

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Research

In the Indonesian context, the standardized curriculum policy mandates that EFL teachers follow the practices of teaching as regulated by the government (Kartika-ningsih & Gunawan, 2019; Permendikbud No. 3 Tahun 2020, 2020). In the current curriculum, Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is one of the approaches strongly recommended by the government (Permendikbud No. 3 Tahun 2020, 2020). This policy makes PjBL become popular and frequently adapted by lecturers as the approach to teacher in higher education (Matahari et al., 2023). Halim et al. (2023) found that 60% of PjBL implementations in Indonesian EFL context between 2017-2022 took place in higher education. However, related studies found that the guidelines for the implementation of PjBL in specific context of teaching has not been provided sufficiently by the policy maker (Lewis et al., 2019; Almulla, 2020). The preliminary study also identified that teachers joined socialization, but it did not provide guidelines for specific contexts such as guidelines for PjBL to teach writing. For instance, The Ministry of Education published a guideline book of student-centered approach called “Panduan Implementasi Pembelajaran Berpusat Pada Mahasiswa” in which PjBL guideline was provided very general with assumption that it may work in any discipline includes teaching writing (Nizam & Partiw, 2023).

Furthermore, PjBL has been introduced as an unspecific approach by the ministry of education (Permendikbud No. 3 Tahun 2020, 2020). In the Sibatik website, a website that is developed by the Indonesian ministry of education, Nurhayati and Harianti (2020) state that PjBL is one of the emerging teaching approaches. PjBL is officially recommended by Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture as a teaching approach based on Ministry Regulation which regulates the national standard of higher education in Indonesia (Permendikbud No. 3 Tahun 2020, 2020). In practice, the ministry usually organizes socialization of the policy

to democratize the concept of the PjBL that is intended to be applied in the classroom. However, the models of PjBL introduced to teachers are rather unspecific in the context. For instance, the ministry generalized PjBL in science education context to be contextualized in multi disciplines (Nurhayati & Harianti, 2020). As the result, PjBL has been adapted in different versions in the teaching of other contexts including the teaching of writing.

The teaching of writing in higher education in Indonesia remains challenging not only in the implementation, but also in the academic writing factors. According to Toba et al. (2019), Indonesian higher education students experience problems in writing including limited knowledge of writing, the lack of writing practice, negative writing perception, and inadequate teaching writing process taught by their lecturers. Moreover, the students face difficulties in the practice of academic writing, for instance in developing paragraphs, in writing research report, and in expressing their voice through writing (Ningrum et al., 2023; Kurniawan & Lubis, 2020). Such issues lead to the searching for the potential best approach to the teaching of writing in higher education .

The principles of PjBL emphasize the issues of student-centered learning, challenging questions, collaborative learning, and meaningful project (Simpson, 2011; Bell, 2010; Grant, 2002; Markula & Aksela, 2022). The issue of student-centered learning may result transformative roles of teacher and students. On the other hand, PjBL is a model for learning around projects (Thomas, 2000). Moreover, Thomas define the project as concrete product which is essentially formed as a hands-on activity in which the learner produces projects on different topics with teacher guidance in the classroom.

In Indonesia, PjBL has been implemented in the classrooms for the last decade. However, pilot study shows there is a gap between PjBL which was socialized by the government and that in language teaching context in the history of the implementation because of the insufficient guideline. PjBL was widely implemented primarily in science education before it was used in language teaching. Research about the implementation of PjBL in science education was widely spread in the 1990s (Krajcik & Shin, 2014; Markula & Aksela, 2022). PjBL

was then incorporated into language education along with a growing interest in student-centered learning, autonomous learning, and collaborative learning (Stoller, 2006).

