrimental effect on students' participation in and dedication to the project. It aligns with Meşe et al. (2021), who found that students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is lower in online learning compared to face-to-face learning, primarily due to a lack of connection with peers and teachers. Farooq et al. (2020) also report that, as the mode of delivery is entirely online, observing and maintaining students' engagement in both asynchronous and synchronous settings may also be difficult for lecturers. Furthermore, Janah & Cahyono (2022) state that the online mode class can maintain students' motivation in learning English as long as the environment, teachers, friends, parents, and students themselves contribute good support to the students to attain good English proficiency. The participants in this study indicate that students often lack motivation and engagement due to insufficient support from their environment, which hinders their ability to participate effectively in online PjBL. Therefore, the biggest challenge the teachers faced was managing students' motivation to engage in class activities.

2. Monitoring project progress

The next difficulty deals with monitoring project progress. The teachers struggle more in the subjects they are teaching when the sessions are delivered online, as they are unable to correct evaluations and provide timely feedback. The teachers find it challenging to monitor

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the students' progress on their assignments effectively, as they do not have direct discussions with them. The excerpt showed that:

"That was the biggest problem when PjBL classes were conducted online. I found it difficult to ensure that students did what they were supposed to do. Even though a clear description of the exercise, project, and timeline was given at the meeting. Students were often doing exercises and quizzes in e-learning, limited to knowledge building. Some even just cheated on a friend's work." (P1).

"Monitoring each student's input to a group effort presents another issue. It is easier for me to see how students are contributing and working together in a physical classroom. However, it is more difficult to assess each student's effort and involvement in an online environment." (P3).

"One of the biggest challenges is that I cannot physically interact with the students as I would in a regular classroom situation because there is no real-time observation going on. Thus, sometimes it is difficult to make sure their progress on the project they were working on." (P4).

The situation worsens because it is project-based, requiring a process that encompasses not only the product. Similarly, Motogna et al. (2022) claim that coordinating schedules and ensuring everyone cooperates productively while students work on a project remotely can be difficult. The teachers are unable even to supervise their students as they work. In order to evaluate the student, the teacher will have to rely on the group reports and the students' assessments, which are occasionally inaccurate (Alves et al., 2016).

3. Assessment

The final challenge pertains to assessment, which remains interconnected with the preceding issue. Assessment is a crucial tool to determine how teaching and learning have taken place. However, evaluation of student achievement in an online PjBL is frequently difficult. Participants mentioned this:

"I had difficulties with my topic because it focused more on gaining skills. (P2).

Additionally, the participants mentioned:

"Because it is online, it is a bit difficult to assess the progress of each student, for example, in the speaking class, it is rather difficult to assess speaking ability if we did not meet face-to-face." (P1).

The other participant stated:

"...because I was used to activities that were effective in face-to-face teaching, it was quite difficult for me to come up with activities and assessments." (P3).

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The complete spectrum of skills acquired through PjBL, including teamwork, communication, and creativity, may not be adequately assessed by conventional approaches. The problem still lies in creating valid and fair assessment strategies that assess both complex skills and soft skills, especially in project-based learning. The results obtained by Apriyani et al. (2022) are not far from this, as they report that learning in-person allows for soft skills assessment to be conducted alongside other resources. However, with the existing online learning approach, teachers find it challenging to evaluate students' soft skills. Besides, the issue of plagiarism is raised by the participants. All of the teachers concurred that it can be challenging to deal with plagiarism, exam cheating, or quiz cheating. As Nordin et al. (2022) argue, students are more likely to copy and cheat when working on online assignments and to use notes during oral presentations for speaking evaluations. Furthermore, according to Šprajc et al. (2017), the students' motivation to cheat in online learning is mainly driven by the ease with which they can discover content to duplicate and the pressure to finish on time. While tackling these obstacles necessitates novel techniques, teachers have devised effective strategies for mitigating these issues and promoting integrity and learning efficacy in online project-based learning contexts.

RQ 2: What strategies do teachers employ to overcome these challenges?

1. Maximizing technology integration

The second question seeks to elicit teachers' strategies to address the barriers they faced during online PjBL implementation.

"I always used Zoom to convey material and consult project progress and assignments synchronously. Then there was a e-learning platform provided by the university that lecturers and students could use, where all the material resided, where students might review it independently, where it was systematically available, and where there were exercises and quizzes to help assess knowledge of the material." (P1).

"I used Google Docs in the writing class to make it easier to check student writing and save their archives or portfolios, and Google spreadsheets in every project in all classes to have a written record of their progress, consultation, feedback, and so on." (P2).

