

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING FOR GRAMMAR DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF POSTER CREATION ON THE 2025 SUMATRA FLOOD DISASTER

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a pedagogical strategy for facilitating grammar development among first-semester vocational students in the English Business and Public Relations programs. Employing a qualitative case study design, the research explores how poster creation centered on the 2025 Sumatra flood disaster supported students' mastery of countable and uncountable nouns, relative clauses, and reported speech. Data were collected through analysis of student-produced posters, classroom observation notes, and reflective responses. The findings indicate that embedding grammar instruction within a socially relevant and visually mediated project enhanced students' grammatical awareness and communicative application. Students demonstrated increased syntactic complexity, improved noun categorization accuracy, and more consistent use of reporting structures. Furthermore, the contextualized theme stimulated engagement, empathy, and collaborative interaction. The study argues that grammar instruction becomes more effective when integrated into authentic, task-based experiences aligned with vocational communication needs. These findings contribute to the growing discourse on contextual grammar pedagogy and provide practical implications for vocational English instruction within student-centered curricular frameworks.

Keywords: contextual pedagogy, grammar instruction, Project-Based Learning, qualitative case study, vocational English

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji penerapan Pembelajaran Berbasis Proyek (PBL) sebagai strategi pedagogis untuk memfasilitasi pengembangan tata bahasa di kalangan mahasiswa semester pertama program studi Bahasa Inggris Bisnis dan Hubungan Masyarakat. Dengan menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana pembuatan poster yang berfokus pada bencana banjir Sumatra tahun 2025 mendukung penguasaan mahasiswa terhadap kata benda yang dapat dihitung dan tidak dapat dihitung, klausa relatif, serta kalimat tidak langsung. Data dikumpulkan melalui analisis poster yang dibuat oleh mahasiswa, catatan observasi kelas, dan tanggapan reflektif. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa penyisipan pengajaran tata bahasa dalam proyek yang relevan secara sosial dan dimediasi secara visual meningkatkan kesadaran tata bahasa dan penerapan komunikatif mahasiswa. Siswa menunjukkan peningkatan kompleksitas sintaksis, akurasi kategorisasi kata benda yang lebih baik, dan penggunaan struktur pelaporan yang lebih konsisten. Selain itu, tema yang dikontekstualisasikan tersebut merangsang keterlibatan, empati, dan interaksi kolaboratif. Studi ini berpendapat bahwa pengajaran tata bahasa menjadi lebih efektif ketika diintegrasikan ke dalam pengalaman otentik berbasis tugas yang selaras dengan kebutuhan komunikasi kejuruan. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada wacana yang berkembang tentang pedagogi tata bahasa kontekstual dan memberikan implikasi praktis untuk pengajaran bahasa Inggris kejuruan dalam kerangka kurikulum yang berpusat pada siswa.

Kata Kunci: pedagogi kontekstual, pengajaran tata bahasa, Pembelajaran Berbasis Proyek, studi kasus kualitatif, bahasa Inggris kejuruan

INTRODUCTION

Grammar instruction remains a foundational component of English language education, particularly in vocational contexts where linguistic precision directly influences professional communication. Students enrolled in English Business and Public Relations programs are expected to produce grammatically accurate reports, promotional materials, and formal correspondence. Nevertheless, grammar teaching frequently relies on rule memorization and discrete exercises that may not sufficiently promote meaningful application.

Contemporary language pedagogy increasingly advocates for contextualized and learner-centered approaches that integrate form with communicative purpose. Project-Based Learning (PBL) represents one such approach, emphasizing inquiry, collaboration, and the production of tangible outcomes. Rather than positioning grammar as isolated knowledge, PBL situates linguistic structures within authentic problem-solving contexts, thereby encouraging functional language use.

The 2025 flood disaster in Sumatra provided a relevant thematic foundation for implementing a grammar-integrated project. Natural disasters present multidimensional social realities involving human impact, environmental consequences, and institutional response. By engaging with this topic through poster creation, students were required not only to visually represent the event but also to articulate its effects using specific grammatical structures. This integration aimed to transform grammar learning from abstract rule manipulation into purposeful communication.