Driven by the policy enforcement, PjBL has become one of the research interests in Indonesia. Some teachers conceptualized PjBL as an applied science to be implemented for science classes (i.e. Bell, 2010) while others refer to other models that have been published in journals. Related studies In Indonesian context (Gai Mali, 2016; Yuliani & Lengkanawati, 2017; Nurhajati, 2016) show that the implementation models of PjBL in EFL classroom refers to the concept of PjBL consisting of three stages in eight activities (Stoller, 2006) and four stage (Bell, 2010), and six stages (Grant, 2002).

In general, there are several reasons why it is urgent to explore how PjBL is recontextualized in EFL contexts. First, the socialized PjBL class in Indonesia was aligned with subject taught in Indonesian language (monolingual) i.e. science education. So, every stage of PjBL that is arranged by the teacher is potentially run as planned. On the other hand, in English classes in Indonesia, the context of teaching English is different from that in English as a second language (Kartikaningsih & Gunawan, 2019). Second, the former implementation of PjBL was perceived in different ways where teachers have their personal interpretation of the approach (Guntur & Retnawati, 2020). Furthermore, their study found that teachers faced the obstacles of running PjBL due to their lack of knowledge about PjBL. Thus, the need for the recontextualization in a specific context is mandatory. Third, at the same time, PjBL in EFL remains to be conceptualized in multi-perceptions (Stoller, 2006). The perceptions of teachers vary based on their beliefs (Stoller, 2006; Cintang et al., 2017).

More specifically, in the context of the teaching of writing, PjBL has become increasingly popular in language teaching for writing in 21st century (Alexander, 2012 ; Storch, 2019). Previous studies have indicated the importance of effective planning when implementing PjBL in the teaching of writing (Alexander, 2012; Habók & Nagy, 2016). The planning process should consider factors such as the teaching stages, teaching materials, the writing process,

instructions, and appropriateness to the student's level. In Indonesian context, Ismail (2022) highlighted the need for PjBL to focus on the applicability of the material to the learning goals. Additionally, Arihastha and Basthomi, (2019) suggested incorporating a writing process phase into classroom writing projects. Therefore, a teacher's careful planning of the approach plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of writing projects through PjBL.

The implementation of PjBL is also influenced by language teachers' belief about PjBL, which tended to be different among teachers' (Stoller, 2006). In Indonesia context Gai Mali (2016) believes that PjBL is a social practice where the concept of active learning, collaborative learning, and learning autonomy is highlighted. In other cases, Yuliani and Lengkanawati (2017) emphasize that PjBL is one of the approaches assumed to promote learning autonomy. While PjBL has the potentials to contribute to enhancing learning quality, teachers varied interpretations may influence the quality of contributions. Thus, this study found it important to search for the best PjBL practices so that teachers can learn how PjBL should be executed appropriately referring to several samples of best practices. The best practices reflect the selected approach or combination of approaches that a teacher apply in actual practice. There are very few studies to date that attempted to capture PjBL in the context of language in general. Stoller (2006) highlighted the features of PjBL in language teaching from the perception of several languages. However, the context is not specified to the teaching of language skills. In addition, referring to the pilot study before researching the implementation of PjBL in teaching writing, it was found that the teachers implemented PjBL without any specific guidelines for language teaching context.

In order to address such PjBL-based teaching practices and problems stated earlier, this study focuses on gaining a portrait of PjBL practices in EFL classrooms in higher education to investigate how it is recontextualized to result in quality learning. In addition, this study attempts to provide a contextual practice of PjBL in the teaching of writing in higher education in Indonesia. It is expected to inform EFL practitioners about a practical approach of PjBL to the teaching of writing, that is, the way it is recontextualized with reference to the main principles of the PjBL

approach. In addition, this study explored the support of PjBL on students' collaborative writing as a broader exploration of study.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problems**

This research aims to investigate how PjBL is contextualized in the teaching of EFL in Indonesia, how it affects learning outcomes, and how the best practice is situated. With the focus of the research, the research questions are constructed based on the case study. The first question is to recontextualize how teachers acquire the PjBL approach and how they implement PjBL in EFL classrooms. The next question is to investigate how the PjBL supports on students' collaborative writing. The third question is to describe the challenges found in the recontextualizing PjBL in the teaching of writing. The research questions are formulated as follow:

1. How is PjBL recontextualized by lecturers of English in the teaching of writing in higher education?
2. How does the recontextualization of PjBL support students' collaborative writing?
3. What challenges are found in recontextualizing PjBL in the teaching of writing?

