

**PROJECT-BASED LEARNING IN THE FRAME
OF MERDEKA CURRICULUM: CHALLENGES
AND PROSPECTS FROM AN EFL TEACHER'S
VOICE**

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for
Gaining the Bachelor Degree in English Language
Education



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Project-Based Learning in the Frame of Merdeka Curriculum:
Challenges and Prospects from an EFL Teacher's Voice

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the frame of Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching at SMPN 35 Semarang, challenges faced by EFL teacher in its implementation, and the prospects from the EFL teacher's voice. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the study collected data through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with English teacher. The findings reveal that PjBL was carried out in eight structured steps: describing material, defining the problem, examining the problem, determining solutions, planning, implementing, presenting, and reflecting on the project. The use of authentic materials and collaborative group work was found to enhance student engagement, critical thinking, and communication skills. However, teacher face several challenges, including limited resources, varying student abilities, and the need for more effective assessment strategies. Teacher addressed these obstacles through adaptive solutions such as providing printed materials, explicit vocabulary support, structured guidance, and alternative assessment methods. The study highlights the importance of continuous professional development and institutional support to optimize the implementation of PjBL. The results are expected to contribute valuable insights for teacher, students, school, and future researchers in improving English language education through innovative curricular approaches.

Keywords: *Junior High School, Merdeka Curriculum, Project-Based Learning (PjBL).*

MOTTO

إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

"surely with hardship come ease."

(QS. Al-Insyirah: 6)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND DEDICATION

Bismillahirrahmanirrahiim

Praise is always given to Allah SWT. We offer our prayers and gratitude to Allah SWT for His mercy, guidance, and providence, which have enabled the author to complete this thesis. May blessings and peace be upon our beloved Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, who guided us from the age of darkness into the age of enlightenment.

Alhamdulillah, by His permission and assistance, the author was able to complete this thesis entitled “Project-Based Learning in the Frame of Merdeka Curriculum: Challenges and Prospects from an EFL Teacher’s Voice”. The author is fully aware that the process of compiling this thesis would not have been possible without the assistance, guidance, motivation, prayers, and the role of various parties. For this reason, the author expresses his deepest gratitude to:

1. The Dean of Education and Teacher Training Faculty, Prof. Dr. Fatah Syukur, M.Ag.
2. Dra Nuna Mustikawati Dewi, M.Pd, as the Head of English Education department, and the secretary of English Department, Lulut Widyaningrum, M.Pd.
3. Mr. Daviq Rizal, M.Pd, as the researcher academic advisor for always patient in giving the advice.

4. My beloved thesis advisor Dr. Siti Tarwiyah, SS., M.Hum. Thank you for always guiding, giving advice, and always helping researcher in completing the thesis.
5. All lecturer in English Education Department and Teacher Training Faculty
6. The Headmaster of SMPN 35 Semarang, Mrs. Yunita Lestari, S.Pd. Thank you for allowing me to conduct research at SMPN 35 Semarang. Mrs. Ida Mintarsih, S.Pd as English teacher grade 8. Thank you very much for sharing your experiences and providing information to researcher regarding the teacher's perspective in implementing Project-Based Learning in the frame of Merdeka curriculum.
7. All of students in grade 8H, thank you for helping researcher in the research process, as students who implement PjBL in the frame of Merdeka curriculum.
8. My beloved family, especially my parents Mulyono and Asmini. Thank you so much for always supporting and pray for me in my every step.
9. My beloved sisters Qith'atul Qomariyah, Qowi Millati, Shofia Maulana, Raychan Maulana, and my lovely niece Khalid Alfahreza. Thank you very much for all of cheerfulness and your support that made my day.

10. My beloved friend Senja Arum Puspita, who always supports, motivates, and strengthens me. My lovely roommate Maghfirotul Ngaini, who always listening to my struggle, and strengthens me. May God always bless you and give us success in the future.
11. My best friends (sobat dahsyat) Stela Yunita, Fitria Nor An Nisha, Anandiya Ariyanti, Arnadita Laila Safitri, Niswatin Filliyah, Zahra Zhafira, Akmal Muzaqy, Sekar Mayang, Tegar Bagaskara. Thank you for always motivating and supporting me. Thank you for always listening to my worries and always strengthening me. May God bless us with continued happiness and success in the future.
12. All of my Friends in PBI-B 2021, I love you all.

Semarang, 23 Juni 2025

The Researcher
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, the research question, the objectives of the study, and its significance.

A. Background of Study

A nation's progress depends on its level of education. As a developing nation, Indonesia always works to raise the standard of education. To create a generation that is smart and capable of competing on a global scale, this is being done. The Indonesian government is currently working to transform the educational system from the current paradigm to a new paradigm. The 2013 curriculum (K-13) has been improved with a new curriculum called the Merdeka curriculum as a form of post-pandemic learning recovery.

The Merdeka Curriculum is designed to provide diverse intra-curricular learning, allowing teacher flexibility in choosing teaching tools to adapt to students' learning needs and interests. The curriculum has been implemented in various universities in Indonesia and is considered appropriate for overcoming learning problems that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic (Riyan Rizaldi & Fatimah, 2022). The curriculum aims to optimize content and provide sufficient time for students to explore concepts and strengthen competencies.

The educational approach known as project-based learning, or PjBL, seeks to combine creative and communicative thinking, encourage peer collaboration, help students develop their critical and problem-solving thinking skills, and stimulate their affective and cognitive abilities, all of which support their intellectual and creative growth (Greenier, 2020). Project-based learning is one of the key features of the Merdeka curriculum. Project Based Learning (PjBL) is a learning activity in the form of making goods or services that is used as a vehicle for mastering competencies (Kemendikbud, 2022). Project-based learning (PjBL), a core component of the Merdeka curriculum, integrates creative, communicative, and collaborative approaches to education. It emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving, and the development of both cognitive and affective skills, fostering students' intellectual and creative development through hands-on learning experiences.

There are several studies related to the Merdeka curriculum and project-based learning in history education. The first research has shown that students and teacher had positive views on the implementation of PjBL, and teacher were actively involved as facilitators in the implementation of PjBL in English classrooms under the Merdeka Curriculum (Rambe & Suganda, 2023). Other researchers found that the teacher at SMA Negeri 19 Bungo has

implemented project-based learning in teaching English, but the procedure used was not optimal (Septina et al., 2023). The participants of this study are senior high school students. Research on students' perception toward Merdeka curriculum implementation through project-based learning in the speaking class (Shofiyuddin et al., 2023).

Other researchers examine the implementation of PBL in English classrooms under the Merdeka Curriculum. This study found that students and teacher had positive views on the implementation of PBL, with students showing increased motivation and critical thinking skills, and teacher actively facilitating the learning process (Kharimah et al., 2023).

Another study investigated the effectiveness of PBL in improving students' English learning outcomes in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. The study found that implementing PjBL significantly improved students' learning outcomes in cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains (Fitriyani et al., 2023).

Additionally, the research with the title "EFL Students' Challenges in a Project- Based Learning Environment" has explored the challenges faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in a PBL environment, highlighting the need for teacher to adapt her teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning needs (Mujiburrahman et al., 2023)

Some of these studies have focused on the challenges of implementing PBL in this curriculum, while others have explored the impact of PBL on student learning outcomes and teacher perceptions. The difference from previous research is that this study focuses on implementing the Project-Based Learning in English learning in the Merdeka curriculum at junior high school, highlighting the challenges and prospects in teacher's voice.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the frame of the independent curriculum in the junior high school, and the challenges that teacher and students may face in the implementation process. The researcher is interested in this topic due to the potential for new innovations in the Merdeka curriculum that allow students to connect English material to the present. The researcher believes that PjBL can stimulate students to solve problems, focus on the material, think critically, creatively, and innovatively in English learning.

B. Question of the Research

1. How is the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the frame of independent curriculum in SMPN 35 Semarang?

2. What are the challenges of EFL teacher in implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the frame of independent curriculum in SMPN 35 Semarang?
3. How do EFL teacher's voice relate to the future development and sustainability of PjBL in the frame of Merdeka Curriculum?

C. Objectives of the Research

1. This research aims to explain the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the context of independent curriculum in SMPN 35 Semarang.
2. This research aims to provide the challenges EFL Teacher faced when implementing Project-Based Language Learning (PjBL) in the frame of Merdeka curriculum in SMPN 35 Semarang.
3. This research aims to explore the EFL teacher's voice relate to the future development and sustainability of PjBL in the frame of Merdeka Curriculum.

