

ENGAGING EFL STUDENTS IN EXPLORING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the kinds of authentic materials provided by teachers and analyze how these materials were used in the implementation of PjBL activities. The method used in this research is qualitative descriptive. Data was collected through classroom observation, structured interviews, and documentation. The study focused on the class X IPA, where students worked in groups to produce a flipbook project on the theme of "Sports and Health." The results of the study showed that teachers use three kinds of authentic materials songs, videos, and podcasts which are shared with different student groups. These materials were applied in the six main stages of the PjBL model: formulating essential questions, designing projects, scheduling, monitoring implementation, evaluating results, and reflecting on learning experiences. The findings indicate that the use of authentic materials can enhance students' motivation, collaboration, critical thinking, and contextual understanding of English. This study underscores the importance of teachers' role in facilitating material exploration and selecting relevant learning resources to create more meaningful, contextual, and student-centered English language learning.

Keywords: Authentic Materials, Project-Based Learning, EFL Student Engagement

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis materi otentik yang disediakan oleh guru serta menganalisis bagaimana materi tersebut digunakan dalam pelaksanaan kegiatan PjBL. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara terstruktur, dan dokumentasi. Penelitian difokuskan pada kelas X IPA, di mana siswa bekerja secara berkelompok untuk menghasilkan proyek berupa flipbook dengan tema "Sports and Health." Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru menggunakan tiga jenis materi otentik lagu, video, dan podcast yang dibagikan ke kelompok siswa yang berbeda. Materi-materi tersebut diterapkan dalam enam tahap utama model PjBL: merumuskan pertanyaan esensial, merancang proyek, menyusun jadwal, memantau pelaksanaan, mengevaluasi hasil, dan merefleksikan pengalaman belajar. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan

materi otentik mampu meningkatkan motivasi, kolaborasi, berpikir kritis, serta pemahaman kontekstual siswa terhadap bahasa Inggris. Studi ini menegaskan pentingnya peran guru dalam memfasilitasi eksplorasi materi dan memilih sumber belajar yang relevan guna menciptakan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris yang lebih bermakna, kontekstual, dan berpusat pada siswa.

Kata Kunci: Materi Otentik, Project-Based Learning, Keterlibatan Siswa EFL

A. INTRODUCTION

English language learning for EFL students is a multifaceted process influenced by a wide range of elements, including social, cultural, and educational context. With the correct technique and assistance, EFL students may gain the English language skills required to communicate effectively in an increasingly interconnected world. To improve student engagement, educators must provide an engaging and participatory learning environment. Innovative teaching methods and the use of appropriate learning tools are critical for successful learning. With the right technique, students will not only comprehend English better, but they will also be more confident in utilizing it in everyday life as well as in academic and professional settings.

However, English language learning in schools still faces several challenges. One major issue is

students' disinterest in the subject, which can be created by repetitious teaching methods and the usage of teaching materials that are irrelevant to their everyday lives. Students fail to understand real-world English situations when the materials provided are excessively rigid and theoretical, reducing the efficiency of learning. One of the most difficult aspects of teaching English is a lack of methods that are engaging and relevant to students' needs, making it difficult for them to comprehend and apply English in their daily lives. One strategy is to employ authentic resources that reflect real-world English use, such as news stories, videos, and daily conversations. Students can not only enhance their language abilities more organically, but they will also be more motivated to learn because the materials used are more relevant to their daily life.

According to Mandarsari (2023) authentic materials are viable

learning tools because of their authenticity, and they provide learners with various significant benefits, including great motivation and passion for language acquisition. The use of authentic resources in English education is crucial because it allows students to understand how English is utilized in real-world situations, not just in grammatical structures. Finding materials from everyday situations allows students to see the practical application of the language they are learning, making the learning process more relevant and engaging. This shows that including authentic materials in language learning affects not only cognition but also students' positive attitudes toward the learning process.

