

## Project-Based Learning for English Diploma Program Students: Implementation and Challenges in Online Learning

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### Highlights

project-based learning becomes one of the alternative methods for assisting English diploma program students in acquiring 4Cs.

**ABSTRACT:** The central goals of this study are to see the implementation of Project-Based Learning for English diploma program students, to see the students' perceptions toward the implementation of project-based learning, and to see the challenges of its implementation in online learning. The research method is a descriptive qualitative method that used Stoller and Simpson theories to analyze the implementation of Project-based Learning in online learning. The results of this study show that 77.1% of respondents are satisfied with the implementation of project-based learning. They also obtained 82.07, which means the students are able to achieve the learning outcome very well. There are some challenges in implementing project-based learning in the pandemic era. They needed autonomous learning methods, especially in mastering language skills, knowledge, and IT skills. However, to achieve learning outcomes and to solve the problems, the students independently discussed and worked together in their group to finish their project. The effect of this process, students are more independent, critical, communicative, and creative in working on the project. Based on the positive findings, project-based learning becomes one of the alternative methods for assisting English diploma program students in acquiring 4Cs.

**Keywords:** Project-based learning, English diploma program students, challenges in the pandemic era, creating real-life experiences

### Introduction

In Indonesia, the government divides higher education into two categories, academic and professional (vocational) education. Academic education means students learn technological science in an academic sense, whereas vocational or professional educations mean students learn applied skills that are useful in their workplace. Besides being called vocational or professional, it is also called a diploma program such as diploma one, two, three, and four.

English vocational students are students of English Diploma Program that are prepared to be ready at work. For diploma three program, the length of study is three years or six semesters with a minimum of 108 credits. The class activities are dominated by practical activities. Regulation from the Minister of Education and Culture states that vocational program students get at least 60 % of practical activities. It means about 65 credits must be

practical activities. Normally, lecturers and students do not have any problems implementing these activities before the covid-19 pandemic. However, during the pandemic era, lecturers and students face obstacles to have practical activities such as; those that should be done virtually, must be connected to the internet, and must be explained the instruction clearly. Many campuses should be more creative to find out the best practice activities for their students. Lecturers must design practical activities which can create real-life learning experiences. One of the creating real-life experience activities that can be done during the pandemic era is conducting project-based learning (PjBL).

Besides that, project-based learning is also one teaching method that is recommended by the education and culture minister through *Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy. MBKM or independent learning – independent campus is a new program in the Indonesian higher education system. It focuses on how to link and match the industrial needs and the outcome of the university. The students will get big opportunities for learning outside the study program and developing human capital such as; skills, competencies, and work experiences (Purwanti, 2021). Moreover, MBKM program through implementing project-based learning is also creating 4 Cs; critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. Students collaborate and communicate with each other to finish their projects well and they also sharpen their critical thinking in creativity. The reasons above are why project-based learning is one of the best methods to 4 Cs and also to create real-life work experience.

There are several studies about project-based learning. They mostly state the implementation and the advantages of project-based learning. This study discusses the implementation of project-based learning in language classes to encourage students to apply their language skills (Kornwipa Poonpon, 2017). This study explained that project-based learning can improve four English skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The second study discusses the use of project-based language learning to increase learning motivation and content relevance. Students are grouped into pairs to carry out fieldwork activities on their chosen topic and learn suitable English to describe their activities and results. They interact with content and peers through a web environment. In class, they engage in communicative assignments in jigsaw format and present their project where their peers use rubrics and online forums to provide feedback. They also participate in speech contests with peers outside their class or from other universities to expand their confidence. The findings of this study indicate that students can develop language skills and evaluation for presentation. Additionally, they show reduced communication anxiety (Farouck, 2016).

This study discusses project-based learning which is emerging as a model that meets the needs of both teachers and students in teaching and learning foreign languages effectively. Project-based learning encourages teaching and learning in Indonesia according to skills, engages students in the learning process, motivates and develops students' creativity (Pham, 2019).