"To encourage active student participation and collaboration, I incorporated several interactive digital tools, including virtual whiteboards, polling platforms, and discussion forums. These resources gave students the chance to communicate with one another and with the course material. It also aided in grabbing students' interest." (P4).

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"I included online synchronous speaking sessions, which students would participate in to have conversations and have discussions about their work, in addition to recorded presentations. I saw them talk live and assessed their speaking abilities using video conferencing tools. (P3)

Regarding challenges in students' engagement, the teachers maximize the integration of technology. The goals and specifications of online PjBL must be carefully considered when choosing digital tools for teachers. They investigate and assess a range of tools, including learning management systems, mobile apps, video conferencing platforms, collaboration software, multimedia creation software, and online communication tools. Teachers can enhance student engagement, streamline project management, and create more realistic learning experiences by selecting tools that provide capabilities such as real-time collaboration, multimedia integration, and seamless communication. Zen et al. (2022) report the same conclusions that the PjBL in online mode improved students' engagement using digital technology such as Microsoft Teams, Facebook, YouTube, and even WhatsApp. Teachers in this study also report employing several mobile apps, such as Quiziz, Kahoot, and Padlet, to engage students since they can participate in the interactive games the apps provide. The result is consistent with the ideas stated by Rohmah & Aditya (2020) regarding the use of mobile apps to provide students with additional exercise in more motivating ways. Moreover, according to Pereira et al. (2022), the utilization of video conferencing in the classroom provides students with more flexibility, which facilitates easy interaction, improved textual communication, and efficient multimedia use.

2. Using modified evaluation techniques

In issues related to students' assessment, the teachers utilize modified evaluation techniques to measure student success in online PjBL. They create evaluation criteria that align with project objectives and assess both subject-matter expertise and the soft skills acquired through PjBL, including collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. They incorporate several key soft skills into the project assessment rubric.

"I also changed my assessment strategies to incorporate more formative evaluations. I implemented self-assessment tools and online quizzes to track progress and provide continual feedback rather than depending exclusively on project assessments at the end." (P1)

"I set up evaluation criteria for soft skills, including active involvement, effective communication, and critical thinking in the form of rubrics. Throughout the project, I also pushed students to consider how their soft skills were developing. They would finish

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questionnaires for their evaluation and write thoughts and reflections on their participation in group discussions." (P3)

"In addition to self-evaluation, I used peer feedback. For instance, in my writing class, students were expected to offer constructive comments to other students' group work. Students had the chance to practice offering and accepting feedback because of the diversity of viewpoints." (P4)

Additionally, students are encouraged to evaluate their work and provide feedback to their peers through peer and self-assessments. Teachers can fully grasp student achievement in online PjBL by using a variety of assessment techniques. The findings support the previous work by Vogler et al. (2018), who employed both self-reflection journals and focus group interviews to assess learners' skills. Moreover, feedback from peers can be provided online through collaborative web-based tools, such as a word processor in writing classes or Canva in reading project classes, which improves the project's quality. Our findings also align with previous research conducted by Widyastuti (2021), who observed that project-based learning and peer evaluation can help students' speaking skills. After students are encouraged to receive peer evaluations, the number of errors in the speaking components significantly decreases.

3. Feedback in consultation sessions

An important problem that comes to light when investigating the difficulties teachers encountered when implementing PjBL in the context of online ELT is the challenge of efficiently monitoring project progress. Although there have been few studies specifically focusing on online ELT and project-based learning, this research has revealed a novel tactic used by teachers: maximizing feedback in consultation sessions.

"For me, consultation meetings served as checkpoints. Students could bring their work, discuss their ideas, and receive direct feedback from me. It enabled me to assess their comprehension, address any misunderstandings, and offer suggestions for improvement." (P1).

"I noticed that organizing periodic consultation meetings with each group was quite beneficial. By doing this, I was able to provide them individualized input on how their project was doing, respond to any queries or problems they had, and make sure they were headed perfectly." (P3).

"Counseling sessions per group allowed me to identify potential issues early on and guide the group in resolving those issues. It ensured that the final project was better and consistent with learning outcomes." (P4).

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As Veluvali & Suriseti (2021) argue, for an online PJBL to be successful, feedback is another crucial component that must be addressed. This conclusion emphasizes the value of continual assistance and tailored advice in easing the difficulties of monitoring and grading student work in an online learning environment. This strategy helps teachers to track and monitor project development more subtly, enabling the early detection of any problems or misconceptions, and ensuring that the students stay on task and are in line with the project's goals. Although prior research does not explicitly address this method of maximizing feedback during consultation sessions, it is consistent with larger pedagogical approaches that emphasize the value of customized support and formative assessment. Although it may be difficult to mimic face-to-face supervision in an online environment, it is possible to overcome this limitation by using consultation sessions.