## **1.3. Objectives of the Research**

This research focuses on recontextualizing PjBL in the teaching of writing in Indonesia. Therefore, the objectives of this research are to answer the research problems:

1. To investigate how lecturers of English recontextualize PjBL in the teaching of writing in higher education.
2. To investigate how the recontextualization of PjBL supports students' collaborative writing
3. To describe the challenges found in the recontextualization of PjBL.

#### **1.4. Significance of the Research**

This study contributes to the enrichment of perspective in the teaching of English language teaching. PjBL has been recommended as of the approaches to the teaching of English curriculum framework. Despite having been incorporated in the English curriculum framework, the teachers often have difficulties in executing actual teaching practices. This is due mainly to the discrepancy between teacher's education programs and teaching practice. Thus, this attempts to contribute to the gap of finding best practices in applying PjBL. In addressing this goal, this study focuses on exploring theoretical significances and practical significances.

Theoretically, this study contributes to making explicit the theory of PjBL specific to the teaching of writing which has been a challenge for teachers in following the recommendation by the curriculum framework. This study provides a picture of teaching PjBL in higher education from which appropriate concept can be drawn to inform teachers in applying the main concept of PjBL in the teaching of writing.

Practically, the recontextualization of PjBL in EFL classrooms contributes to the enrichment of the ELT practices. The result of this study is expected to provide a suitable context of PjBL in the Indonesian context which will guide teachers in applying PjBL in the teaching of writing. In context of policy, as pointed out by the Indonesia Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, there is the need to do the best practice in the implementation of PjBL. This study will contribute to informing the policy maker the portrait of best practices of PjBL in EFL Classrooms for the teaching of writing.

#### **1.5. Operational Definition**

To avoid the ambiguity of interpretation of the definition in this research, the terminology used in title need to be described.

##### **Project-Based Learning**

Project-based learning is an adoptable approach to language teaching. The key features cover the existence of a process and a product orientation, the involvement

of students in the preparation of project, the extent of stages over a period of time rather than a single class session, encouragement of natural integration of skill, a dual commitment to language and content learning, obligation of students to work in groups and on their own, the requirement of students to take some responsibility for their own learning through the gathering, processing, and reporting of information from target language resources, the requirement for the teacher and students to assume new roles and responsibility, the result in tangible final project, scaffolding, the use of technology, and the reflection on both process and the product (Stoller, 2006; Stoller and Myers, 2019).

### **Recontextualization**

Recontextualization is the idea that text and practices can change as they are used in different settings (Dowling, 2020). The theory of recontextualization also proposes that when a practice is designated as something to be taught, it undergoes a transformation (Bernstein, 2000; Chevallard, 1989). In addition, recontextualization theory examined how a practice is transformed through pedagogy and transmission, particularly in formal schooling (Bernstein, 2000).

### **Writing in Higher Education**

Writing in higher education is the subject of writing that was taught in university level.

### **Collaborative Writing**

This study referred to Matthews et al. (1995) characterizing collaborative writing in five criteria. The first is the belief that students already have necessary social skill and that they will build on their existing skill in order to reach their goals. The second is that students organize and negotiate effort themselves. The third, the activity is not monitored by the instructor. Therefore, when the questions are directed by the teacher, he/she guides the students to the information needed. The fourth, students retain draft to complete further work, and the fifth is that students assess individual, and group performance.

### **Best Practice**

Best practice is teachers' endeavors to achieve the learning objectives of a course in classroom practice that is realized in the selected approach or combination of approaches.