

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This section discusses about the research background, research questions, research purposes, significance, framework, and previous studies.

A. Background

The effectiveness of English Language Teaching (ELT) heavily depends on the quality and appropriateness of its instructional materials. These materials are not merely supplementary tools, they form the foundation of the learning experience, guiding both teachers and students through the process of language development. As emphasized by Tomlinson (2013), well-designed materials help shape curriculum delivery, scaffold learners' progress, and enhance the overall teaching-learning process.

Over time, the principles behind ELT materials have changed significantly. The once teacher and textbook centered practices have evolved into more communicative, learner centered approaches that prioritize authentic language use, critical thinking, and active engagement (Nunan, 2003). This shift places ELT material design at the heart of language education and highlights its importance as a key pedagogical competencies for future English teachers. Material design in ELT involves more than just producing teaching aids, it requires careful planning, creating, adapting, and evaluating learning materials to stimulate learners and encourage active language use. It is a complicated process that demands a great competence, high-level of knowledge, mastery of language skills and passion of one's work. As such, designing effective ELT materials demands not only theoretical understanding but also practical creativity and pedagogical insight.

When it comes to teaching English to young learners, material design requires even more specific considerations. This area, known as English for Young Learners (EYL), involves unique pedagogical challenges and material needs. Unlike older learners, young children, usually aged 6-12, have distinct cognitive, emotional, and social developmental traits that require specialized approaches and materials (Cameron, 2001). Their shorter

attention spans, dependence on concrete experiences, and intrinsic need for play-based and multi-sensory learning mean that standard ELT materials are often inappropriate. According to Cameron (2001), effective materials for young learners must be highly engaging, visually appealing, suitable for their age, and designed to promote curiosity and active involvement. Recognizing these specific demands is crucial for anyone responsible for developing learning experiences for this vital developmental stage. In response, many teacher education programs now include dedicated courses on material design to help pre-service teachers gain the skills necessary to create, adapt, and evaluate resources tailored to diverse learning needs and contexts.

In the English Education Department at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, material design for young learners is taught through a structured course progression. After completing the Introduction to TEYL and TEYL Methodology courses in the earlier semesters, they proceed to the TEYL Material Design course in the sixth semester. This mandatory course aims to equip students with the skills to design English learning materials for young learners. Its objectives include understanding TEYL Material Design principles, evaluating teaching media and materials, designing, creating, and presenting teaching media, digital learning tools, worksheets in both paper and digital formats, and implementing these effectively. It emphasizes the importance of aligning materials with TEYL principles, curriculum goals, and learner needs. Within this course, students are expected not only to understand the theories but also to produce and evaluate their own learning materials, an outcome that is best achieved through experiential learning.

To facilitate the development of these practical skills, the course adopts a project-based learning. As Dewey (1959) stated, project-based learning allows students to engage in authentic, meaningful tasks that mirror real-world expert work to foster personal investment. Rather than merely absorbing concepts, students learn by doing. They develop skills in analyzing, evaluating, creating, and implementing learning media by cycling through brainstorming, planning, designing, refining, and presenting their materials.

Project-based learning is especially suitable for material design courses because it promotes deeper understanding, critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. Through hands-on projects, students are challenged to apply their knowledge, explore relevant issues, and construct solutions that are pedagogically sound and contextually appropriate.

As they collaborate in groups, brainstorm ideas, evaluate their materials, and revise their work based on feedback, they also build essential professional skills. The project-based learning transforms the classroom into an active, inquiry-driven environment where students experience the iterative process of teaching materials development firsthand.

In Indonesia, project-based learning has been widely applied, especially in higher education. It has a bunch of compelling reasons, such as deepening students' understanding through real-world application, building students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, enhancing collaboration and communication among students, and encouraging independent learning and ownership (Rachmawati et al., 2024). For these reasons, the project-based learning is increasingly applied across various university-level courses, including TEYL Material Design course.

This current study aims to understand how the lecturer designs the project-based learning in the TEYL Material Design course and to explore students' perception. The students' perception focuses on the affective, cognitive, and conative aspects. Affective will analyze students' interest, motivation, and attitude. Then, cognitive will examine the understanding of the concept of project-based learning and how it is applied in completing the TEYL Material Design project assignments. Meanwhile, conative will analyze students' active participation in the TEYL Material Design course learning process and their ability to work together in groups.