Based on pre-observations of students at MA Muallimin Muhammadiyah Makassar, the researcher found some significant problems in English language learning. The main problem identified was students' difficulty in understanding the English subject matter, which negatively affected their academic performance. This was caused by the lack of relevant and interesting teaching materials, as well as monotonous learning approaches,

which led to students' boredom and lack of motivation. As a result, teachers must create a pleasant learning environment in order to minimize boredom throughout the teaching and learning processes. Currently, teaching and learning activities include not only lectures, group projects, and discussions, but also the utilization of intriguing learning models. Various strategies and models have been used to support school-based learning activities, including Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), cooperative learning, blended learning, and others. PjBL is one of the most widely used learning models due to its ability to create a more contextual and relevant learning experience, so that students can see first-hand the application of English in their daily lives.

Project-based learning (PjBL) is an educational technique that involves students actively participating in real-world and individually relevant projects (Halim et al., 2023). This method enables students to apply knowledge in a more practical setting by encouraging active learning through the

completion of subject-related projects. PjBL gives pupils the opportunity to work in groups, solve problems on their own, and explore information. Students gain valuable real-world skills by working together on projects, such as listening to others' viewpoints and offering comments. As a result, PjBL not only enhances students' educational experiences but also gets them ready for challenges in the future.

Actually, there have been studies on the implementation of project-based learning (PjBL) technique in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). One of them is a study conducted by Ngadiso et al. (2021) which found that the classroom situation improved positively after the introduction of PjBL. The teaching and learning process goes smoothly and is well-managed. In addition, Wijayanti & Budi (2023) found that the stages of PjBL implemented by teachers increased students' English learning. The findings add to our understanding of the use of PjBL in EFL contexts, provide light on young learners' experiences with this method, and emphasize PjBL's potential to improve language skills

and engagement. However, limited studies have specifically explored the integration of authentic materials within PjBL models in EFL classrooms at the senior high school level.

Based on the challenges that students frequently face when learning English as a foreign language, the researcher was interested in investigating the use of authentic materials in project-based learning at MA Muallimin Muhammadiyah Makassar. This study investigated how teachers used the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) method with authentic materials when teaching English. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights into the success of the PjBL technique, as well as practical advice for teachers seeking to construct more engaging and relevant learning experiences. As a result, this study tackles the topic of "Engaging Efl Students in Exploring Authentic Materials in Project-Based Learning".

Authentic materials are resources or materials intended for natural speakers of a language rather than specifically for language learners. These resources take diverse forms, such as text, audio,

video, and photographs, and reflect language use in real-world circumstances. According to Lafta (2024) authentic materials are typically more engaging than phony ones since their primary objective is to convey a message rather than to emphasize the target language. Authentic materials fall into three categories: authentic hearing things, such as radio news, cartoons, music, etc. Authentic materials are texts, videos, audio recordings, or photographs that are intended for native speakers of the language rather than language learners (Huseynli, 2024).

In addition, Future (2024) define that authentic materials are real-world resources designed for native speakers of the target language. These materials may include academic journals, research papers, professional articles, films, podcasts, and more states. Authentic materials are useful resources that have a big impact on English language education and the learning process, because they make teachers and learners creative in understanding various topics, which reinforces reading abilities. Saleh (2022) also argue that, "authentic

material gives students a taste of 'real' language in use, and provides them with valid linguistic data for their unconscious acquisition processes to work on".

Authentic material is real material that has been collected with the goal of being utilized as teaching materials to help the learning of a relevant subject. Furthermore, using actual materials in class such as videos that provide both visual and contextual input might help encourage students. This is because it may incorporate real-life components into the student learning experience (Azis & Subki, 2023). Authentic material in the classroom is critical, as there is a significant gap between the learning material and the students' real lives. Authentic material promotes meaningful learning, proper background knowledge, and confidence and comfort in practice (Hariri et al., 2023).

Project-Based Learning is a teaching technique in which students confront real-world difficulties using an inquiry-based instructional method to complete meaningful projects, thereby engaging in knowledge production (Santos et al., 2023). Project-based learning (PjBL) allows

students to apply geometric concepts in real-world projects including garden design, architectural modeling, and geometric artwork. This technique helps students understand that geometry is more than just an abstract theory; it is also a useful tool for solving real-world problems (Ibrahim & Yew, 2023).

Project-based learning is an educational technique that engages students in complicated and meaningful projects, allowing them to examine real-world problems and find inventive solutions (Firdausih & Aslan, 2024). Project-Based Learning is a teaching approach that employs a real-world, authentic project that is based on an extremely engaging and motivating question, task, or problem to teach students academic material. Students collaborate to solve the problem by offering a method that enables them to independently pursue content knowledge and showcase their newly acquired knowledge using a range of presentation formats. The classroom atmosphere improves when teachers act as facilitators in project-based learning, guiding and supporting the learning process (Angelina et al., 2020).