D. Significance of the Research

The results of this study are expected to contribute theoretically and practically to teacher, students, schools, and the researcher.

a. For teacher

In education, the curriculum will continue to be updated to keep up with the times and technology so that the world of

education will continue to develop, as in the 2013 curriculum reform to a Merdeka Curriculum. In updating the curriculum, of course, there are many challenges faced by English teacher in learning, so the researcher describes the results of the research in the form of challenges and prospect from the teacher's view as a form of effort to overcome future challenges. The teacher's perspective are important to reveal the actual challenges in the classroom to determine the best solution.

b. For students

This research can be used as knowledge on how to implement a Project-Based Learning in the frame of Merdeka Curriculum, especially from a student's point of view in English learning activities so that students as elements of the school can make improvements in the future so that English learning activities can run well, effectively and can achieve learning goals.

c. For researcher

For further research materials, this research can be used as a reference for future research developments, especially in every renewal of the curriculum which will continue to be updated with the times.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents important aspects of previous studies and related to the theoretical views.

A. Previous Research

The Merdeka Curriculum is a new educational framework in Indonesia that emphasizes student-centered learning and project-based learning (PjBL) as a means to equip students with the necessary language skills and competencies for a global society. The curriculum aims to address the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic by equipping students with the necessary language skills and competencies for a global society, emphasizing student-centered approaches, technology integration, cultural diversity, collaboration, and comprehensive assessment methods. The Merdeka Curriculum has been introduced as a response to the learning crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and it provides teacher with the flexibility to choose various teaching tools to adapt to the learning needs and interests of students (Riyan Rizaldi & Fatimah, 2022). The government aims to implement the Merdeka Curriculum comprehensively by 2024 at all levels of education in Indonesia, starting from primary and secondary schools. It is expected that the comprehensive application of this curriculum to all levels of education in

Indonesia by 2024 will provide a solid foundation for future generations.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an instructional methodology that encourages students to engage in hands-on projects to foster deep learning and critical thinking. Research by Ida Puji Lestari indicates that PBL facilitates enhanced language acquisition in EFL contexts by allowing students to communicate their ideas through projects, thereby improving their language skills in a practical setting (Lestari, 2025).

Significant impacts of implementing PBL include improving student motivation and engagement, as evidenced by various studies. For instance, Muhammad Yamin et al., (2023) describe how PBL implementation encourages students to take greater responsibility for their learning by engaging in projects that require critical thinking and problem-solving. Contextually, these effects relate to broader themes of active learning and learner-centered approaches, which are increasingly vital in contemporary educational paradigms.

There are several studies related to the Merdeka curriculum and project-based learning in history education. The first research has shown that the implementation of PjBL in English classrooms under the Merdeka Curriculum has been investigated in two schools, with a mixed-method case study using online

questionnaires and interviews (Rambe & Suganda, 2023). There is study about the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum and its challenges (Ndari et al., 2023), others research is about the implementation of PjBL oriented to the Merdeka learning curriculum (Fitriyani et al., 2023), but the participants from these research are elementary students. The study found that students and teacher had positive views on the implementation of PjBL, and teacher were actively involved as facilitators. The findings also revealed that teacher were able to scaffold productive and equitable interactions among students from different backgrounds, as required by the Merdeka Curriculum. This study is about perspective from the teacher and students about the implementation of PjBL in the English classroom.

Other researcher found that the teacher at SMA Negeri 19 Bungo has implemented project-based learning in teaching English, but the procedure used was not optimal (Septina et al., 2023). The participants of this study are senior high school students. The Merdeka Curriculum focuses not only on the way students learn but also on teacher competence and project-based learning. It is one of the methods used to achieve the goals of the curriculum (Shofiyuddin et al., 2023). The research from Susila et al., (2024) focusing on the understanding of vocational high school teachers regarding the implementation of project-based

learning models or known as project based learning (PjBL). Others research is about the implementation of PjBL through Merdeka Curriculum, but this research focus on Teaching Speaking Skills (Rahmawati & Kusumaningtyas, 2024). The difference from previous research is that it focuses on the implementation of the Project-Based Learning model in English learning in the Merdeka curriculum at junior high school.

The adaptability of PBL allows EFL teachers to create more meaningful learning experiences that go beyond traditional methods, encouraging students to apply language skills in real-world contexts. Furthermore, the collaboration involved in PBL aligns closely with the Merdeka ethos of fostering independence and creativity in learners (Nurohmah et al., 2024). EFL teachers' perspectives play a crucial role in shaping the approaches taken to PBL within the Merdeka Curriculum. According to research, understanding the teachers' insights regarding their experiences can inform better practices and support systems necessary for successful curriculum adaptation (Roberts & Nurkhamidah, 2024)

The Merdeka Curriculum is a student-centered educational framework that emphasizes project-based learning as a means to equip students with the necessary language skills and competencies for a global society. Previous research has shown

that the implementation of PjBL in English classrooms under the Merdeka Curriculum has been successful, with positive views from students and teacher (Rambe & Suganda, 2023). Then, this article aims to explain the implementation of project-based learning in the frame of the independent curriculum and the challenges that teacher may face and the prospect in the future.

B. Literature Review

a. Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning (PBL) is an active, student-centered form of learning characterized by student independence, constructive inquiry, goal setting, collaboration, communication, and reflection in real-world practice (Kokotsaki et al., 2016).

According to a book published by the Institute, Pacific Education, E Baker, B Trygg, P Otto, M Tudor, and L Ferguson, project-based learning consists of eight steps, namely: describing the material, defining the problem, examining the problem, determining problem solving/solution, planning the project, implementing the project, presenting the project, summarizing, evaluating, and reflecting.

Project-Based Learning combine creative and communicative thinking, encourage peer collaboration, help

students develop their critical and problem-solving thinking skills, and stimulate their affective and cognitive abilities, all of which support their intellectual and creative growth (Greenier, 2020). Project-based learning enables students to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for success in life, students to solve, evaluate, and present problems to the public (Tsybulsky & Muchnik-Rozanov, 2019). More specifically, it allows for learning through problem-solving, questioning, idea-debating, planning, and interpersonal communication (Choi et al., 2019). Project-based learning encourages student collaboration, with the teacher serving merely as a guide for the duration of the project (Greenier, 2020). Because it fosters critical thinking and problem solving, interpersonal communication, information and media literacy, cooperation, leadership, creative problem solving, flexibility, and originality, it is an effective approach for developing twenty-first-century skills (Chu et al., 2016).

b. Project-Based Learning in EFL Classroom

Project-based learning (PBL) is an instructional approach that emphasizes active learning through collaborative projects, significantly enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education by fostering engagement and practical language use among students.

Project-based learning in EFL classrooms is characterized by a shift from traditional rote learning to a more dynamic and experiential learning environment. It allows students to engage in meaningful projects that require the use of the English language for communication, collaboration, and critical thinking (Kavlu, 2017). In this context, students not only learn the language but also apply it in real-world situations, enhancing their linguistic and cognitive skills.

Effective PBL implementation in EFL settings involves structured planning and execution. For instance, successfully integrating PBL requires teachers to design authentic projects that align with curricular goals while addressing students' interests and needs (Yamin et al., 2023). Strategies include setting clear objectives, providing necessary resources, and facilitating group work that encourages peer interaction. In Indonesian classrooms, case studies have shown that PBL strategies are particularly effective when they incorporate cultural elements relevant to the students, fostering a deeper connection to the language being learned (Lestari, 2025).

Research demonstrates that project-based learning significantly enhances student engagement and motivation in

EFL contexts. A study focusing on EFL students' involvement in project-based speaking activities highlights improved communicative competence and increased confidence in using the English language (Zhong et al., 2025). Furthermore, by fostering collaboration and teamwork, PBL prepares students with essential 21st-century skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking, which are vital in today's globalized world (Alshihri, 2024).

The rise of project-based learning in EFL classrooms aligns with ongoing educational reform efforts that emphasize learner-centered pedagogies. Globally, educators are increasingly recognizing the necessity of equipping students with skills relevant to the demands of the modern workforce. This pedagogical shift can be observed in diverse contexts, from Iraqi and Indonesian classrooms to Saudi educational systems, showcasing its adaptability and effectiveness across different cultures and educational settings (Alshihri, 2024; Kavlu, 2017; Lestari, 2025).