This study seeks to investigate how poster-based Project-Based Learning supports grammar development among first-semester vocational students. It addresses the following research question:

How does poster-oriented Project-Based Learning facilitate the development of selected grammatical structures in a vocational English classroom?

RESULT

The findings of this study provide evidence that Project-Based Learning can function as an effective mediating framework for grammar development within vocational English education. Unlike conventional grammar instruction, which frequently emphasizes decontextualized drills, the poster-based intervention required students to deploy grammatical structures as communicative resources. This shift from rule rehearsal to purposeful expression aligns with contemporary perspectives on form-focused instruction, which argue that grammatical knowledge is strengthened when embedded in meaningful discourse.

Students' improved ability to differentiate countable and uncountable nouns suggests that contextualized usage facilitates conceptual clarity. Rather than memorizing noun classifications, learners engaged with quantifiers in situational appropriate descriptions of disaster impact. This supports the argument that grammatical competence develops more sustainably when learners interact with language as a tool for representation rather than as an abstract system.

The increased use of relative clauses indicates progression toward greater syntactic elaboration. By describing victims, locations, and events through clause embedding, students extended simple sentence patterns into more complex constructions. Such development reflects the cognitive benefits of project-based tasks, which encourage elaboration and specificity. Furthermore, guided teacher feedback during drafting stages appears to have enhanced noticing of structural inaccuracies, reinforcing the role of scaffolding within PBL environments.

speech usage revealed that learners were able to approximate authentic reporting conventions. The disaster theme naturally invited narrative reconstruction of victims' statements, providing a functional rationale for tense shifts and pronoun adjustments. This contextual necessity likely supported deeper processing of indirect speech structures compared to traditional transformation exercises.

Beyond structural gains, the project also influenced affective engagement. Students' reflective responses indicated heightened empathy and social awareness. Emotional involvement may have contributed to sustained attention and motivation, factors frequently associated with improved learning outcomes. The integration of a socially relevant issue thus expanded grammar instruction beyond linguistic form toward ethical and civic reflection.

Importantly, the study contributes to vocational English pedagogy by demonstrating how grammar learning can be aligned with professional competencies. In business and public relations contexts, practitioners must accurately describe events, report stakeholder statements, and construct coherent explanations. The poster project simulated such communicative demands in a pedagogically structured environment. Therefore, the intervention illustrates how PBL can bridge linguistic development and occupational relevance.

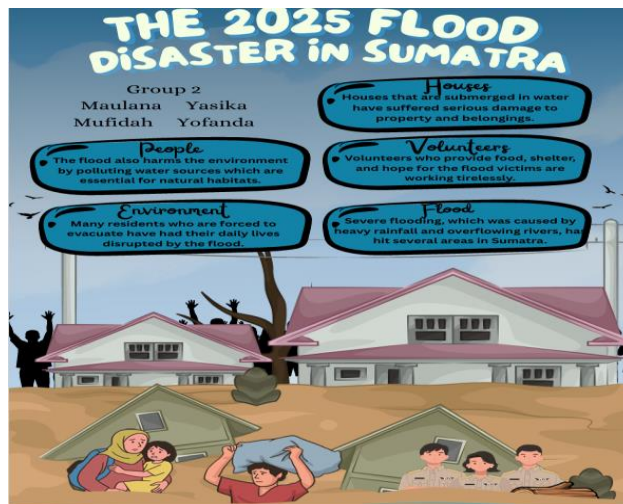
Nevertheless, minor inaccuracies persisted, particularly in tense consistency and quantifier agreement. These findings indicate that while PBL enhances meaningful application, explicit corrective guidance remains essential. Effective grammar pedagogy may therefore require a balanced integration of project-based production and targeted form-focused clarification.