However, those studies focused on the implementation of project-based learning in developing language skills. They did not mention the obstacles and challenges of applying project-based learning in their classes. Moreover, they are much more focused on academic education rather than professional (vocational) education. Based on the description, the problem can be formulated, how is the procedure for implementing (1) Project-Based Learning in English diploma Program? (2) What do students' perceptions of the implementation of Project-Based Learning in the English diploma Program? and (3) what are the challenges of Project-Based Learning implementation during the pandemic?

## Method

The subject of this research was English diploma program students at Universitas Jenderal Soedirman who practiced tour guiding in several tourist destinations in Banyumas. The total number of respondents was 39 students. This study used a purposive sampling technique because this study focused on English for tourism class which must develop a project of virtual tour guiding video.

This research method focused on several stages of research. First, a library study was used to collect theories and data to create the instruments of the research. The data was about the list of statements to measure students' perception toward the implementation of project-based learning. Second, field study used to know the process of implementing project-based learning, to analyze the students' perception of the implementation of PjBL, and to know the challenges of project-based learning.

Data was collected through the observation, survey, and interview method. Observation is used to see the project-based learning implementation procedure. The observation was carried out by lecturers starting from the first week of giving the project until the six meetings. Lecturers always monitor students' activities by filling out students' activity sheets. Observations were a method to know their performance and their participation in doing their project. The lecturer provided an assessment rubric for students' participation in the implementation of project-based learning.

The lecturers provided two rubrics which were used to assess the process and product. The first rubric was obtained from the lecturer who assessed students' work in making preparation, implementation, and report and the second rubric was obtained from assessing the product including the quality of the video image, skill competence, knowledge, and attitude. The rubrics were provided on the student assessment sheet that was used by the lecturer to compile the final grades of students in carrying out PjBL. The second data collection instrument was a survey. It was conducted to determine students' perceptions of the implementation of project-based learning. There were twenty statements from five indicators which were distributed via Google form to 39 students.

Table 1.  
*Indicators of students' Perception*

Variable	Indicator	No of item	Total item
Students' perception of the implementation of project-based learning	Student perceptions of lecturer and student interactions	1,2,3,4,5	5
	Student perceptions of student interest in learning	6,7	2
	Students' perceptions of material understanding	8,9,10,11,12	5

Project-Based Learning Student perceptions of student learning outcomes	13,14,15	3
Students' perceptions of the suitability of the Project-Based Learning model to the subject	16,17,18,19,20	5

*Table 2.*  
*List of statements to measure students' perception toward the implementation of project-based learning*

No	Statement
<b>Student perceptions of lecturer and student interactions</b>	
1	I feel more active in doing assignments with a project-based learning model
2	I dared to ask the lecturer when I had difficulty working on the task of making a tour description video
3	My lecturer gave a briefing during the task of making a tour description video
4	I consult with lecturers in completing assignments/projects
5	With the PBL model, I dare to express my opinion to my lecturers and friends in class about the material presented
<b>Student perceptions of student interest in learning</b>	
6	The application of the project-based learning model embodies my imagination as a tour guide
7	I am passionate about doing the assignment/project given
<b>Students' perceptions of material understanding</b>	
8	By applying the project-based learning model, I became aware of the tour guide's duties.
9	I feel more active in doing assignments with a project-based learning model
10	I became more aware of the tasks to be done
11	The project-based learning model made it easier for me to understand the tourist destinations
12	From applying the project-based learning model, I have come to understand the description of the tourist destinations that I am describing
<b>Student perceptions of student learning outcomes</b>	
13	The application of the project-based learning model made me understand every detail of the tourist destinations that I described
14	I am satisfied with my results Project-based learning models can improve my learning outcomes
15	I get real experience from applying the project-based learning model

<b>Students' perceptions of the suitability of the Project-Based Learning model to the subject</b>	
16	I find it easy to work on travel description videos with a project-based learning model
17	The application of a project-based learning model makes the subject of specialization in tourism more interesting
18	The travel description videos I work on make the assignment even more real
19	The project-based learning model makes the subject of specialization in tourism more useful
20	In my opinion, the project-based learning model is appropriate for the subject of specialization in tourism

The analytical method used was the descriptive analysis method which was combined with basic statistical analysis. The analysis included a description of the procedure for implementing project-based learning, a statistical report of students' perceptions, and challenges in implementing project-based learning.