Project-based learning serves as a transformative approach in EFL classrooms, promoting active engagement and practical language use among learners. By emphasizing collaboration and real-world applications, PBL significantly enhances linguistic skills and prepares students for future

challenges in a global context.

c. Merdeka Curriculum

There are a lot of changes in the school system and its components once the Merdeka Curriculum is implemented. These adjustments are undoubtedly a development and advancement for schools, particularly for instructors. The primary changes in learning activities are that both teacher and students are becoming more inventive, creative, and active. In addition, in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum concept, the use of technology as a learning support tool is also becoming more optimal. The Merdeka Curriculum, which is self-learning, is crucial for upgrading the post-pandemic 2013 curriculum and for advancing education in Indonesia in keeping up with the constantly evolving modern technologies of today.

A Merdeka curriculum was initiated in 2019 by Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim. It was tested in 2020 and was ready for use in 2022. The Merdeka Curriculum has been applied in a number of Indonesian schools, but not uniformly across all of them. The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum where the learning structure is separated into two primary activities: the project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students, which refers to

graduate competency standards that students must have, and intra-curricular learning, which refers to learning outcomes that students must achieve in each subject (Hamdi et al., 2022).

In the Merdeka Curriculum, the principles of implementing learning are designed to provide quality, interactive and contextual learning experiences. In this cycle, educators are expected to be able to organize learning that are: (1) interactive; (2) inspirational; (3) fun; (4) challenging; (5) motivating students to participate actively; and (6) provide sufficient space for initiative, creativity, independence in accordance with the talents, interests and physical and psychological development of students. Throughout the learning process, educators can conduct formative assessments to determine the extent to which learning objectives have been achieved by students (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2022).

d. Challenges and Prospects in Implementing Project-Based Learning in the Frame of Merdeka Curriculum

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum enhanced student autonomy and creativity. PjBL fosters student autonomy and creativity by

providing opportunities for students to explore real-world problems and develop problem-solving skills. Improved collaboration and communication, PjBL encourages collaboration and communication among students, which can lead to better teamwork and problem-solving skills. Increased student engagement and motivation, PjBL can increase student engagement and motivation by providing meaningful and relevant learning experiences that align with students' interests and needs. Teacher professional development, implementing PjBL can provide opportunities for teacher to develop their professional skills, such as lesson planning, classroom management, and assessment (Rahmawati & Kusumaningtyas, 2024; Rambe & Suganda, 2023).

Time management, allocating sufficient time for PjBL activities, can be challenging due to the limited lesson hours, which can lead to difficulties in completing all stages of the PjBL process. Assessment and evaluation, assessing student progress and evaluating the effectiveness of PjBL can be difficult, especially in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, requiring new assessment methods. Infrastructure and Resources, limited resources and infrastructure in some schools can hinder the implementation of PjBL, particularly in rural areas, impacting the quality of

the learning experience. Teacher readiness, teacher readiness is a significant obstacle in implementing PjBL, particularly in the Merdeka Curriculum, as teachers may require additional training and support to effectively integrate PjBL into their teaching practices (Sephiawardani & Bektiningsih, 2023). Student understanding and commitment, some students may struggle to understand the PjBL process or lack the necessary commitment to complete projects, which can impact the effectiveness of the approach.

The use of project-based learning in the Merdeka Curriculum is expected to provide opportunities for students to learn through an experiential process, integrate essential competencies across various disciplines, and offer a more flexible learning structure according to their need. This approach aligns with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum, allowing students to engage in hands-on learning experiences and develop critical competencies (Riyan Rizaldi & Fatimah, 2022).

While the Merdeka Curriculum offers flexibility and adaptability, its implementation may come with challenges. These challenges could include aligning teaching methods with the curriculum's goals, ensuring effective integration of project-based learning activities, and addressing any barriers

to successful implementation (Ndari et al., 2023). The curriculum is a crucial guide in the education system, providing a plan to achieve expected learning outcomes. It has evolved over time to facilitate the teaching and learning process, offering guidance and instruction within educational institutions. The Merdeka Curriculum represents a significant shift in the Indonesian education system, emphasizing independent learning and adaptability

The literature review indicates that the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes flexibility, adaptability, and independent learning, with project-based learning playing a significant role in achieving its educational goals. The curriculum's implementation and its alignment with teaching methods present both opportunities and challenges that require careful consideration and effective integration. This approach has gained popularity in recent years as a way to engage students in meaningful and authentic language learning experiences. In this descriptive study, we will explore the implementation of PjBL in the context of an independent curriculum in secondary school.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter discusses the research design, research setting and time, data source, method of collecting data, instrument, method of analyzing data, data validity.

A. Research Design

The research method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative research is a type of scientific research. This type of research data focuses on qualitative research data, which is in the form of words, sentences, and oral, not in the form of numbers to obtain data or information from an observed object or phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2017). According to Mack et al., (2005) these types of data are field notes, audio (and sometimes video) recordings, and transcripts. The data in this study were collected from sources/informants. This research used observation to collect the data about how PjBL is implemented in the frame of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The second and third research question about the challenges and prospects, data were collected by semi-structured interviews with the teacher. As Sharan and Elizabeth (2016) say, in a semi-structured interview, researcher might ask teacher to elaborate on her understanding of mentoring or to reflect on someone she

considers a mentor (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This research uses the semi-structured interview to gather data from teacher's about her perspective (challenges and prospect) while implementing PjBL in the frame of Merdeka Curriculum.

Qualitative research has a multimethod focus, engaging an interpretive and naturalistic approach to its subjects. This means that qualitative research study things in their natural settings, seeking to understand or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people give to them. Qualitative research involves using and collecting a wide range of empirical materials-case studies, personal experiences, introspective, life stories, interviews, observations, and historical, interactional, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. Nelson et al. (1992:4), argue that because qualitative research is interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counter-disciplinary, it is difficult to find a single meaning of this research (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

B. Research Setting and Time

1. Place of the Research

Data collection in this study was carried out at SMPN 35 Semarang located in Jl. R. Soebagyo, Bubakan, Mijen District, Semarang City, Central Java 50216.

2. Time of Research

Data collection in this study was carried out at 11th November 2024-22nd November 2024

C. Source of Data

The source of data in this research refers to where the data can be obtained. Someone who responds, gives information or answers the researcher questions is the source of data. The primary data sources for this study were gathered through observation and semi-structured interviews. Observation was conducted over two classroom sessions to analyze the implementation of project-based learning in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) under the Merdeka Curriculum framework. Additionally, semi-structured interview was conducted with EFL teacher to gather insights into her perspective, challenges, and experiences in applying this learning approach. These methods provided a detailed understanding of both the practical application and reflective aspects of the study. The selected school is a secondary school that implements project-based learning in the frame of Merdeka Curriculum.

This research employs judgemental sampling, also known as purposive sampling, to select participants who are considered most relevant and knowledgeable regarding the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in EFL

classrooms within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum. The primary rationale for using judgemental sampling is to ensure that the data collected reflects the specific experiences, insights, and challenges faced by EFL teachers who have directly engaged with PBL under the current curriculum reforms.

Participants in this study is selected based on several criteria: (1) the teacher actively teaching English as a Foreign Language at the secondary school level; (2) the teacher have at least one year of experience implementing the Merdeka Curriculum; and (3) the teacher have practical experience in applying PjBL strategies in their classrooms. The selection process involves identifying teachers from various schools that have officially adopted the Merdeka Curriculum, ensuring a diverse representation in terms of teaching backgrounds and school environments.

By focusing on teachers who meet these specific criteria, the study aims to obtain rich, in-depth information regarding both the challenges and prospects of PjBL in the EFL context. This targeted approach is expected to yield valuable insights that may not be captured through random

sampling, particularly given the specialized nature of the research topic. Judgemental sampling thus enables the researcher to purposefully engage with participants who are most likely to provide meaningful and relevant data for addressing the research questions.

D. The Technique of Data Collection

Researcher collected data using observation, semi-structured interview, audio records, and documentation to provide an overview of the human experience.

