

**STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN ENGLISH ONLINE LEARNING  
THROUGH PROJECT-BASED LEARNING METHOD**

**THESIS**

**By**

**Rahma Amalia Insyra**

**Student Number: 06011281823043**

**English Education Study Program**

**Language and Arts Education Department**



**FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

**SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY**

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**Rahma Amalia Insyra**

**Student Number: 06011281823043**

**This thesis was defended by the writer in the final program examination and  
was approved the examination committee on:**

**Day : Thursday**

**Date : March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

**1. Chairperson : Erlina, S.Pd., M.Pd., M.Ed. (  )**

**2. Member : Drs. Muslih Hambali, MLIS. (  )**

**Indralaya, March 24<sup>th</sup> 2022  
Certified by  
Coordinator of English Education  
Study Program,**



**Hariswan Putera Jaya, S.Pd., M.Pd.  
NIP. 197408022002121003**

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**Rahma Amalia Insyra**

**06011281823043**

**English Education Study Program**

**Department of Language and Art Education**

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**INDRALAYA**

**2022**

Approved by

Advisor,



**ERLINA, S.PD., M.PD., M.ED.**

**NIP. 197409082000122001**

Certified by

Head of English Education Study Program,



**HARISWAN PUTERA JAYA, S.PD., M.PD.**

**NIP. 197408022002121003**



## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned,

Name : Rahma Amalia Insyra

Student's Number : 06011281823043

Study Program : English Education

Certify that the thesis entitled "*Students' Engagement in English Online Learning through Project-Based Learning Method*" is my own work and I did not do any plagiarism or inappropriate quotation against the ethic and rules commended by Ministry of Education of Republic of Indonesia Number 17, 2010 regarding plagiarism in higher education. Therefore, I deserve to face court if I am found to have plagiarized this work.

Indralaya, March 24<sup>th</sup> 2022

The Undersigned,



Rahma Amalia Insyra

06011281823043

## **THESIS DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my parents and family who always support me in the tough times, and encourage me to be patient and never give up.

## **MOTTO**

إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

*inna ma'al-'usri yusrā*

*“With hardship [will be] ease” (QS.Al-insyirah: 6)*

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Hopefully, this thesis can benefit and help the teachers at schools, lecturers and students in the English Education Study Program, and all the readers who need it.

Indralaya, 2022  
The writer,

Rahma Amalia Insyra

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# **Students' Engagement in English Online Learning through Project Based Learning Method**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Students' engagement in English online learning was affected by the learning method applied in the class. This study aimed to measure the students' engagement level in English online learning through the project-based learning (PjBL) method. This study also purposed to find out the most significant aspect of engagement and identify the challenges students faced. A mix-method design of quantitative and qualitative approaches was applied to collect the data from the sixth-semester students of the English Education Study Program Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Sriwijaya University. A total of 73 participants filled out the questionnaire adapted from Wang et al. (2014). Based on the Wang et al. theory, students' engagement was divided into emotional engagement, behavioral engagement, and cognitive engagement. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis and one way ANOVA (Analysis of Variant) test. The results showed that most of the students (62%) were categorized in the high category of engagement, and the most significant aspect of engagement was cognitive engagement (mean = 29.58). After that, an interview was conducted mainly to identify students' challenges. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results identified all interviewees of low, intermediate, and high categories of engagement faced similar challenges. Bad internet connections and hard-to-do group activities were the challenges that made the PjBL method ineffective in English online learning. In addition, students were sometimes stuck in finding the idea for the project and lacked the confidence to show their abilities.

**Keywords:** *Students' Engagement, Online Learning, Project Based Learning Method, Engagement in Online Learning through Project-Based Method.*

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter introduced the background, the research questions, the objectives, and the significance of the study.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Teaching and learning activities are the interactions of a teacher with students discussing a topic of knowledge. It cannot be said successful if only the teacher is active in the class. Both the teacher and students must engage in the class activities. Students' engagement in learning can be defined as the level of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion shown by students when they are being taught, which can develop to the level of motivation that they must learn and progress independently in their education (Nelson, 2016). It is the main element of learning where the teacher is not the one-sided talker in the classroom. Gunuc (2014) mentioned that students' engagement is the quality and quantity of students' psychological states such as cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions to the learning process, as well as academic and social activities in the classroom or outside the classroom to achieve good learning outcomes.

A learning environment should be designed to the fulfillment of the learning needs of students. Students must engage in the learning activities as much as possible. They may be reluctant to take part in learning because the learning approach does not yet fully contain learning activities that can fully engage students in the learning process (Wang et al., 2014). Students' engagement increases when the teacher lets the students lead the discussion, while the teacher only acts as the observer of the class. Zulfikar et al. (2019) stated that if the teacher is not too

involved in the learning, the students tried to find information about the given topic, then their engagement in the class continued to increase. Students' engagement can also be characterized by how much they are involved in the meaningful dialogue regarding the subject being discussed in the class (Pedler & Hudson, 2020). This can be easily seen when learning takes place directly face to face in the classroom.

However, the pandemic era has completely changed the mechanism of academic learning in Indonesia. Amin and Sundari (2020) stated that technology use, such as digital teaching and social media, is not a new method that has been implemented occasionally in facilitating language teaching and learning activities. It is an alternative method for innovative learning to avoid monotonous classes and attract students' attention. Recently, it has been used intensively for learning activities to comply with lockdown regulations. So, even the teacher and the students could not meet directly in a classroom, they could communicate virtually using technology to do a teaching and learning activity that is called the online classroom or online learning.