The third data collection instrument was an interview. It was used to know the problems and also the challenges of the students during the implementation of project-based learning. The interview process was done when they presented the product in the virtual classroom.

## Findings and Discussion

### Implementation of Project-Based Learning

Project-Based Learning is a project assignment given by a lecturer in class, starting from observing interests, inviting students to solve problems, and making decisions on a project. This project-based learning provides an opportunity for students to study independently with a long processing time. The term project in the context of English Foreign Language (EFL) as conveyed by Fried-Booth (1986) is a task that is governed by the natural language skills of the project they are working on, including the ability to organize, collect information on reading, listening, oral and written group discussions.

Table 3.

*Criteria for implementing project-based learning from Stoller and Simpson*

<b>Stoller (2006)</b>		<b>Simpson (2011)</b>	
1	Students must be oriented on two things process and product.	1	Complex exploration
2	Students must be able to design processes and products.	2	Learning activities refer to student-centered learning.
3	Must be able to develop assignments outside the classroom	3	Questions, problems, or student interests that are the main focus of the project and learning process
4	Must be able to integrate skills.	4	Reduction in activities directed by the teacher.

5	Must be able to provide support in language development and learning content	5	Giving feedback
6	Students must be able to work in pairs or groups	6	Authentic use of resources and tools.
7	Students must be responsible and focused on learning their target language	7	Collaborative learning.
		8	Use of varied skills; language skills, technology, social, management, and others.
		9	Assessment refers to the value of the process and the results (product).

From the two experts' opinions above, it can be concluded that project-based learning criteria focus on student interest or student-centered learning, varied skills, processes, and products. Lecturers focused on PjBL activities on the criteria mentioned by Stroller and Simpson, whereby applying these criteria, they are allowed to hone critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity within a group member.

After the criteria for implementing project-based learning were decided, we explained its implementation in class. Meanwhile, the stages of implementing project-based learning refer to the project-based learning model according to George Lucas consisting of six stages.

***Start with the essential question***

This stage was an essential learning phase. We invited students to discuss topics that were in accordance with the realities of the real world/world of work. We discussed the types of tourist destinations (DTW), namely natural, artificial and mixed tourist destinations. We also discussed examples of each type of tourist destination in Indonesia and in Banyumas. Example of natural tourist destinations is Cipendok waterfall, bayan waterfall, and others. Example of artificial tourist destinations is The Village, Jenderal Soedirman museum, Saka Tunggal Mosque. Meanwhile, the example of a mixed tourism destination is Baturraden which combines the natural beauty of the mountains on the slopes of Mount Slamet, water boom, and the children's playground.

It was the stage that we start with the essential question stage. Why does this place become a tourist destination? What can we see, we do and we buy there? What is the accessibility to the place? Why was the place so crowded or quiet? Which tourist destination did you learn more about? To answer all these questions, we invited students to think highly or High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). This project was done during the COVID-19 pandemic, so teaching and learning activities were carried out online and utilized Gmeet and Whatsapp as a medium of communication. The students were very enthusiastic because, in a minute, 39 students had written a list of tourist destinations. Lecturers and students agree on the theme and discuss the steps that must be taken regarding the project design, schedule, and outcome. After they got the topic, the lecturer divided the class into four groups. The distribution of groups is based on the location of the tourist destination they choose. So, they worked together and helped each other in the process of making projects.

### ***Project design***

The next thing to do was to design the project. The activity of designing projects was carried out collaboratively by lecturers and students. The project design included:

(1) Designing learning objectives (learning outcomes)

The learning outcome is to make the students can narrate tourist destinations properly and correctly. These objectives are in accordance with the level 5 Indonesian National Framework Curriculum (KKNI) in the diploma study program. In the vocational context, the competencies required include three things; knowledge, skills, and attitude. The knowledge used is about the tourist destination. The skills used are especially speaking skills such as; Public Speaking, Narrating, and presenting. Meanwhile, attitude is an important competency to use non-verbal communication such as facial expressions, gestures, hand movements, eye contact, and others.