1. Observation

The observation was used to get the data about the implementation of PjBL in the frame of independent curriculum. Data are information collected by researcher to answer research questions. Observations were conducted directly at SMP N 35 Semarang to obtain the data about the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the frame of independent curriculum. Through this observation, researcher recorded various activities, interactions, and situations that occurred in the field in the form of field notes, audio recordings, or videos according to research needs.(Mackillop et al., 2004)

2. Semi-structured Interview

The researcher used the semi-structured interview method to gather data on the challenges and prospects of EFL teacher in implementing PjBL in the frame of an independent curriculum. In data collection techniques using semi-structured interviews, the data and results obtained become more detailed according to the research design, namely, descriptive qualitative. the most important thing is that the data obtained was used to describe the research purposes at the points above by using semi-structured interview techniques.

As Sharan and Elizabeth (2016) say, in a semi-structured interview, you would be more likely to ask each teacher to describe his or her understanding of mentoring, or you might ask the teacher to think of someone who is a mentor (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this type of interview, either all of the questions are more flexibly worded or the interview is a mix of more and less structured questions. Usually, specific information is desired from all the respondents, in which case, there is a more structured section to the interview.

E. Instrument

Research instruments are required to collect the data. The instruments of collecting data used by the researcher in this research were designed to ensure that the data collection became

systematic and easy. In this research, the research instruments used were observation guidelines and interview guidelines.

1. Observation Guidelines

To answer questions regarding the implementation of PjBL in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning in the frame of Merdeka Curriculum in SMPN 35 Semarang, the researcher conducted observations on two meetings with two different materials in the same class, namely class 8H. The first meeting was project-based learning with “invitation card” material, and the second material was “greeting cards”. These two observations were conducted with the same indicators, namely as follows:

Table 3.1 Lattice of Instrument The Implementation of PjBL in the Frame of Merdeka Curriculum

Variabel	Indicator
The Implementation of PjBL in the frame of independent curriculum	Describe concept /material being studied
	Defining the problem
	Examining the problem
	Determine problem solving/solution

	Planning the project
	Implementing the project
	Presenting the project
	Summarize, evaluate, and reflect

*Adapted from “Project-Based Learning Model: Relevant Learning for the 21st Century” (Institute, Pacific Education, E Baker, B Trygg, P Otto, M Tudor, and L Ferguson)

2. Interview Guidance

Researcher use research tools to collect data in the form of guidance interviews. Interview guidance is a guide in interviewing so that it can be properly systemized. The interview is one of the most widely used and basic methods for obtaining qualitative data. Interviews are used to gather data from people about opinions, beliefs, and feelings about situations in her own words. Interview may provide information that cannot be obtained through observation, and can used to verify observations (Ary et all, 2014).

Rosanne (2020) said interview guidance provides guidelines that can be used to develop an interview guide adds structure to the interview process, as well as provides transparency of methods to human subject review

committees and IRBs, while at the same time allowing flexibility within the interview process. Various types of interview questions are described and working examples are included. Interview guides are useful within both semi-structured and in-depth interviews of individuals or groups Bloom & Crabtree (2006). This research uses the semi-structured interview to gather data from Teacher about her perspective (challenges) while implementing PjBL in the frame of Merdeka Curriculum.

To answer the question of what the challenges of EFL teacher are in implementing PjBL in the frame of the Independent Curriculum in a secondary school, the indicators are:

Table 3.2 Lattice of Instruments of the challenges of EFL teacher in implementing PjBL in the frame of Merdeka curriculum

Variabel	Indicator
The challenges of EFL teacher in implementing PjBL in the frame of independent curriculum	Challenges in describing the concept/ material being studied
	Challenges in defining the problem

	Challenges in examining the problem
	Challenges in determining problem-solving / solution
	Challenges in planning the project
	Challenges in implementing the project
	Challenges in summarize, evaluate, and reflect
EFL Teacher envision the future development and sustainability of PjBL within the Merdeka curriculum	Teacher strategies to overcome the problem in the next lesson

*Adapted from “Project-Based Learning Model: Relevant Learning for the 21st Century” (Institute, Pacific Education, E Baker, B Trygg, P Otto, M Tudor, and L Ferguson)

F. Method of Analyzing Data

The data was analyzed using the model by Miles & J. Saldana, which outlines a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis (Miles et al., 2013). This model consists of three main components: data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions.

a. Data condensation

This process involves simplifying, focusing, and transforming raw data from data collection into a more organized and meaningful form. The researcher collected the data from observation and a semi-structured interview with an English teacher. While collecting the data through observation, the researcher eliminates unnecessary things and takes a notes only of the data about the implementation of PjBL. The next step is creating categories, organizing themes, and filtering out information irrelevant to the research focus. Data condensation occurs continuously in the field until the final report is written.

In the observation process, the researcher summarizes, categorizes, and concentrates on the 8 steps of the implementation of PjBL in the classroom in both 1 and 2 materials. While in the semi-structured interview, the researcher summarizes, categorizes, and concentrates, focusing on the challenges and prospects in teacher's view.

b. Data Display

The next step involves data display. After the data is simplified, it is presented in an organized format so that it is easy to understand. This presentation can be a matrix, graph, chart, network, or narrative designed. For the observation, the data will be displayed in a table, and for the semi-

structured interview, it will be presented narratively. Data display will help the researcher to understand what is happening and take action for further analysis or caution based on that understanding.

After reducing the data, the next step is to display the data by compiling the data that has been obtained in descriptive form. The purpose of displaying data is to make it easier for researcher to explain information clearly from data reduction.

c. Drawing and Verifying Conclusion

This process involves identifying patterns, themes, relationships, or propositions based on the data that has been simplified and presented. To draw conclusions, researcher must first understand what the analyzed data mean and how she relate to the questions. Based on the type of analysis selected, the researcher extracts from the data any relevant interpretations, structures, or processes. At this stage, the researcher draws a conclusion regarding the answer to the defined question. In qualitative research, the conclusion can answer the problem question that has been formulated.

G. Data Validity

Ensuring the validity of data is a crucial aspect of any research study, particularly when employing qualitative methods such as observation and interviews. In this research,

methodological triangulation was utilized to enhance the validity of the findings related to the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the frame of the Merdeka Curriculum. Triangulation involves using multiple methods or sources to cross-verify data (Denzin, 2017).

a. Interview

Interviews were used to validate data about the implementation of PjBL through observation. Observations provided direct insights into the practical application of PjBL. However, some important information that was collected during observations was not fully captured. To address this problem, interviews were conducted with an English teacher to gather additional context and clarify identities where necessary.

b. Member Checking

Member checking was used to validate the data on prospects and challenges taken from the semi-structured interviews. Interviews offered a deeper understanding by capturing the perspectives of EFL teacher. To validate the data obtained from interviews, member checking was employed. This process involves returning to participants to confirm the accuracy and relevance of the information provided (Birt et al., 2016). By engaging this way,

researcher can ensure that the teacher's interpretations align with the Teacher's experience and perspective, thus enhancing the credibility of the findings.

CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This chapter explain the implementation of Project-Based Learning in the frame of Merdeka curriculum. This chapter consist of research Findings and Discussion.

A. Research Findings

In this study, the researcher has explored the implementation of PjBL in the frame of Merdeka Curriculum which was implemented in grade 8 of SMPN 35 Semarang in 2 meetings. The first meeting with the learning material "invitation text", and the second material with the learning material "greeting card". Researcher observed learning activities to find out how is the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the frame of independent curriculum in SMPN 35 Semarang. Then, the results are explained as follows:

a. The Implementation of Project-Based Learning in the Frame of Merdeka Curriculum

1. The Description of the Implementation I

From the observation results, the researcher can describe the implementation of PjBL in the Merdeka curriculum implemented at SMPN 35 Semarang consisting of 8 steps, there are: describing the material,

defining the problem, examining the problem, determining problem solving/solution, planning the project, implementing the project, presenting the project, summarizing, evaluating, and reflecting. The following are the results of observations from the first material (invitation letters):

a) Describing the material

Teacher explains to the student the material about “invitation text” there are: the definition, social function, the structure, and the kind of invitation text.

Table 4.1 Teacher describing the material

Implementation	Document
- Teacher displayed the example of invitation card. - Student identify the invitation card - The teacher used paper material to	

explained the material (the structure of the text, and the kind of invitation card)	
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The teacher gives the example of the invitation text (display birthday card). Students identify the invitation card in pairs. The teacher explains the material, students write down the material in their notebooks.

b) Defining the Problem

Based on the observation, the researcher found that in the second step of PjBL, the teacher give the problem.

Table 4.2 The summary of the implementation of PjBL

Implementation	Document
- The teacher wrote the questions on the whiteboard - The teacher explained how to answer the questions.	