According to Royani et al. (2024) project-based learning is a teaching strategy that places students in authentic situations by giving them worthwhile tasks, challenges, or projects to complete or develop. Students' active participation and deeper comprehension are emphasized as they apply their knowledge and abilities to real-world scenarios. By promoting students' exploration, investigation, and teamwork on projects, PjBL develops their critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Project-based learning is a learning style that allows students to gain understanding and skills via hands-on experience doing real-world projects.

Rahman et al. (2024) argues that project-based learning is a teaching method that enables students to acquire a variety of vital abilities, including critical, creative, communicative, and collaborative thinking, as well as the ability to solve issues autonomously. Project-based learning (PjBL) is a student-centered learning in which the teacher facilitates the students to get the learning. It starts with questions, and they inquire about the solution with their curiosity, as monitored by their

lecturer. The core element of the Pjbl is collaborative work which fosters individual learning (Pratami et al., 2024).

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed the descriptive qualitative method. Furidha (2024), stated that descriptive research is a kind of research which has a basic form of describing phenomena that happen either naturally or fictionally. The researcher used the descriptive qualitative method because this study focused on describing the data which were obtained from observation and interview. This research focused on exploring authentic materials used in project-based learning in class X IPA at MA Muallimin Muhammadiyah Makassar. Interview results were transcribed and analyzed thematically to identify patterns and themes that emerged from the collected data. Thus, this research was expected to provide valuable insights into how authentic materials were used in project-based learning.

C.RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Kinds of Authentic Materials in Project-Based Learning are

provided by teachers at MA Muallimin Muhammadiyah Makassar

The results of this element was to determine the kinds of authentic materials used by teachers in implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) at MA Muallimin Muhammadiyah Makassar.

Result of Observation Checklist A

Group	Authentic Materials Provide by Teacher
I	Song
II	Video
III	Podcast

Table above demonstrates that the teacher used three kinds of authentic materials in the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in Class X IPA at MA Muallimin Muhammadiyah Makassar: song, video, and podcast. These materials were divided among three distinct student groups. Each group was given a different kinds of authentic material to explore and utilize as a reference to complete the same end project, a flipbook on the topic "Sports and Health."

Group I were employed songs as the primary source. Students listened to an English song on healthy habits and were asked to select vocabulary related to physical health. The lyrics were used as input for the content of

their flipbook, encouraging kids to connect language use with everyday health practices.

Group II utilized videos, notably a YouTube video titled "Healthy Lifestyle." After watching the video, students examined the content and collected relevant information to integrated into their flipbook. The video gave students visual and contextual cues that helped their understanding and organize the information.

Group III used a podcast episode that addressed how to build a healthy lifestyle tips. While listening, students took notes and chose the most relevant parts for their flipbook. This method improved students' listening comprehension and allowed them to practice with authentic spoken English in a real-world setting.

2. Authentic Materials in Project-Based Learning used by teachers at MA Muallimin Muhammadiyah Makassar

Result of Classroom Observation

This section described how English teachers used authentic materials in the context of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) at MA Muallimin Muhammadiyah Makassar. Data was collected through classroom observations and conversations with English teachers.

1) Starting with Essential Questions

In the first stage, the teacher begins the learning process by asking fundamental

questions that are contextual and relevant to the students' daily life. Questions like "Why do you think you need to stay healthy?" and "Can you mention one creative way of staying healthy" are designed to raise students' awareness of the necessity of preserving their health. In response to these queries, the teacher explains the main assignment, which is to create a flip book on "Sports and Health". The project becomes a clear and relevant beginning point for learning.

2) Designing a Project Plan

The next stage is to collaborate on the project design. The teacher instructs students to locate and utilize authentic materials such as YouTube videos, English song, and brief podcasts. Students are divided into small groups and given the flexibility to choose what content to explore, as long as it is still relevant to the theme.

3) Creating a Schedule

The third stage involves teachers and students working together to create a schedule for project activities from start to presentation. Teachers assist students in determining the time required for each phase of the project, such as material selection, group discussions, flip book content development, and presentation preparation. The distribution of

work and responsibilities among group members is also clearly stated.