(2) Developing project implementation rules/guidelines

The rules were drawn up by the lecturer and distributed to students. The lecturer asked students to write down the stages of project work including preparation. At this stage, the lecturer asked students to plan activities, schedules, materials, and tools. Implementation was the stage in which the lecturer asked students to make a video with a maximum duration of 5 minutes, narrating the tourist destinations in Banyumas and packaging them into attractive promotional videos. Lecturers give two weeks for making the video.

(3) Preparing the need for language competence (language demand)

Language competence was the most important thing in the implementation of this project-based learning because they were required to use English to explain or narrate the Tourism Destination Area (DTW). The language competencies required: speaking skills, grammar focus: simple present, simple past, expression of describing things, and expression of narrating a story.

(4) Gathering information to answer essential questions.

The students can collect information from various sources such as books, articles in online media (internet), interviews with industry players, observations, and students' real experiences.

(5) Preparing software and hardware

Lecturers gave freedom to the students to choose what software and hardware to be used. This was done to see the creative side of students in making and editing videos.

### ***Create schedule***

When the project design was ready, the next step was to make a project work schedule. Project-based learning was a learning method that referred to student-centered learning, so the project schedule was different from one student to another. However, the lecturer as the learning facilitator gave a deadline for the processing from the beginning to the collection of the project. This project has implemented in two weeks.

### ***Monitor the students and the progress of the project***

During project implementation, the lecturer monitored student activities. To make it easier in the monitoring process, the lecturer made students' working sheets. It was an assessment rubric that can recap the whole activity.

### ***Assess the outcome***

Assessment is used to measure the achievement of learning outcomes. The assessments included the score of the process and product of the project. The score of the process was obtained from the lecturer who assessed students' work in making preparation, implementation, and report. The score of the process also got from students' peer assessment in a group. The product score is obtained from assessing the videos that are collected including the quality of

the video image, skill competence, knowledge, and attitude. As we can see in table 6, the final score for project-based learning is good. The average of their score is 82.07 which means they are able to reach the learning outcome.

Table 4.  
*Project assessment*

No of Students	Score of Process					Score of Product			Total Score	
	Skill of Making a Plan		Skill Of Making a Project			Product Assessment				
	Topics/Relevancy	Time Management	Tools Preparation	Skill of Using IT	Originality	Language Skill	Knowledge	Attitude		Quality
	10	10	10	10	10	15	15	10	10	100
1	10	8	8	8	10	12	9	7	7	79
2	10	8	8	8	10	12	10	7	7	80
3	10	8	8	8	10	12	10	7	7	80
4	10	9	9	9	10	13	10	8	8	86
5	10	8	8	8	10	12	10	7	7	80
6	10	8	8	8	10	12	10	7	7	80
7	10	9	9	8	10	12	10	8	7	83
8	10	9	9	9	10	13	12	8	8	88
9	10	9	9	9	10	12	10	9	7	85
10	10	9	9	9	10	12	10	8	8	85
11	10	8	8	8	10	12	10	7	7	80
12	10	9	9	9	10	12	10	8	7	84
13	10	9	9	9	10	12	10	8	7	84
14	10	9	9	9	10	12	10	7	7	83
15	10	8	9	9	10	13	12	8	8	87
16	10	8	8	9	10	12	10	7	7	81
17	10	8	8	8	10	12	10	7	7	80
18	10	8	8	8	10	12	10	7	7	80
19	10	8	8	8	10	12	10	8	7	81
20	10	9	8	8	10	12	10	8	7	82
21	10	8	8	8	10	12	10	7	7	80
22	10	8	8	8	10	11	10	7	7	79
23	10	9	9	9	10	13	11	8	8	87
24	10	9	8	8	10	12	11	8	8	84
25	10	8	8	8	10	11	10	7	7	79
26	10	8	8	8	10	12	10	7	7	80
27	10	9	9	9	10	12	12	8	8	87
28	10	8	8	8	10	11	9	7	7	78
29	10	8	8	8	10	12	10	8	7	81
30	10	9	8	8	10	12	10	8	8	83
31	10	9	9	9	10	12	10	7	7	83
32	10	9	9	9	10	13	9	8	8	85
33	10	8	8	8	10	12	10	7	7	80
34	10	8	8	8	10	12	10	7	7	80
35	10	9	8	8	10	12	10	7	7	81
36	10	9	8	8	10	12	9	7	7	80
37	10	9	8	8	10	12	10	7	7	81
38	10	9	9	8	10	12	10	7	7	82
39	10	9	9	8	10	12	11	7	7	83