After explaining the material, teacher give assignment. Students are asked to fill in the blank invitation text.

c) Examining the problem

The teacher gives instructions on how to answer the questions.

Table 4.3 Teacher examining the problem

Implementation	Document
- The teacher gave assignments. - Student did the task (15 minutes)	

Students are given about 15 minutes to do the task, but not all students do their task because not all students understand.

d) Determining problem solving/solution

The teacher guide students to answer questions.

Table 4.4 Teacher determine the problem solving

Implementation	Document
- 5 students come forward to did the task on the whiteboard - The teacher discussed the questions that had been worked on together	

Then, the teacher appoints 5 students to answer the questions in front of the class. The teacher discusses the students' answers together.

e) Planning the project

The teacher gives the project directions.

Table 4.5 Plan the project

Implementation	Document
- The students discussed in each group to divide the tasks and plan the project. - The teacher determined the theme of the project for each group.	

Students divided into groups. Each group plans their projects with different themes (determined by the teacher). Each student in a group receives a different task.

Based on the observation, the researcher found that in EMI learning, learning assessment and evaluation are conducted for each EMI subject (math, science, English). The assessment is in the form of doing practice questions and assignments for students, after which it is evaluated to know the extent to which students understand EMI subjects.

f) Implementing the Project

Table 4.6 Students implement the project

Implementation	Document
- Students made invitation cards. - The teacher monitored the students' work. - Students asked the teacher how to arrange the words to make a correct sentence.	

Students prepare materials such as origami, markers and other tools to create invitation texts. Then students began to compose their own invitation texts. The teacher monitors the students' work. The students ask the teacher how to arrange the words to make a correct sentence.

g) Presenting the project

Table 4.7 Students present the project

Implementation	Document
- Each group presented their project. - The other group gave feedback about the presenting project	

After completing the project, each group come forward to present the results of their work. The presentation includes: the text structure and contents of the invitation card.

h) Summarize, evaluate, reflect

The teacher reflects on the learning. Students collected the project. The teacher is assessing students during the project.

Table 4.8 Teacher and Students summarize, reflect

The teacher reflects on the learning. Students are asked to collect the project. The students who

Implementation	Document
- Students explain what they learned today. - The teacher asked the students what difficulties they had experienced in making the invitation cards. - Students collected the project.	

have not finished can be collected at the next meeting. Teacher assessing students during learning, namely the aspects of creativity and activity. After the project, the teacher assesses the results of the students' work. The assessment method is based on vocabulary, creativity, and duration of the project.

2. The The Description of the Implementation II

The implementation of PjBL in the Merdeka curriculum in the second material has the same steps, there are: describing the material, defining the problem, examining the problem, determining problem-solving/solution, planning the project, implementing the project, presenting the project, summarizing, evaluating, and reflecting. The following are the results of observations from the second material, “greeting card”.

a) Describing the material

The teacher uses the focus group discussion to make the students fully involved in the discussion.

Table 4.9 The Teacher describes the material

Implementation	Document
- Students are divided into groups. Each group consists of 4-5 students - The teacher gave 1 example of a greeting card to each group. - Each group identifies the different greeting cards - The teacher used the focus group discussion method. - Each group explained the result of their analysis - The teacher explained the material using paper materials.	

The teacher gives the example of greeting cards. Discussion was conducted with the pairs. Students are asked to identify the parts of the

greeting cards that have been distributed and write down the result in their notebooks. The teacher explains to the students the meaning of each part. The teacher explains to the student the material about “greeting card”, there are the definition, social function, the structure, and the kind of greeting card.

b) Defining the problem

The teacher defines what kinds of problems that students may face. The teacher gives problems through given questions.

Table 4.10 The Teacher defines the problem

Implementation	Document
- The teacher gave assignments. - The teacher wrote the questions on the whiteboard and explained how to answer the question.	

After explaining the material, the teacher gives an assignment. Students are asked to answer the question about the greeting card.

c) Examining the problem

The teacher explains to the student how to answer the question

Table 4.11 Teacher examines the problem

Implementation	Document
- Student discussed with their pair to do the task. - Students did the task in 15 minutes.	

Students are given about 15 minutes to do the task with their pairs.

d) Determining problem solving/solution

The teacher discusses with the students the correct answer.

Table 4.13 The Teacher determining the problem solving

Implementation	Document
- The teacher gave assignments. - The teacher wrote the questions on the whiteboard and explained how to answer the question.	

Then, 3 students to answer the questions in front of the class. The teacher discusses the students' answers together.

e) Planning the project

The teacher gives project directions. Students are asked to make greeting cards individually with different theme for each group.

Table 4.14 The Teacher plans the project

Implementation	Document
- The students discussed in each group to divide the tasks and plan the project. - The teacher determined the theme of the project for each group.	

The class divided into 3 group. The first group will make a greeting card with the theme “Teacher’s day”, the second group “Father’s day”, and the last group with the theme “Mother’s day”. The students discussed in each group to divide the tasks and plan the project.

f) Implementing the project

Students were excited to prepare materials such as origami, markers and other tools to create greeting card.

Table 4.15 Students implementing the project.

Implementation	Document
- Students made greeting card in groups - The teacher monitored the students' work. - Students asked the teacher how to arrange the words to make a correct sentence.	

Students began to compose their own greeting card. The teacher monitored the students' work and helped students who had difficulty

g) Presenting the project

Table 4.16 Students present the project.

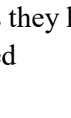
Implementation	Document
- Students presented their project results in groups in front of the class. - Each theme is represented by 1 group.	

After completing the project, students are asked to come forward in pairs to present the results of their work. The presentation includes: the text structure and contents of the greeting card.

h) Summarize, evaluate, reflect

After the presentations from all groups are finished, the teacher reflects on today's learning material with the students.

Table 4.17 Teacher and Students summarize, evaluate, reflect

Implementation	Document
Students explained about what they had learned today.	
The teacher asked the students what difficulties they had experienced in making the invitation cards.	
Students collected the project.	

Students explain about what they had learned today. Students collected the project. Teacher assessing students during learning, namely the aspects of creativity and activeness, after the project the teacher assesses the results of the students' work. The assessment method is based on: vocabulary, creativity, and duration of the project. Teacher evaluate the students' project.

b. Challenges of Implementing Project-Based Learning in The Frame of Merdeka Curriculum

The researcher gets the data about teacher's view on challenges in implementing PjBL through semi-structured interviews with the English teacher. The findings below have been analyzed by researcher based on appropriate indicators.

1. Challenges in describing the concept/ material

One of the main challenges faced during the learning process is ensuring that all students can participate effectively with the material presented. One of the problems teacher face when explaining the material is that students sitting in the back rows cannot see the projector screen clearly. This makes it difficult for students to follow the teacher's explanations.

“Because the light from the outside window was too bright, the projector screen in class 8h was not clearly visible from the back row of students. Therefore, I provided printed materials on paper for each student's desk.”

Teacher overcome this problem by continuing to use the projector and providing printed copies of the material for each table, so that all students have access to the necessary information.

2. Challenges in defining the problem

Students had difficulty understanding the vocabulary in the questions (fill-in-the-blank text). The teacher explained:

“The difficulty is mostly in understanding the text structure. Students may know what to write, but they are confused about how to organize their writing according to the structure of an invitation.”

To overcome this challenge, the teacher first explained the content of the text and helped answer students' questions about unfamiliar vocabulary.

3. Challenges in examining the problem

Students struggled to find the right words and structure. The teacher responded by preparing a vocabulary list and offering continuous guidance. She noted:

“The difficulty is mostly in understanding the text structure. Students may know what to write, but they are confused about how to organize their writing according to the structure of an invitation.”

Moreover, she encouraged peer discussion and group work to help students build understanding together.

4. Challenges in determining problem-solving/solution

Translating and expressing ideas in English was another significant challenge. Many students struggled

to find the right words and structure. The teacher responded by preparing a vocabulary list and offering continuous guidance. She noted:

“When students feel stuck, they usually ask me directly. I guide them on how to express their ideas in English, step by step.”

Moreover, she encouraged peer discussion and group work to help students build understanding together.

5. Challenges in planning the project

Planning the project required early preparation, especially in terms of theme selection and materials. The teacher said:

“I usually tell them a few days before the project so they can prepare materials at home, like stationery.”

When students struggled to choose appropriate themes, she assigned themes to each group to ensure focus and creativity.