Overall, the study underscores the potential of contextualized, artifact-driven learning to transform grammar instruction into a dynamic and socially responsive practice. By situating grammatical structures within authentic thematic exploration, educators may foster both linguistic precision and learner engagement in vocational settings.



Picture 1. Poster of Paradise Submerged

Source of picture : Students' PBL using Canva



Picture 2. Poster of The 2025 Flood Disaster in Sumatra (1)

Source of picture : Students' PBL using Canva



Picture 3. Poster of The 2025 Flood Disaster in Sumatra (2)

Source of picture : Students' PBL using Canva

Analysis of Poster Artifacts

Analysis of student posters revealed that most participants were able to integrate the required grammatical structures into meaningful written descriptions accompanying their visual designs. Three primary findings emerged from the artifact analysis.

Use of Countable and Uncountable Nouns.

Students demonstrated improved awareness in distinguishing countable and uncountable nouns when describing disaster impacts. Common examples included:

- (1) Many houses were destroyed by the flood.
- (2) There was much water in the village.
- (3) The victims needed food and clean water.

Most students correctly used quantifiers such as many with plural count nouns and much with uncountable nouns. However, minor inconsistencies appeared in some posters, such as “many water” or “much houses,” indicating partial mastery. Overall, noun categorization accuracy was considerably higher than observed in prior conventional exercises conducted earlier in the semester.

Use of Relative Clauses

Relative clauses were frequently used to describe affected individuals and locations. Examples included:

- (1) This is a child who was rescued by volunteers.
- (2) The houses that were near the river were damaged.
- (3) The people who lost their homes stayed in temporary shelters.

Students showed stronger control over relative pronouns who and that, though occasional omission of relative pronouns was observed (e.g., “The people lost their homes stayed in tents”). Despite minor syntactic errors, most students successfully applied relative clauses to provide additional information, demonstrating functional understanding.

Use of Reported Speech Classroom Observation Findings

Reported speech appeared in students' attempts to represent victims' experiences:

- (1) The woman said that she needed help.
- (2) The children said that they were afraid.
- (3) The volunteer explained that the government would send more aid.

While tense consistency errors occasionally occurred, the majority of students correctly shifted pronouns and time expressions. The contextual nature of the disaster theme appeared to support authentic usage of reporting structures.

Classroom Observation Findings Student Reflection Themes

Observation notes indicated high student engagement during poster planning and creation stages.

Compared to previous grammar lessons that relied on worksheets, students were more active in discussing grammar usage while designing their posters. Peer interaction frequently included grammar-focused negotiation, such as debating whether to use *who* or *which*, or whether a noun was countable.

Students demonstrated increased ownership of their learning, asking clarification questions and revising sentences voluntarily. The creative component of poster design appeared to reduce anxiety commonly associated with grammar-focused lessons.

Student Reflection Themes

The analysis of students' reflective responses revealed three major themes. First, there was a noticeable increase in motivation, as students expressed that learning grammar through a real disaster case made the lesson more meaningful and less monotonous. Second, students demonstrated a better understanding through practice; many indicated that constructing sentences for their poster enabled them to grasp grammatical concepts more effectively than completing traditional exercises alone. Third, emotional engagement emerged as an important theme, with several students expressing empathy toward flood victims. This suggests that contextualized learning not only supports cognitive development but also fosters students' emotional and social awareness.

DISCUSSION

The present study demonstrates that Project-Based Learning (PBL) can serve as an effective pedagogical framework for facilitating grammar development in vocational English education. Unlike traditional rule-based grammar instruction, which often isolates form from communicative function, the poster-based project situated grammatical structures within a meaningful socio-environmental context. This integration aligns with form-focused instruction theories that advocate embedding grammar within authentic communication (Ellis, 2016).

The findings indicate that students were able to meaningfully apply countable and uncountable nouns, relative clauses, and reported speech when these structures were required to serve communicative purposes. This supports Guo et al. (2020), who found that PBL promotes deeper cognitive engagement through purposeful language use. In this study, grammar was not treated as abstract knowledge but as a functional tool to describe disaster impact, report victims' statements, and explain causal relationships.