RQ 3: What opportunities does project-based learning present for the practice of online ELT?

1. Development of practical digital competence

The final research question deals with the opportunities that can be gained through PjBL implementation. First, both teachers and students who participate in online PjBL must acquire and hone their technological and digital literacy abilities. Teachers help students learn how to use digital tools for project development and presentation, do research, critically evaluate online sources, and navigate online platforms. Furthermore, teachers improve students' digital literacy by incorporating technology into the learning process, preparing them for the needs of 21st-century jobs. The teachers' abilities are enhanced, alongside the students' digital literacy. These examples indicate that teachers' digital literacy enhances in parallel with that of students, particularly when employing digital technologies for collaborative and project-oriented tasks. This development is apparent in the participants' reflections; however, further research is needed to investigate how these digital abilities progress through specific, quantifiable measurements (e.g., pre/post-test comparisons).

For one project, my students had to create an infographic to demonstrate their understanding of a journal article. I had to become familiar with presentation applications like Canva and learn how to utilize its features to teach and help them successfully. I received practical experience through this assignment." (P1).

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"Students usually work together on projects in our online PjBL exercises using digital platforms and resources. I had to become familiar with various online collaboration technologies, such as shared documents, virtual whiteboards, and video conferencing platforms, to enable effective teamwork. I was able to use these tools more effectively as a result, which helped my teaching and also allowed me to direct and assist students in their group projects." (P4).

Teachers must update their proficiency in digital literacy and skills to provide better resources for students, particularly when employing project-based learning online. As a result, teachers' digital skills are developing. The present study's findings support the study by Palacios Hidalgo et al. (2020), which suggests that students will not fully benefit from technology unless teachers integrate it effectively.

2. Assisting students' soft skill development

Second, echoing the results of the previous research, our study reveals that by applying online project-based learning, teachers can aid students in developing crucial soft skills.

"There were other qualities like cooperation and how they handle their problems in the group that were important in PjBL, because those were the things students would need later when they graduate and go to work. It is not only about providing students with the material and helping them achieve high grades. By teaching soft skills that were applicable outside of the classroom, we were indirectly teaching more than just English-related material." (P3).

Apart from learning languages, students developed soft skills like time management, teamwork, collaboration, and problem-solving. In particular, the PjBL in online mode posed a greater challenge for them to collaborate. However, eventually they had to solve those problems" (P4).

"A group in my reading class once had a disagreement among themselves about the design of their infographic assignment when we had a group consultation via Zoom. The students attentively listened to one another's viewpoints and had a courteous discussion instead of becoming frustrated. They finally came to an agreement that everyone could live with. Seeing how their communication and negotiation abilities have improved has been rewarding. (P2).

PjBL can aid in incorporating the four 4Cs skills into learning: communication, collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, and creativity and innovation. Through inquiry-based learning, PjBL allows teachers to assist students in developing these skills (Asman et al., 2022). PjBL naturally encourages cooperation and teamwork, and the online setting presents special chances for students to collaborate on projects. Teachers can assist students in forming virtual teams, delineating roles and duties, and encouraging productive cooperation and collaboration. Students can interact, share materials, and collaborate on project tasks via online platforms regardless of their actual location. Students develop

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collaboration skills, learn to negotiate and resolve disagreements, and appreciate the value of diverse perspectives through collaborative project work. Lou & Kim MacGregor (2004) report that working in groups improved students' collaborative abilities during the virtual PjBL lesson. Throughout the project, students participate in group discussions. It is demonstrated by their participation in online discussions and the project presentation phase of their virtual class. They discuss how to handle the final presentation stage to earn a decent grade for their project work, and they divide the duties.

3. Teachers' creativity in pedagogical design

Lastly, online PjBL provides English teachers with an array of alternatives to develop their creativity in the classroom. Teachers can give projects that require students to produce multimedia presentations, videos, and other multimedia-based products. Teachers are challenged by these innovative projects to think creatively and come up with fresh ideas for interacting with students, incorporating multimedia, and giving tailored feedback. This study's finding supports the study by Ruiz Viruel et al. (2025) that suggests teachers who implement PjBL using AI improve the quality of their creations to provide supporting materials.

"My ability to be creative and innovative as a teacher has been affected by using online PjBL. Since I mentioned earlier, I have to deal with the issue of students' motivation and engagement, which has given me new opportunities for instructional design and challenged me to create engaging and meaningful learning experiences outside of the box." (P2)

"After several months applying online PjBL, I think I somehow improved my creativity in preparing the most interesting activity and material for my students, sometimes after discussing best practices with other teachers." (P3).