6. Challenges in implementing the project

Some students struggle to understand how to organize their vocabulary and sentences into well-structured paragraphs.

“Some students struggle to understand how to organize their vocabulary and sentences into well-structured paragraphs.”

To address this, the teacher closely monitors each group's project, offering guidance and feedback as needed.

7. Challenges in presenting the project

Another challenge was the presentation phase, where students only understood the text created by their own group. The teacher facilitated presentations followed by Q&A sessions to foster deeper understanding across groups:

“This structured approach encourages broader engagement and understanding.”

This structured approach encourages broader engagement and understanding.

8. Challenges in summarizing, evaluating, and reflecting

The deadline for project results is important for assessment, yet some students face challenges that affect their ability to meet deadlines. Several students struggle to collect and submit their project results promptly. To address this, the teacher emphasizes the importance of deadlines in the assessment criteria,

encouraging students to develop better time management skills.

The challenges faced by teacher in implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the Merdeka Curriculum are diverse and multifaceted, ranging from difficulties in delivering materials and defining problems to problems in planning, implementing and assessing projects. Despite these obstacles, teacher have demonstrated adaptability and commitment by using a variety of strategies to support student learning and engagement at every stage of the process. Overcoming these challenges not only requires continuous teacher innovation and support, but also highlights the importance of collaborative efforts among all educational resources to ensure the successful implementation of PjBL in English language teaching.

c. Prospect of Project-Based Learning in the Merdeka Curriculum

Based on interviews with the English teacher at SMPN 35 Semarang, the prospect of implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) under the Merdeka Curriculum is

viewed with both optimism and critical reflection. The teacher acknowledged that PjBL offers significant opportunities to cultivate essential 21st-century skills, such as creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. She appreciates the flexibility provided by the Merdeka Curriculum, which allows teachers to design project themes and approaches based on students' needs and real-life contexts.

In comparing PjBL with traditional instructional methods, the teacher observed a notable increase in student engagement and active learning. As she stated:

“In the traditional method, I usually lecture first, then the children do the exercises. But with PjBL, the children do more hands-on activities. They create their own texts based on their understanding. I think it's more effective because they become more active.”

Such reflections underline the teacher's belief that PjBL promotes not only knowledge retention but also student ownership of learning. The shift from passive to active roles empowers students to engage more meaningfully with the content.

However, the teacher also pointed out that PjBL may not be suitable for all types of learning materials. She emphasized the need for selective application:

“Not all of them. But for certain subjects, PjBL is very suitable and more effective. My hope is that in the future, PjBL can continue to be used for appropriate subjects.”

Despite the positive outlook, several challenges persist. These include limited classroom facilities, unequal student learning abilities, and logistical barriers such as time constraints. One challenge in delivering the material, for example, was related to classroom visibility:

“Because the light from the outside window was too bright, the projector screen in class 8H was not clearly visible from the back row of students. Therefore, I provided printed materials on paper for each student's desk.”

This illustrates the practical constraints teachers may face and the need for improvisation and resourcefulness. Additionally, although the teacher did not experience significant difficulty in using PjBL herself, she noted that students sometimes struggle with text structure and expression:

“Personally, I don't find it difficult. However, the students sometimes have trouble understanding the

structure of the text. They understand the parts, but are confused about how to express them. I usually help by explaining the structure and meaning.”

To address such challenges, the teacher advocated for continuous professional development and more systemic support from the school administration. She emphasized the importance of peer collaboration among teachers to exchange strategies and strengthen the implementation of PjBL.

Overall, the teacher’s perspective suggests that while PjBL offers transformative potential, its sustainability and effectiveness within the Merdeka Curriculum will depend on ongoing support, proper teacher training, and accessible resources. With adequate planning and institutional backing, PjBL can evolve into a sustainable and impactful component of EFL education in Indonesia.

B. DISCUSSION

This chapter will explain how the implementation Project-Based Learning in the frame of Merdeka curriculum.

a. Implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL)

The researcher observed 2 meetings with 2 different materials, the first material is invitation cards and the second material is greeting cards. From the first and second

meeting it can be concluded that SMP N 35 Semarang implemented the project-based learning follows 8 structured steps, including describing the material, defining the problem, examining the problem, determining problem solving/solution, planning the project, implementing the project, presenting the project, summarize, evaluate, and reflects.

Based on the finding, the first step describing the material, the teacher displayed the example of invitation card and greeting card. The use of invitation and greeting cards as teaching materials reflects Greenier (2020) "10Cs of PjBL," particularly authenticity and connection to real-world contexts.

In the second step, defining the problem, students are asked to identify the function, generic structure, and linguistic elements of the examples of invitation cards and greeting cards that have been given. This problem is authentic and relevant to real-world contexts, following what was said by Kokotsaki et al., (2016).

Examining the problem, the teacher provided five fill-in-the-blank exercises and explained how to do the task. Students were given 15 minutes to discuss and solve the exercises with their seatmates. The next step, determining the problem-solving/solution. Three students were invited

to do the task at the front of the class, followed by a group discussion of the correct answers. It allows for learning through problem-solving, questioning, idea-debating, and interpersonal communication in accordance with the opinion of (Choi et al., 2019)

Planning the project, the teacher explained the project, divided the class into groups, and assigned each group a project theme. Students discussed task distribution within their groups, fostering collaborative learning.

In implementing the project, each group created an invitation card based on their assigned theme, with individual students responsible for specific tasks. The teacher monitored progress and guided as needed, ensuring active engagement and accountability in accordance with research by Fajarika Nuninsari et al., (2020).

In the next step, presenting the project, each group presented its finished invitation cards to the class. Other groups give feedback on the presented material.

In the last step, summarizing, evaluating, and reflecting, students explain what they learned today, the difficulties experienced during the planning and implementation of the project (Guo et al., 2020). Students submit their projects.

The implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 35 Semarang demonstrates a structured and

comprehensive approach that aligns with both theoretical frameworks and practical recommendations from previous research. By following the eight key steps, teacher successfully integrate authentic materials and collaborative activities, fostering students' critical thinking, creativity, and real-world problem-solving skills. This systematic application not only enhances student engagement and learning outcomes but also reflects the core values of the Merdeka Curriculum, preparing students to meet future academic and life challenges more effectively.

b. Challenges in Implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the Frame of Merdeka Curriculum

Semi-structured interviews with English teacher revealed various challenges faced during the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the classroom. These challenges can be categorized according to 8 key phases of the “Project-Based Learning Model: Relevant Learning for the 21st Century”.

One of the problems teacher faced was ensuring equitable access to the learning materials, as some students, especially the students sitting at the back, struggled to see the projector screen clearly. The teacher's strategy to overcome this problem was to have printed handouts for each table. This

challenge is in line with findings by Ho Xuan Mai & Trang (2022), noted that inadequate classroom resources and facilities can hinder the effective delivery of PjBL activities, especially in large classrooms.

Students' limited vocabulary and difficulty in understanding the questions became obstacles in defining and analyzing the problem. Teacher addressed this by providing explicit explanations and vocabulary support. Similar challenges have been reported in previous studies, where students' lack of basic knowledge and language proficiency hindered their engagement in project tasks. Astarilla and other researchers highlighted that limited understanding of PjBL concepts and inconsistent instructional support can reduce students' motivation and learning outcomes (Astarilla et al., 2024).

Encouraging active participation in problem-solving activities remains a challenge, as some students are often discouraged from engaging in problem-solving. The teacher uses group discussions to foster an understanding of the importance of student engagement is in line with the literature that emphasizes the importance of a collaborative learning environment in PjBL (Nurohmah et al., 2024). However, group work management is often mentioned as a main challenge, with issues such as inequality of participation and

domination by certain members, as well as difficulties in effectively directing group activities (Mai & Trang, 2022).

Choosing an appropriate project theme and organizing the content to achieve a good and correct outcome are the parts where students often need additional guidance. The teacher's approach of determining the theme and closely monitoring group work is the best way to address this issue, as identified in previous research, which underlines the need for structured guidance to support students' creativity and organizational skills (Astarilla et al., 2024). Research also notes that teacher often struggle to adapt project activities to students' proficiency levels and manage the group's work logistics, especially in large classes.