Several studies have been conducted related to students' perceptions of the application of project-based learning methods in higher education. A study by Yulianti and Roza (2023) focused on how English education department students' perceptions of the project-based learning implementation in English for Journalism class and its impact on students' learning experience. As a result, students positively perceived the method, which influenced their attitudes toward learning. Kartika (2020) investigated Indonesia undergraduate students' perceptions of project-based learning in the Critical Reading class, where students reported enhanced reading skills and deeper comprehension as outcomes of the method. Meanwhile, Batubara, Musthafa, and Gunawan (2023) focused on the implementation stages of project-based learning in an Academic Writing class, concluding that the project-based learning was effectively applicable in the teaching of writing.

While those studies offer valuable insights into students' perceptions and the use of project-based learning in various language-related courses, they differ in course focus and scope. None of them specifically discussed about how project-based learning in the TEYL Material Design course, a course that requires students not only apply the theoretical knowledge but also to creatively design materials tailored to the developmental characteristics of young learners. Most studies concentrate on the outcomes and skill development, without exploring the students' perceptions through a structured framework, such as the affective, cognitive, and conative dimensions. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by exploring students' perceptions of the project-based learning in the TEYL Material Design course.

This study addresses the research gap by understanding how the lecturer designing the project-based learning in the TEYL Material and exploring the English Education Department students' perceptions of it, focusing on their affective, cognitive, and conative responses. Understanding students' perceptions of project-based learning in the TEYL Material Design course is crucial for optimizing instructional strategies. By exploring their experiences, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how the project-based learning supports students in learning TEYL principles and developing effective teaching materials. If students perceive project-based learning as beneficial, educators can refine its application to enhance engagement and learning outcomes. Through this exploration, the study aims to contribute meaningfully to developing student-centered approaches in English language teacher education, particularly in preparing pre-service teachers to design effective materials for young learners.

B. Research Questions

There are two research questions in this research:

- a. How is the lecturer's experience in designing the project-based learning in the TEYL Material Design course in the English Education Department at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung?
- b. What are the students' perceptions of the application of project-based learning methods in the TEYL Material Design course in the English Education Department at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung?

C. Research Purposes

Based on the research question above, this study has two purposes:

- a. To understand how the lecturer's experience in designing the project-based learning at the English Education Department of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung.
- b. To explore students' perceptions of the application of the project-based learning in the TEYL Material Design course.

D. Research Significance

This study aims to understand how the lecture designing the project-based learning in the TEYL Material Design course and to explore the students' perceptions. Therefore, this study anticipates the following significant levels:

Theoretically, this study provides an insight into how the lecturer designing the project-based learning in the TEYL Material Design course in higher education. It offers a framework for comprehending how the project-based learningsupports the growth of material design abilities and improves student-centered learning.

This study also provides valuable insights for educators and students. For educators, the findings can be used to optimize the application of the project-based learning in the TEYL Material Design course. For students, this study draws attention to the advantages and difficulties of the project-based learning method, which promotes better learning strategies.

E. Research Framework

Project-based learning is a student-centered instructional introduced by the American philosopher and educator John Dewey. Motivated by constructivist theories developed by Gergen (1995), Piaget and Inhelder (1969), and Vygotsky (1978), this theory emphasizes that learners actively construct knowledge through meaningful and contextual experiences. According to McLeod (2024), the connection between constructivism and project-based learning lies in their shared focus on real-world problem-solving, critical thinking, and decision-making.

This learning method engages students in authentic tasks that require investigation, collaboration, and the production of tangible outcomes. It supports the development of

critical thinking, creativity, communication, and teamwork skills. Chiou (2019) asserts that the project-based learning facilitates deep understanding by actively involving students in constructing knowledge, while Cudney and Kanigolla (2014) highlight how it encourages active participation throughout the learning process.