Moreover, the improvement observed in students' use of relative clauses confirms that structured scaffolding within project work enhances syntactic complexity. Previous studies (Han & Nassaji, 2021) emphasize that grammar acquisition improves when learners receive guided feedback during meaningful production tasks. In the present project, teacher feedback during poster drafting allowed students to revise their grammatical forms before final submission, promoting noticing and self-correction.

From a sociocultural perspective, collaborative interaction during poster creation contributed to grammar awareness. Students engaged in peer negotiation regarding noun quantifiers and relative pronouns, reflecting Vygotskian principles of socially mediated learning. The collaborative dimension of PBL thus functioned as a mechanism for co-constructing grammatical knowledge rather than passively receiving instruction.

Another significant finding concerns emotional and contextual engagement. The theme of the 2025 Sumatra flood disaster fostered empathy and social awareness. Emotional engagement has been shown to enhance memory retention and motivation (Kondratjeva, 2022). By linking grammar learning to a real disaster event, the lesson moved beyond linguistic mechanics toward meaningful reflection. This suggests that contextual authenticity may strengthen both affective and cognitive dimensions of grammar acquisition.

Importantly, the findings contribute specifically to vocational English education. Students in English Business and Public Relations programs must construct grammatically accurate professional narratives, reports, and statements. The poster project simulated communicative tasks such as reporting information and describing events—skills essential in corporate communication. Therefore, this study extends existing PBL research by demonstrating its relevance not only for general EFL classrooms but also for profession-oriented language training.

Despite its contributions, this study also reveals that PBL does not eliminate grammatical errors entirely. Minor inaccuracies in tense consistency and quantifier usage indicate that project-based grammar

learning must be supported by systematic feedback and structured review sessions. Thus, PBL should complement, rather than replace, explicit grammar instruction.

Overall, this study advances the discourse on contextualized grammar pedagogy by empirically illustrating how artifact-based qualitative analysis can reveal grammar development within authentic projects. It offers a replicable model for integrating PBL into grammar-focused vocational courses, contributing to ongoing curriculum transformation initiatives in Indonesian higher education.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative case study demonstrates that Project-Based Learning can effectively support grammar development among first-semester vocational students in English Business and Public Relations programs. Through poster creation on the 2025 Sumatra flood disaster, students practiced countable and uncountable nouns, relative clauses, and reported speech in authentic contexts.

The findings suggest that contextualized PBL enhances grammatical awareness, engagement, and communicative competence. Embedding grammar instruction within meaningful projects transforms traditional rule-based teaching into interactive and reflective learning experiences.

Pedagogical Implications

The pedagogical implications of this study highlight that grammar instruction is most effective when integrated into authentic and meaningful tasks rather than taught in isolation. By embedding grammar within real-world contexts, students are better able to understand its practical use and apply it more naturally. In addition, visual-based projects such as posters can enhance grammar retention by engaging learners in both creative and linguistic processes. Incorporating socially relevant themes also plays a significant role in increasing students' emotional engagement and motivation, making the learning experience more meaningful and memorable. Therefore, vocational English programs should consider adopting Project-Based Learning (PBL) approaches to better align grammar instruction with professional communication needs and to prepare students more effectively for real-world workplace contexts.

Limitations

This study was limited to one classroom context and relied primarily on qualitative artifact analysis. Future research may incorporate mixed methods approaches, including pre- and post-tests, to measure measurable grammar improvement.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies may focus on comparing Project-Based Learning (PBL) with traditional grammar instruction through experimental research designs to determine their relative effectiveness. In addition, further research could investigate the long-term retention of grammar when taught through project-based tasks, providing insight into the sustainability of learning outcomes. Future work may also explore the use of digital poster platforms and their role in supporting multimodal literacy development, particularly in enhancing students' ability to integrate visual, textual, and technological elements in language learning.

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