4) Monitoring the Project

Teachers constantly monitored the groups' progress throughout the assignment. Teachers encourage students to explore authentic materials and offer advice if they have difficulty understanding English content, such as accents, new vocabulary, or cultural contexts. Students are observed actively conversing, asking questions, and independently researching sources.

5) Evaluating the Results

After the project was completed, each group presented their flip book results to the class. During the presentation, students described the topic, actual authentic materials used, and the reasoning for their decision. The teacher provided feedback using evaluation criteria such as the authenticity of the materials, the creativity of the flip book design, and the correctness of the content. This practice was supplemented with reflective discussions among students, during which other students could provide feedback and recommendations on their peers' work.

6) Evaluating the Experience

The final stage is to evaluate the learning experience. Teachers encourage students to reflect on the learning process and share their experiences while investigating authentic materials. Some students reported that using real materials, such as videos and songs, made learning more exciting. However, they admitted that there were difficulties, particularly in interpreting native speakers' spoken language. Teachers responded openly to these reflections, which they utilized to evaluate future learning gains.

Data Display of Interview

Extract 1 was about understanding authentic materials in PjBL context.

R What do you understand about authentic materials, especially in the context of project-based learning?

T Authentic materials are real-life resources like videos, songs, news articles, and real conversations. In PjBL, they help students create projects based on real situations and understand English in everyday contexts.

Extract 2 was about the kinds of authentic materials used.

R What kinds of authentic materials do you usually provide to students in project-based learning projects?

*T In addition to YouTube
: videos, I use English songs,
short podcasts, and
interviews related to the
topic, such as "Sports and
Health".*

Extract 3 described how the teacher encourages students to explore authentic materials.

*R How do you encourage and
: guide EFL students to
explore and use these
authentic materials during
the project?*

*T I divide students into groups
: to find theme-related videos
or articles, provide trusted
sources and guidelines, and
regularly monitor their
progress through
discussions.*

Extract 4 discussed the students answers and difficulties with authentic materials.

*R In your experience, how do
: students engage with
authentic materials? Do they
show interest or face
challenges?*

*T Very relevant, though some
: students struggle with
vocabulary or accents. So, I
review the material with them
in class.*

Extract 5 was on teacher strategies for increasing student involvement.

*R What strategies do you use
: to increase students'
engagement with authentic
materials in project tasks?*

*T I let students choose relevant
: materials based on their
interests and link them to real*

*projects, like creating a
flipbook. This builds their
sense of responsibility.*

Extract 6 discussed the criteria for selection of authentic materials by teachers.

*R How do you select authentic
: materials that are appropriate
and interesting for students
to explore?*

*T I consider language difficulty,
: theme relevance, and
student interest, choosing
materials with visual and
audio elements for better
understanding and
engagement.*

Based on classroom observations, teachers used a variety kinds of authentic materials to learning objectives and student characteristics. Although the kinds of materials used ranged, such as songs, videos, and podcasts, all students were required to complete the same final project, a flipbook with the theme "Sports and Health." This technique reflects the spirit of the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) method, which allows for the differentiation of learning materials while retaining a common goal.

Each kinds of authentic materials serves a different teaching function. Songs are particularly successful in increasing student engagement and vocabulary by providing relevant context and emotional nuances. Videos use visual and narrative elements to help students relate learning subject to real-life situations, enhancing their knowledge. Meanwhile, podcasts

encourage students to practice active listening and summarizing skills while also exposing them to natural pronunciation, different accents, and real-world language. These three kinds of materials compliment one another and can accommodate to a variety of student learning styles. These findings align with Azis and Subki (2023) highlight that authentic materials such as videos can support students' comprehension by providing visual and contextual input, while also fostering their genre awareness and improving their listening skills.

This study provided new information by concentrating not just on the impact of authentic materials, but also on how teachers facilitate the process of exploring, comprehending, and applying such materials. The teacher's adaptive role emerged as critical not just in material selection, but also in understanding support, group dynamics management, and timely feedback delivery. The researcher assumes that the teacher's mediation is an important predictor of student performance when using authentic materials, particularly in heterogeneous classrooms with varying competency levels. This demonstrates that the success of using authentic materials depends heavily on teacher mediation, particularly in courses with different skill levels.