Students' limited experience with diverse presentations and the complexity of aspects in evaluating PjBL outcomes are continuing problems. The teacher's solution was to organize presentations and facilitate the question-and-answer sessions to encourage more engagement and deeper understanding. Previous research has highlighted the inadequacy of traditional assessment methods to capture the range of skills developed through PjBL, such as collaboration, problem solving, and communication. Therefore, teacher is encouraged to develop alternative

assessment strategies that reflect both the process and the final product.

The challenges identified in this study included limited facilities and student readiness to group dynamics and assessment. Effective solutions often involve a combination of clear instructional support, structured guidance, adaptive use of available resources, and development of alternative assessment methods. These findings highlight the importance of continuing teacher professional development and institutional support to optimize the effectiveness of PjBL in diverse educational contexts.

c. Prospects in Implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in EFL Classroom within within the Framework of Merdeka Curriculum

The perspective of an EFL teacher plays a pivotal role in shaping the future direction of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) within the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers are not merely implementers but act as key stakeholders whose experiences and feedback can directly influence curriculum improvement and educational policy. As highlighted by Pertiwi & Pusparini (2021), understanding teachers' perspectives is essential for enhancing curriculum implementation in a way that aligns with classroom realities.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, where language production, practice, and engagement are critical, the teacher's positive attitude toward the core principles of PjBL—such as student-centered learning, real-world application, and collaborative tasks—reflects a strong pedagogical foundation. Her willingness to innovate and adjust strategies in response to students' linguistic needs and classroom challenges demonstrates a deep commitment to learner-centered instruction. This aligns with findings from Rambe & Suganda (2023) as well as Rahmawati & Kusumaningtyas (2024), who emphasize that teacher engagement and professional growth are fundamental to the successful integration of PjBL.

However, the sustainability of PjBL in EFL classrooms also depends on resolving several practical challenges. These include students' varied language proficiencies, difficulty in understanding text structures, and the need for vocabulary support—all of which were observed during the implementation process. The teacher noted that while PjBL promotes active participation, students often struggle to express their ideas in English due to limited vocabulary and unfamiliarity with genre structures. Without sufficient resources, clear assessment rubrics tailored to language learning, and continuous professional development, teachers

may face difficulties in maintaining the effectiveness of PjBL. As emphasized by Sephiawardani & Bektiningsih, (2023), both teacher readiness and institutional support are essential for long-term implementation success.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter presents the conclusion and suggestions of the research. It summarizes the key findings and addresses the research questions posed at the beginning of the study. Additionally, the researcher offers several suggestions aimed at enhancing future research and practical applications related to this topic

A. Conclusion

The implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) within the Merdeka Curriculum at SMPN 35 Semarang follows 8 structured steps, including describing the material, defining the problem, examining the problem, determining problem solving/solution, planning the project, implementing the project, presenting the project, summarize, evaluate, and reflects. From this study it can be concluded that the implementation of project-based learning in the independent curriculum at SMP N 35 Semarang has been well implemented. The teacher uses authentic materials, students work on projects in groups, the teacher monitors from the planning stage, division of tasks, and making projects. Students present the project results and then are given feedback by other groups. All of these stages can increase the ability of critical thinking, collaborative skills, problem-solving,

student engagement, creativity, questioning, idea-debating, and interpersonal communication.

Despite these successes, some challenges were faced during the process, including limited classroom resources, students' difficulties with vocabulary and comprehension, uneven participation in group activities, and the need for more effective assessment strategies. Teacher addressed these issues through adaptive solutions, such as providing printed materials, explicit vocabulary support, structured group guidance, and alternative assessment approaches.

These findings are relevant to previous research, which highlights that effective implementation of PjBL requires ongoing instructional support, structured guidance, and institutional support. As a result, while PjBL offers significant benefits to student learning and skill development, its success depends on teacher ability to meet classroom challenges and adapt her strategies to meet the needs of diverse students.

The voices of EFL teacher highlight the practical need to sustain PjBL in the Merdeka Curriculum. Her insights should inform future policy, resource allocation, and professional development initiatives to ensure that PjBL continues to thrive and positively impact English language education in Indonesia. Continuous professional development and resource support are

essential to optimize the effectiveness of PjBL in a variety of educational settings.

B. Suggestion

The research provides some suggestions related the findings and discussion in the previous chapter. The following suggestions from the researcher include:

1. For Teacher

Continuous professional development is essential to enhance teacher readiness and ability to implement PjBL effectively. Teacher should seek opportunities to update her pedagogical skills, especially in classroom management, group facilitation, and the use of authentic materials. Collaboration with colleagues and participation in training programs can help address challenges and improve instructional practices.

2. For School and Policymakers

Schools should provide adequate resources, including learning materials and technological support, to facilitate PjBL activities. Policymakers are encouraged to support the professional development of teacher and ensure that assessment systems are adapted to capture the diverse skills developed through PjBL.

3. For Students

Students should be encouraged to take an active role in group work and project activities, developing her time management, communication, and problem-solving skills. Embracing the opportunities offered by PjBL can help students become more independent, creative, and adaptable learners.

4. For Future Researchers

Further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of PjBL in the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in diverse educational contexts. Studies focusing on innovative assessment strategies and the integration of technology in PjBL can provide valuable insights for future curriculum development.

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APPENDIX

Appendix I

Research license



KEMENTERIAN AGAMA REPUBLIK INDONESIA
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI WALISONGO SEMARANG
FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN
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Telepon 024-7601295, Website: www.walisongo.ac.id

Nomor : 4703/Un.10.3/D1/KM.00.11/10/2024 31 Oktober 2024
Lamp : -
Hal : Izin Penelitian/Riset

Kepada Yth.
Kepala Sekolah SMP Negeri 35 Semarang
Di tempat

Assalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb

Dalam rangka penyusunan Skripsi untuk mencapai gelar kesarjanaan pada Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Walisongo Semarang, dengan ini kami mohon kesediaan Bapak/Ibu untuk memberikan izin penelitian kepada:

Nama : Azizatus Sa'adah
NIM/Program/Smt : 2103046077/S1/7 (tujuh)
Alamat : Jl. Tanjung Sari Utara no. 08, RT 05/ RW 07, Ngaliyan, Kota Semarang
Judul Skripsi : Project-Based Learning in the Frame of Merdeka Curriculum:
Challenges and Prospect in EFL Teachers' Voices
Lokasi : SMP Negeri 35 Semarang
Dosen Pembimbing : Dr. Siti Tarwiyah SS., M.Hum

Sehubungan dengan hal tersebut mohon kiranya yang bersangkutan diberikan izin riset dan dukungan data dengan tema/judul skripsi sebagaimana tersebut di atas mulai bulan November sampai dengan selesai.
Demikian atas perhatian dan terakbulnya permohonan ini disampaikan terimakasih.

Wassalamualaikum Wr. Wb



Dekan,
Dekan Bidang Akademik
Mahid Junaedi

Appendix II

Observation Sheet

Variabel	Indicator	Items of Question	Notes
The Implementation of PjBL in the frame of Merdeka curriculum	Describe the concept/ material being studied	- How does teacher deliver the material? - What methods does teacher use to deliver the material? - What media are used in learning?	-teacher present material using a projector -teacher uses the lecture method -Use a projector and examples of invitation cards
	Defining the problem	- What methods does teacher use to enable students to identify the problem critically?	- The teacher asks students to identify examples of invitation/greeting cards (structure, social function).
	Examining the problem	-How does the teacher direct students to be able to identify problems?	-The teacher presents questions about the text. -The teacher explains how to answer the

		questions. -Students are asked to complete the assignment.
Determine problem solving/solution	How does the teacher direct students to be able to Determine problem solving/solution?	-Teacher discusses together the questions that have been answered.
Planning the project	- How can teachers enable students to plan their own projects in groups?	-The teacher explains the project to be worked on. -The teacher divides the students into groups. -The teacher assigns different themes to each group. -The teacher asks each group to divide

		up the tasks.
Implementing the project	- Are students able to work well on projects? - Do students fully participate in the implementation of PjBL?	- Students are able to understand the steps of the project - Students do not yet understand how to compose words into invitation texts
Summarize, evaluate, and reflect	- How does teacher summarize, evaluate, and reflect on today's lessons? - How often do you provide feedback to students during and after PjBL projects?	- Teacher reflects on learning with students. - Teacher evaluates or assess student projects. - Students are asked to submit their projects. - Assessment is based on vocabulary, creativity, and

			speed or length of completion.
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Appendix III

Interview Guideline

Variabel	Indicator	Items of Question
The challenges of EFL teacher in implementing PjBL in the frame of Merdeka curriculum	Challenges in describing the concept/material being studied	- What strategies do the teacher use to direct students to be able to conceptualize a problem? - What challenges does teacher face in describing the concept/material being studied? - What strategies do you use to overcome the challenges?
	Challenges in defining the problem	-Are there any difficulties when directing students in defining the problem? -What strategies do you use to overcome the challenges?
	Challenges in Examining the problem	-Are there any difficulties when directing students in examining the

		problem? -What strategies do you use to overcome the challenges?
	Challenges in determine problem solving/solution	-Are there any difficulties when directing students in determine problem solving/solution? -What strategies do you use to overcome the challenges?
	Challenges in planning the project	-Are there any difficulties in planning the project? -What strategies do you use to overcome the challenges?
	Challenges in implementing the project	-Are there any difficulties in implementing the project? -What strategies do you use to overcome the challenges?