Focuses on developmentally appropriate approaches for teaching English to children, TEYL (Teaching English to Young Learners) course requires careful material selection and creation to match learners' cognitive, emotional, and linguistic needs. According to Cameron (2001), young learners benefit most from contextualized, engaging, and meaning-focused instruction that promotes fluency over accuracy. TEYL Material Design Course, a compulsory subject for the sixth-semester students in the English education department at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, implemented this learning method. This course focuses on equipping students with the theoretical and practical knowledge necessary to evaluate, design, and implement a variety of instructional materials that are developmentally appropriate for young learners. By the end of the course, students are expected to understand the principles of TEYL Material Design, create traditional and digital teaching media, design engaging worksheets, and apply these materials effectively in classroom settings.

Considering the course objectives, the project-based learning was appropriate for the TEYL Material Design course. This study was conducted to explore the lecturer's experience in designing the project-based learning in the TEYL Material Design course and the students' perceptions of it. The designing process is examined through the stage of planning, where the lecturer plan the material for the course. Simultaneously, students' perceptions are analyzed through three key aspects: affective, cognitive, and conative. The affective aspect focuses on students' interest, motivation, and attitude. The cognitive aspect examines the students' understanding. Last, the conative aspect analyzes students' active participation in the TEYL Material Design course learning process and their ability to work effectively in groups.

This research explores the lecturer's experience in designing the project-based learning in the TEYL Material Design course and the students' perceptions.

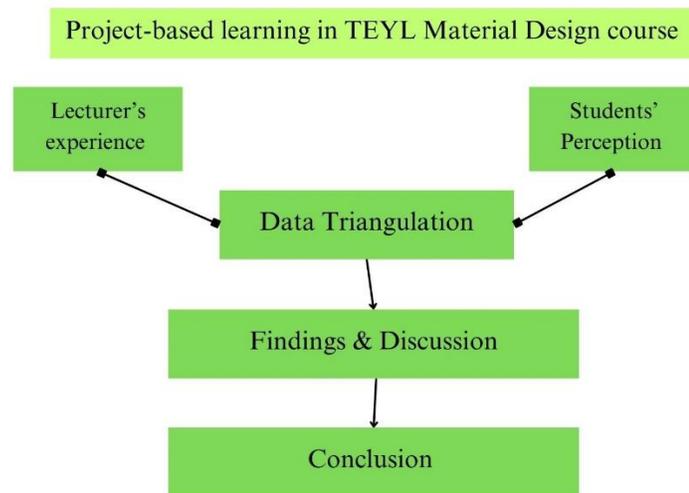


Figure 1. 1 *Conceptual Framework*

This framework underpins the study's research questions and guides the selection of methodologies. It is designed to analyze the project-based learning in the TEYL Material Design course by understanding the lecturer's experience and the students' perceptions.

Additionally, this framework is associated with constructivist learning theories, emphasizing students' active role in constructing knowledge through meaningful and contextually relevant experiences. By investigating the dynamics of project-based learning in the specific context of TEYL Material Design, this study contributes to acknowledging how student-centered approaches can be optimized to prepare future educators to meet the demands of teaching English to young learners.

F. Previous Study

Several studies have explored the project-based learning in university-level courses. Almulla (2020) highlighted that project-based learning in listening course improves student engagement by facilitating knowledge sharing and discussion, emphasizing the method's potential to promote active participation in university-level education. Abdullah, Harun, Wahab, and Suo (2022) explored project-based learning in academic writing course. They found that it enhanced students' attitudes towards learning

through collaborative activities, suggesting that project-based learning encourages a more holistic and positive learning experience.

Studies on writing and problem-solving, e.g., Argawati and Suryani (2020), show that project-based learning in critical thinking course helps students improve their writing by engaging them in real-world problem-solving activities. This is in line with Yamada (2020), who found that team-based project-based learning fosters a dynamic learning environment where students learn from each other through interaction, further enhancing their skills and confidence.

In an international context, studies like those by Alberto, Guerra, Mario, and Alexander (2019) and Kemalolu, Elif, Sahin, Muazzez, and Tugce (2022) demonstrate the positive impact of project-based learning on students' critical thinking, creativity, and teamwork, which are essential skills for success in both academic and professional settings. The studies also found that project-based learning contributes to students' language proficiency and boosts their interest and confidence in English, suggesting that the project-based learning effectively enhances linguistic and personal development.