Teachers conduct teaching and learning proces utilizing the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model, which includes six syntaxes: starting with essential questions, designing a project plan, creating a schedule,

monitoring the project, evaluating the results, and evaluating the experience. The syntax used by teachers is consistent with that given by Kurniawan et al. (2024) for the six stages of the PjBL. This finding answers the second study question, which is how teachers at MA Muallimin Muhammadiyah Makassar used authentic materials within the Project-Based Learning framework.

In practice, teachers not only follow the syntactic sequence formally, but also make adaptations based on the classroom situation and student characteristics. Learning begins with important questions relevant about real life, such as the importance of a healthy lifestyle. These questions not only serve as the project's starting point, but they also inspire students' personal involvement in studying the issue using authentic materials such as health motivation videos on YouTube and positive-themed songs.

During the project planning step, teachers and students work together to construct projects such as flipbooks carrying health information. In this process, students are able to choose authentic materials related to the theme, such as songs with encouraging lyrics, short podcasts on health tips, or inspirational videos. This demonstrates a student-centered learning strategy as described by Royani et al. (2024), which emphasizes engaging students in meaningful, real-world tasks that foster active participation and the development of critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration.

Next, teachers and students collaborate to create a project work schedule. Teachers assign deadlines for video exploration, listening to songs and podcasts, and creating flipbook content.. At this stage, students learn not only time management, but also teamwork and personal responsibility. This consistent with the ideas of Rahman et al. (2024), who suggest that Project-Based Learning nurtures students' higher-order thinking skills and autonomy through active engagement in collaborative and meaningful tasks.

The involvement of teachers in monitoring project development is also very important. Teachers assist in explaining new vocabulary from songs and podcasts, guiding comprehension of YouTube video content, and ensuring that the selected material is consistent with the project objectives. In this context, the researchers conclude that the success of PjBL depends not just on student creativity but also on the teacher's capacity to provide adaptive guidance throughout the project process. It is founded on the researcher's assumption that effective PjBL implementation is influenced not just by student participation, but also by how teachers frame and encourage the usage of authentic materials throughout each stage. This is consistent with the findings of Angelina et al. (2020), who discovered that teachers who act as facilitators in project-based learning improve the classroom environment.

The assessment stage focused on the final output, which was a flipbook, the clarity of information obtained from real materials, and student presentations. Teachers evaluated the flipbook content's creativity and relevancy to the material from videos, songs, or podcasts. This approach represents the idea that assessment in PjBL is based on students' actual work products rather than rote memorization. After completing the project, students are encouraged to reflect. Most students are more motivated when they study from authentic and relevant content. Despite challenges such as difficulty understanding accents in podcasts or videos, they believe the experience helps them comprehend English in a more contextualized manner. Nevertheless, the researcher notes that the language complexity and lack of accessible scaffolding in many authentic materials may provide ongoing challenges for students who have had little exposure to local speech patterns.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the data and discussions, the researcher found that teachers employed three kinds of authentic materials in project-based learning (PjBL) in the Class X IPA at MA Muallimin Muhammadiyah Makassar: English songs, YouTube instructive videos, and short podcasts. These materials were

offered to student groups in various ways as resources for constructing a final project in the form of a flipbook titled "Sports and Health." The variety of these tools enables students with diverse learning styles (auditory, visual, or kinesthetic) to participate more actively and meaningfully in the learning process. The selection of materials that are relevant to real-life situations and student interests is thought to increase motivation and curiosity. The teacher's method of tailoring materials to student characteristics has resulted in a more contextualized and engaging learning experience. In practice, teachers follow the PjBL theory's six stages of learning, beginning with the design of essential questions, followed by the development of projects and schedules, and finally evaluating and reflecting on learning. Students actively participate at each step, including group discussions and independent exploration of authentic materials. Teachers serve as facilitators, guiding the selection of materials, explaining the content of the material, and accompanying the project development process to the final presentation. Students' reflections show that using authentic

materials makes learning feel more relevant to their life. Thus, the systematic incorporation of authentic materials into PjBL has shown helpful in increasing EFL students' engagement in meaningful language exploration while also connecting academic learning to the real world.

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