	Challenges in summarize, evaluate, and reflect	-Are there any difficulties in assessing the outcomes of PjBL projects? -What strategies do you use to overcome the challenges?
EFL Teacher envision the future development and sustainability of PjBL within the merdeka curriculum	EFL Teacher envision the future development and sustainability of PjBL within the merdeka curriculum	-What do you envision as the future role of PjBL in EFL education within the Merdeka Curriculum? -How do you think the Merdeka Curriculum can be enhanced to better support PjBL initiatives in EFL classrooms?

Appendix IV

Interview Transcript

Researcher : “What strategies do you use to direct students to be able to conceptualize a problem?”

Teacher : “When teaching invitation texts, I usually start by giving students real and familiar examples. I show them actual invitation cards that are commonly used in daily life. This helps students understand the concept because it's something they have seen or experienced themselves. By using real-life contexts, they can better conceptualize what an invitation is and how it works.”

Researcher : “What challenges do you face in describing the concept or material being studied?”

Teacher : “The main challenge is vocabulary. Since the material is in English, many students struggle with understanding the words. They often ask me, “Bu, what does this mean?” So I have to explain the vocabulary to them so they can fully grasp the material.”

Researcher : "What strategies do you use to overcome these challenges?"

Teacher : "I usually explain the meaning of the words while teaching the material. I don't just mention the structure; I also translate and clarify the meaning so that they don't just memorize the form but also understand what they're writing or reading."

Researcher : "Are there any difficulties when directing students in defining the problem?"

Teacher : "Not really. Because the context is familiar, like invitations, students can easily relate. But sometimes they're unsure how to phrase their ideas in English.

Researcher : "What strategies do you use to overcome that challenge?"

Teacher : "When students feel stuck, they usually ask me directly. I guide them on how to express their ideas in English, step by step, and give them alternative expressions to use."

Researcher : “Are there any difficulties when directing students in examining the problem?”

Teacher : “The difficulty is mostly in understanding the text structure. Students may know what to write, but they are confused about how to organize their writing according to the structure of an invitation.”

Researcher : ”What strategies do you use to overcome this challenge?”

Teacher : “I explain the structure clearly and show examples. I also break down each part and explain its purpose, so they can follow it when creating their own texts.”

Researcher : “Are there any difficulties when directing students in determining solutions?”

Teacher : “I don’t find any major difficulties in this part. Since the topic is simple and relevant to their daily life, they can usually find their own way of writing after they understand the format and vocabulary.”

Researcher : “What strategies do you use to overcome the challenges?”

Teacher : “I just make sure to clarify the instruction early on, and I support them when they ask for help. I also encourage peer discussion to help them develop their ideas.”

Researcher : “Are there any difficulties in planning the project?”

Teacher : “Planning isn’t too difficult because the text is short and commonly used in real life. But it’s important to inform students in advance. I usually tell them a few days before the project so they can prepare materials at home, like stationery or sample texts.”

Researcher : “What strategies do you use to overcome that challenge?”

Teacher : “I give them clear instructions and reminders ahead of time. I also let them know what to bring and what to expect, so they come prepared.”

Researcher : “Are there any difficulties in implementing the project?”

Teacher : “Not really. As long as they’re prepared and understand the instructions, the project runs smoothly.”

Researcher : “What strategies do you use to overcome the challenges?”

Teacher : “Preparation is key. I make sure they know the project details and objectives beforehand. That way, we avoid confusion during implementation.”

Researcher : “Are there any difficulties in assessing the outcomes of PjBL projects?”

Teacher : “No major difficulties, but I do need to be clear about the criteria. I usually assess their spelling, creativity, structure, and grammar. As long as I define the aspects from the beginning, the assessment goes well.”

Researcher : “What strategies do you use to overcome those challenges?”

Teacher : “I design a rubric based on the expected output. That helps both me and the students understand what is being evaluated.”

Researcher : “What do you envision as the future role of PjBL in EFL education within the Merdeka Curriculum?”

Teacher : “I think PjBL is very effective for certain materials. It encourages students to be more active and creative. I hope it continues to be used, especially for materials where practice and real-life application are important.”

Researcher : “How do you think the Merdeka Curriculum can be enhanced to better support PjBL initiatives in EFL classrooms?”

Teacher : “It would be helpful if the curriculum provided more project-based templates or guidelines that fit various language skills. Also, integrating PjBL in a way that connects with students’ daily life would make learning more meaningful and engaging.”

Researcher : “Previously, what strategies did you use to encourage students to conceptualize problems in learning?”

Teacher : “For invitation text learning, I usually provide some real-life examples that are relevant to their daily lives. This way, the children can understand

more easily because they often experience similar situations. For example, I bring examples of invitation cards that they often see or have received. This helps them understand well and then create their own invitations based on those examples.”

Researcher : “How about the project planning, Ma’am? Are there any challenges?”

Teacher : “Regarding project planning, since the material is short texts and often used in real life, it’s actually not too difficult. But I have to inform the students a few days in advance. So they can prepare the materials from home, such as paper, writing tools, or the images needed. The point is, before the day of the project, the children already know what they need to do.”

Researcher : “Does the length of time spent on the project affect the results and assessment?”

Teacher : “Yes, of course. I assess it from various aspects, such as spelling, creativity, text structure, and grammar. But so far, it hasn’t been too difficult to

assess. We just need to determine the aspects from the beginning.”

Researcher : “In your opinion, what is the difference between the Project-Based Learning method and the traditional method?”

Teacher : “In the traditional method, I usually lecture first, then the children do the exercises. But with PjBL, the children do more hands-on activities. They create their own texts based on their understanding. I think it's more effective because they become more active.”

Researcher : “Are there any difficulties in delivering material using the PjBL method?”

Teacher : “Personally, I don't find it difficult. However, the students sometimes have trouble understanding the structure of the text. They understand the parts, but are confused about how to express them. I usually help by explaining the structure and meaning.”

Researcher : “In your opinion, is PjBL suitable for all learning materials?”

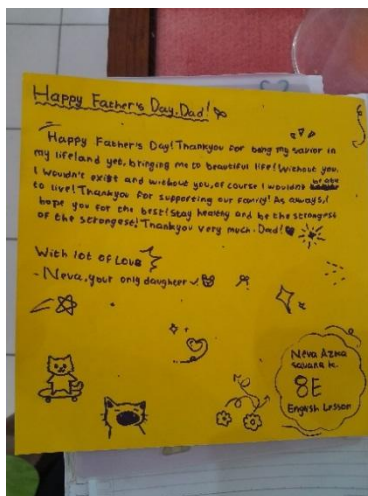
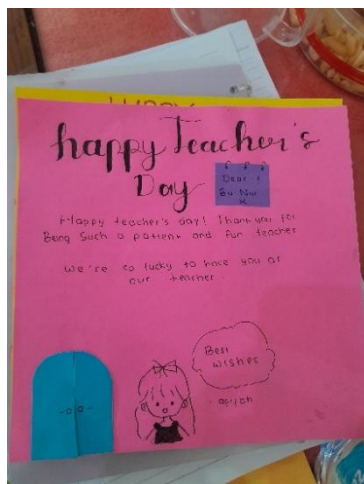
Teacher : “Not all of them. But for certain subjects, PjBL is very suitable and more effective. My hope is that in the future, PjBL can continue to be used for appropriate subjects.”

Appendix v

Documentation



The researcher observed the implementation of PjBL in the classroom (8H)



The result of the greeting card

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Semarang, 23 Juni 2025

Azizatus Sa'adah

NIM. 2013046077