### *Evaluate the experience*

The Project-Based Learning method is a refinement of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) method. Project-Based Learning is a training strategy oriented to CTL or contextual teaching and learning process. CTL is a learning concept that helps educators link the learning material with real-world situations and encourages students to use the knowledge they have that can be applied in their lives as members of society.

At the end of the learning process, lecturers and students reflect on the activities and results of the projects that have been carried out. At this stage, students tell the obstacles they



have encountered and the solutions they have. Finally, students can learn from experience and create student-centered projects. Based on the interviews between lecturers and students, it resulted that the students had difficulty concentrating to do the projects because of the many other subject assignments. Students have difficulty in gathering information and knowledge because they need to develop their prior knowledge about a tourist destination. Students also need high learning independence, especially in terms of mastery of language skills, searching for data (information and knowledge), and mastery of information and technology (IT). With this high independence, students can be more critical, communicative, and creative in working on projects.

### ***Students' Perceptions of the Implementation of Project-Based Learning***

Perception is a view of someone's assessment of something. According to Thoha (2010), if the information comes from a situation that is already known to the individual, then this information will affect how the individual perceives it. The result of procuring these perceptions can be in the form of an understanding of an object.

The writers surveyed students' perceptions of the application of Project-based Learning. The survey was shared in google form and was distributed to students in the tourism class. The survey consists of 20 questions to measure five indicators.

Table 5  
*Students' perception of project-based learning*

No	Statement	Mean
<b>Students' perception of lecturer and students' interactions</b>		<b>72.8</b>
1	I feel more active in doing assignments with a project-based learning model	71.9
2	I dared to ask the lecturer when I had difficulty working on the task of making a tour description video	68.8
3	My lecturer gave a briefing during the task of making a tour description video	75
4	I consult with lecturers in completing assignments/projects	73.3
5	With the PBL model, I dare to express my opinion to my lecturers and friends in class about the material presented	75
<b>Students' perception of student interest in learning</b>		<b>71.85</b>
6	The application of the project-based learning model embodies my imagination as a tour guide	65.6
7	I am passionate about doing the assignment/project given	78.1
<b>Students' perception of material understanding</b>		<b>71.9</b>
8	By applying the project-based learning model, I became aware of the tour guide's duties.	68.8
9	I feel more active in doing assignments with a project-based learning model	81.3
10	I became more aware of the tasks to be done	71.9
11	The project-based learning model made it easier for me to understand the tourist destinations	65.6
12	From applying the project-based learning model, I have come to understand the description of the tourist destinations that I am describing	71.9
<b>Student perceptions of student learning outcomes</b>		<b>77.1</b>

13	The application of the project-based learning model made me understand every detail of the tourist destinations that I described	68.8
14	I am satisfied with my results Project-based learning models can improve my learning outcomes	78.1
15	I get real experience from applying the project-based learning model	84.4
<b>Students' perceptions of the suitability of the Project-Based Learning model to the subject</b>		<b>74.38</b>
16	I find it easy to work on travel description videos with a project-based learning model	65.6
17	The application of a project-based learning model makes the subject of specialization in tourism more interesting	75
18	The travel description videos I work on make the assignment even more real	84.4
19	The project-based learning model makes the subject of specialization in tourism more useful	84.4
20	In my opinion, the project-based learning model is appropriate for the subject of specialization in tourism	62.5

Data about students' perceptions of the implementation of Project-Based Learning in English for tourism class in terms of aspects of lecturer and student interaction, showed that the average students, or 72.8% answered agreed. This means that students consider that the implementation of project-based learning can increase the interaction and communication between lecturers and students. The highest answer was in question number 5, which was related to the increased courage to express opinions when project-based learning is implemented.