The online classroom is a learning environment that relying entirely on technology, especially the website and internet network (Zulfikar et al., 2019). By connecting to the internet, the teacher and the students can do learning activities from home easily. Even though in the different regions, cities, or countries, they still can see and interact with each other through the screen. Online learning is considered very helpful and more practical and more efficient in collecting assignments, providing feedback, and discussing learning materials (Kumari et al., 2020). Surely, it helps a lot for students to be engaged in the class. So, it is not impossible that online learning continued to be applied on some occasions even though the pandemic has disappeared.

Looking at the situation, the teacher must choose the best teaching strategy to adapt to online learning. According to Yuliansyah and Ayu (2021), the most suitable approach to be implemented in distance learning is the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) method. It is a common teaching and learning approach to make students understand the material deeper through a team project. PjBL is an approach where the students can fully engage in building their knowledge by learning in a group or peers environment with the help of a tutor or teacher as the mediator (Amamou & Cheniti-Belcadhi, 2018). It means that the PjBL method has a purpose to make the students actively participate in the learning process by working on the project that is given by the teacher with their peers or group members.

The mechanism of PjBL is basically students-centered learning with the teacher as the observer of the class. Veselov et al. (2019) stated that PjBL is a combination of creative methods and problem searching-solving techniques to finish a project within small or big groups, which need to be explained the final results of the project that have been obtained. Its implementation includes students in planning, designing, exploring, and accomplishing the project by themselves with full responsibility and good team cooperation.

In addition, it can increase the collaboration skill of the students in sharing their opinions in their own groups, also combining those ideas into their final project (Yuliansyah & Ayu, 2021). Since the students mostly explore the knowledge by themselves, it developed their creative and innovative skills in finishing the project. In brief, teachers in a PjBL classroom take part as the mentor of the project, while the students working following their instructions. The students were taught how to examine the project, find the hypotheses by peers or team discussion, and try to solve any problem of the project with the best strategy. So, it was



not only develop their cognitive ability but also social skills during the project activities (Puangpunsi, 2021).

In English language learning, PjBL is often used as the teaching approach to increase students speaking ability. Bakar et al. (2019) concluded in a study that the PjBL strategy effectively improves the English speaking ability and communicative competence of the students, especially for those who have low proficiency in English skills. Sirisrimangkorn (2018) mentioned that PjBL in EFL class opens the opportunity for students to improve speaking skills as much as possible during the process of the project because the environment forces them to collaboratively plan, design, discuss, and organize to finish the project well. After that, the PjBL English classroom allows students to build on not only their knowledge but also social-communicative competence. The way students do the planning and presenting the project helps them to confidently practice speaking English (Kavlu, 2017). Students believed that PjBL makes a big improvement on their English learning outcomes, and they agree that it benefits them to be the responsible person in completing the project (Syakur et al., 2020).

Besides, PjBL develops students' excitement to be involved in the project given, as well as their performances and achievements (Kusumawati, 2019). Students enthusiastically do a group project in the EFL classroom and actively participate in the lesson that increased their creativity, confidence, and collaboration better than the class that does not apply the PjBL approach (Astawa et al., 2017). Since the students need to socialize with their mates, the PjBL method intensified their willingness to talk about during the project works. Hence, it could also affect the students' engagement in the classroom whether students were active or passive to finish the project was monitored directly by the teacher.

However, implementing PjBL in online classrooms is not a piece of cake. Many technical and other problems the students faced during online learning. A study by Nora et al. (2021) mentioned that some students did not have sufficient internet quota, and it was hard to manage time and teamwork in online PjBL classes. According to Kusumawati (2019), online PjBL class is not only involved students and teachers but also the parents in facilitating the learning process. It is in line with a study by Amissah (2019) that concluded lack of teacher and student preparation, lack of technology knowledge, and lots of distraction were the obstacles that happened in the online PjBL classroom. As a result, the students might not engage well in the PjBL class even if they intended to.

Applying the PjBL strategy in online learning is a new challenge for the teacher in this pandemic situation. The students also need to participate in their project and finish it on time even facing many problems. Different from the usual class environment, students not only face challenges while working on the project but also all technical problems in the online platforms. Students might need to find the solutions to make all the team members contribute to reaching the project goals. Therefore, it leads the researcher to study the students' engagement in online learning through the PjBL method at the 6<sup>th</sup> semester students of the English Education Study Program of Sriwijaya University, and also to find out the challenges that they faced while working on the project so that PjBL method can be implemented effectively in English online learning in the future.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

1. How is students' engagement in English online learning through the PjBL method?
2. Which aspect of students' engagement is the most significant between emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagements in English online learning through the PjBL method?
3. What are the challenges that the students faced in English online learning through the PjBL method?

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

1. To measure students' engagement in English online learning through the PjBL method.
2. To find out the most significant aspect of students' engagement between emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagements in English online learning through the PjBL method.
3. To identify the challenges that students faced in English online learning through the PjBL method.

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study analyzed students' engagement in learning English through the online PjBL method. Also, the researcher reviewed the challenges of online PjBL from the students' perceptions. Hopefully, this study can become a medium for students to express their opinions about the effectiveness of the PjBL learning method in the English online classroom and motivate them to participate more in the learning process. Moreover, the researcher wishes that this study can be used as feedback for the teachers to find the solutions for increasing students' engagement in the online learning through the PjBL method. Last but not least, the researcher hopes that this paper can be a beneficial source or reference for other researchers in the future.

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