Additionally, online project-based learning gives teachers the chance to try out various pedagogical techniques and teaching methods. Teachers can experiment with new ideas because of the flexibility and adaptability of the online environment. This conclusion implies that online project-based learning holds untapped potential for fostering instructors' creativity, which calls for additional research and attention in the field of ELT. The study's findings suggest that creativity is cultivated; however, these results warrant further investigation, particularly with quantifiable metrics of creativity and invention.

Although online PjBL offers substantial advantages for educators and learners in terms of digital literacy, soft skill enhancement, and creativity, it is essential to acknowledge the

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systemic obstacles that may restrict these benefits. Specifically, inequitable access to technology constitutes a serious problem in Indonesia, where disparities in internet connectivity and digital resources can profoundly impact the educational experience. Therefore, while the study highlights the potential benefits of online PjBL, it also raises important questions about how these opportunities can be made more equitable for all students, regardless of their socio-economic background or geographic location.

All in all, the challenges faced by teachers in implementing PjBL in English online ELT include a variety of issues ranging from maintaining student engagement and motivation to effectively monitoring project progress and assessing student achievement, all of which are exacerbated by the transition to online learning environments riddled with technical glitches and distractions. Teachers have demonstrated resilience by devising tactics such as utilizing technology, altering evaluation techniques, and increasing feedback that not only address these issues but also improve learning efficacy and integrity. Furthermore, the use of online PjBL opens up opportunities for developing digital literacy skills, improving soft skills such as communication and collaboration, and encouraging innovative pedagogical approaches, indicating a transformative shift in ELT methodology that empowers teachers and enriches student learning experiences. It emphasizes the significance of adaptation, innovation, and student-centered approaches in modern ELT contexts, adding to continuing concerns about effective pedagogical techniques in online learning environments.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion

The goal of this research is to examine the difficulties, solutions, and possibilities faced by teachers while implementing online PjBL in ELT environments. The results show a variety of difficulties teachers have while putting online PjBL into practice and the strategies to overcome them. Those results are related to students' low engagement and motivation, as well as monitoring their project progress and assessment. Teachers employ various strategies to maximize the implementation of online PjBL and address these difficulties. One strategy to increase student involvement is to integrate technology as much as possible. Then, a thorough picture of student accomplishment can be obtained through the use of modified evaluation

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procedures that evaluate both hard and soft skills as well as subject-matter competence. To effectively track project progress and give students individualized guidance, teachers also make the most of feedback during consultation sessions. Numerous options exist when PjBL is used in online English language instruction. It enhances the technology and digital literacy skills of both students and teachers. PjBL also promotes. Additionally, online PjBL enables teachers to use their imagination while developing cutting-edge projects, including multimedia components, and discovering fresh instructional approaches.

Limitation

It is essential to acknowledge several limitations of this study. First, the study focused entirely on teachers' experiences implementing PjBL in online ELT, without taking into account students' viewpoints. Including student perspectives could have resulted in a more comprehensive knowledge of how online PjBL affects both teaching and learning. Second, the study relied solely on qualitative methods, such as teacher interviews; incorporating additional data collection methods, such as classroom observations or student performance analysis, could have provided a more comprehensive and triangulated view of PjBL practices. Finally, it is essential to recognise that the study's sample size, four teachers from one institution, restricts the generalisability of the results. The limited sample size was selected to facilitate a comprehensive examination of each participant's experiences; yet, it does not capture the full diversity of perspectives that might exist in Indonesian higher education or online ELT contexts more broadly. The findings should be seen as offering a localised, context-specific comprehension of the issues and strategies. Future studies would benefit from larger sample sizes from more diverse educational situations.

Implication

This study's findings offer valuable insights for English language teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers. Teachers may implement the outlined ways to enhance online Project-Based Learning practices, whilst curriculum developers can create more authentic, language-focused projects. Policymakers are urged to contemplate professional development and resource distribution to facilitate the implementation of online PjBL. It is crucial to acknowledge that these programs must include the infrastructural obstacles in developing

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countries, such as unequal access to technology and restricted internet connectivity, which may impede the efficacy of online PjBL efforts. The study enhances comprehension of adapting PjBL to online settings, establishing a foundation for future research in online ELT. Subsequent research should examine methods to mitigate these barriers to enhance access and equity in the implementation of online PjBL techniques.

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BIOPROFILE

Farida Noor Rohmah is an English lecturer at Universitas Aisyiyah Yogyakarta. She earned her Bachelor's degree in English Education from Universitas Sanata Dharma Yogyakarta and her Master's degree in Applied Linguistics from Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta. Her research focuses on Technology-Enhanced Language Learning, Educational Technology Integration, English for Specific Purposes, and material development.

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