Data about students' perceptions of the implementation of Project-Based Learning in English for tourism class in terms of student interest in learning, showed that the average students, or 71.85% answered agreed. That assumed that through the implementation of Project-based learning they can increase their interest in learning. The highest answer was in question number 7, which was related to the enthusiasm for working on the project.

Data about students' perceptions of the implementation of Project-Based Learning in English for tourism class in terms of the aspect of understanding the material, showed that on average, 71.9% of students answered agree. This means that students assume that through the implementation of project-based learning, students understanding of the material being studied will increase. The highest answer was in question no.9 at 81.3%, which was related to understanding the project that must be done.

Data about students' perceptions of the implementation of Project-Based Learning in English for tourism class in terms of student learning outcomes, showed that the average student or 77.1% answered agreed. That is, students are satisfied with the value of learning outcomes. The highest answer is in question no.15 which is 84.4%, which is related to getting real experience when they are working on a project. This is in accordance with the initial goal of implementing Project-based Learning in the vocational study program, namely increasing practice so that students are able to get real experience in the field.

Data on students' perceptions of the implementation of Project-Based Learning in English for tourism class in terms of the suitability of the Project-Based Learning model for the subject, showed that the average students, or 74.38% answered agreed. The highest answers were on statements number 18 and 19, amounting to 84.4%, that is, thanks to the tourism

descriptive video that they made more real and felt the benefits. From the five perceptions above, it can be concluded that Project-Based Learning model gives some benefits to their learning process such as it can increase interaction between lecturers and students and between students, can increase students' interest in learning English, can increase students' understanding about the materials and can reach the learning outcomes.

Moreover, in conducting the project-based learning, the students become more independent, critical, communicative, and creative in working on projects. This finding is supported by Pham' research findings that PjBL motivates and develops students' creativity (Pham, 2019) and Faraouck's research study indicate that students can develop language skills and evaluation for presentation. Additionally, they show reduced communication anxiety (Farouck, 2016).

### **Challenges of the Implementation of Project-Based Learning**

Based on the observation and interview between lecturers and students, it resulted that the students had some challenges in implementing PjBL. First, they had difficulty in concentrating to do the project because of many other assignments during the semester. Students overcome these problems by dividing the work with fellow group members and managing the timeline of work and project collection properly. As a result, they can complete many tasks and projects properly and on time.

Second, Students have difficulty in gathering information and knowledge. The implementation of PjBL online provides a big challenge for students. They are not in the same city, so they experienced difficulties in coordinating and discussing the project. However, they can overcome this by always holding a virtual group discussion through Gmeet. They do this to share information and knowledge with each other. They also search for information and knowledge through search engines. Finally, students are able to create an active academic environment by always conducting coordination in designing plans, implementation, and reporting.

Third, students need autonomous learning methods, especially in terms of mastery of language and IT skills. However, mastery of language and IT skills is not an instant process. To solve the problems, the students learn them regularly from multiple sources of knowledge such as handouts, ebooks, youtube, journals, and others. For creating a good video project, they must be mastering IT skills. They have already got this basic editing video from computer application class and they improve it with some additional editing skills from friends and the internet. Finally, the effect of this process, students are more independent, critical, communicative, and creative in working on projects.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this study showed that there are some processes to implement PjBL in online learning. PjBL must be oriented on students' interests, varied skills, processes, and products. Therefore, it is very important to know the students' perceptions of the implementation of PjBL. The data showed that 77.1% of students are satisfied with the implementation of project-based learning. They also obtained 82.07 which means that students are able to achieve the learning outcome very well. Even though, they have already achieved their learning outcome. The implementation of project-based learning in English diploma program during online learning is very challenging. They faced some challenges to implement project-based learning in the pandemic era. They needed an autonomous learning method, especially in mastering language skills, knowledge, and IT skills. However, to obtain the scores and to solve the problems, the students independently discussed and worked together to find

out the solution. Effect of this process, students are more independent, critical, communicative, and creative in working on projects. Based on the positive findings, project-based learning becomes one of the alternative methods for assisting English diploma program students in acquiring 4Cs.

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