

Implementation of Project Based Learning in Teaching Speaking for 7th Grade Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in teaching English speaking skills to seventh-grade students. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, with data collected through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and documentation. The participants consisted of a class of seventh-grade students in an EFL context. The findings indicate that PBL was implemented through several stages, including preparation, planning, execution, monitoring, presentation, and reflection. The teacher played a significant role as a facilitator by providing scaffolding, guidance, and constructive feedback throughout the learning process. The use of technology, particularly video-based projects, helped reduce students' speaking anxiety and encouraged active participation. However, several challenges were identified, such as time constraints, varying student abilities, and limited technological resources. Overall, the findings suggest that PBL can support student motivation, engagement, and speaking development when implemented with appropriate guidance and classroom management. This study offers practical insights for teachers and educators in applying PBL to enhance speaking instruction in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Project-Based Learning; Speaking; Teacher

INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate effectively in English has become an essential skill in today's globalized world, particularly in academic and professional contexts. Among the four language skills, speaking is often considered the most challenging for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Many students experience anxiety, lack confidence, and have limited opportunities to practice speaking in meaningful contexts. These challenges often hinder their ability to develop fluency and engage in spontaneous communication (Sung & Lee, 2019).

In many EFL classrooms, traditional teaching methods still emphasize grammar and vocabulary mastery rather than communicative competence. While these approaches contribute to language accuracy, they often provide limited opportunities for students to actively use English in real-life situations. As a result, students may understand language rules but struggle to express their ideas orally. This gap highlights the need for more student-centered and interactive teaching approaches that can foster meaningful communication and improve speaking skills. One approach that has gained increasing attention is Project-Based Learning (PBL).

PBL encourages students to engage in extended learning activities that involve problem-solving, collaboration, and the application of language in authentic contexts (Becker, 2021). In EFL settings, PBL is believed to enhance student motivation, promote active participation, and provide opportunities for meaningful language use. Previous studies have shown that PBL can improve overall language proficiency and support the development of 21st-century skills such as creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking (Koehler et al., 2020; García-Sánchez, 2022).

However, despite the growing body of research on PBL, most studies focus on general language outcomes rather than specifically examining its implementation in teaching speaking skills. In addition, limited attention has been given to how teachers apply PBL in real classroom settings and how students respond to this approach, particularly in terms of engagement and participation (Yuan & Yang, 2022). This indicates a gap in understanding the practical application of PBL in EFL speaking classrooms.

Therefore, this study aims to explore how Project-Based Learning is implemented in teaching speaking skills to seventh-grade EFL students. It also seeks to identify the teacher's role, the learning process, and the challenges encountered during the implementation. By addressing these aspects, this study is expected to provide practical insights for teachers and contribute to the development of more effective speaking instruction in EFL contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

PBL increases student motivation by enhancing the relevance and engagement of learning. It assists in bridging the gap that exists between classroom education and language use in everyday situations, which is frequently problematic for traditional language teaching approaches. When given assignments that relate to their interests and real-world experiences, students are more inclined to participate and take charge of their education.

As García-Sánchez (2022) explains, PBL supports the development of 21st-century competencies, such as collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving, which are essential for academic and career success. Implementing Project-Based Learning (PBL) in EFL speaking classes requires careful planning, adaptability, and strategic instructional design to meet the diverse needs of students. Teachers must ensure

that speaking tasks are meaningful, interactive, and relevant to students' real-life experiences to fully engage learners and maximize language use.

The role of the teacher in Project-Based Learning (PBL) is significantly different from that in traditional, teacher-centered classrooms. In a PBL environment, the teacher acts not as the primary source of knowledge but as a facilitator, mentor, and guide who supports students throughout the learning process. This shift in role is essential to promote learner autonomy and to ensure that students take active responsibility for their own learning (Sung & Lee, 2019).

Previous Related Study

Despite the growing interest in PBL, limited studies have focused specifically on its implementation in EFL speaking classrooms. While previous research has demonstrated its effectiveness in enhancing general language proficiency, there is still a gap in understanding how PBL impacts the development of speaking skills specifically, particularly in terms of student engagement and teacher roles in the classroom (Yuan & Yang, 2022). By exploring how PBL is implemented in EFL speaking classes, this study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on effective language instruction and provide valuable insights for teachers seeking to integrate PBL into their teaching practices.

METHOD

Design and Samples

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in teaching speaking to EFL students. This approach was chosen to provide a detailed and contextualized understanding of classroom practices, particularly the strategies used by the teacher, the challenges encountered during the implementation process, and students' responses within a natural learning environment. Qualitative research is appropriate when the aim is to understand phenomena from participants' perspectives in real-life contexts (Creswell, 2012). In this study, the descriptive design focused on capturing and interpreting classroom events as they occurred, without manipulating variables or testing hypotheses. Data were collected through observation and interviews to obtain rich and in-depth information on teacher-student interactions and instructional practices.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling, which is commonly used in qualitative research to identify information-rich cases relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2002). The study involved one class of seventh-grade students who were actively engaged in a PBL-based speaking project during the data collection period. The class consisted of male and female students with diverse levels of English proficiency. Rather than selecting individual participants, the researcher observed the class as a whole during regular classroom activities to

capture authentic interactions and learning dynamics. In addition, the English teacher responsible for implementing PBL in the classroom was included as a key participant to provide insights into instructional strategies and challenges.

Instruments and Procedures

This study employed three main instruments to collect data: classroom observation, interviews, and documentation. Classroom observations were conducted to examine the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in teaching speaking, focusing on teacher strategies, student participation, and classroom interaction. An observation checklist and field notes were used to record important events and behaviors during the teaching and learning process. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the English teacher to gain deeper insights into the instructional strategies, challenges, and perceptions related to the implementation of PBL. The interview guide included open-ended questions that allowed the teacher to explain experiences and provide detailed responses. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Documentation was also used to support and validate the data obtained from observations and interviews. The documents included lesson plans, students' project outputs, and relevant classroom materials. These documents provided additional evidence of how PBL was implemented and helped ensure the credibility of the findings. The data collection procedures were carried out in several stages. First, the researcher conducted classroom observations during the implementation of PBL activities. Second, interviews with the teacher were conducted after the observations to clarify and deepen the findings. Finally, relevant documents were collected and analyzed. To ensure data validity and reliability, triangulation was applied by comparing and cross-checking data from observation, interviews, and documentation.

Data Analysis

The data in this study were analyzed using thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was chosen to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the data collected from classroom observations, teacher interviews, and documentation. The analysis followed six steps: (1) familiarizing with the data by reading and reviewing the transcripts and field notes, (2) generating initial codes from significant data segments, (3) searching for themes by grouping related codes, (4) reviewing themes to ensure consistency and relevance, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report. Through this process, key themes were identified, including teaching strategies, student engagement, teacher roles, and challenges in implementing Project-Based Learning (PBL). The analysis aimed to provide a clear and systematic interpretation of how PBL was applied in teaching speaking within the classroom context. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, data triangulation was applied by comparing information obtained from

observations, interviews, and documentation. This approach helped to enhance the credibility and consistency of the results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of PBL Stages

The findings reveal that Project-Based Learning (PBL) was systematically implemented through six interconnected stages: preparation, planning, execution, monitoring, presentation, and reflection. These stages provided a structured framework that guided both the teacher and students throughout the learning process, while also creating opportunities for meaningful speaking practice. In the preparation stage, the teacher established a supportive and inclusive learning atmosphere by using both Indonesian and English as instructional languages. This bilingual approach was particularly effective in reducing students' anxiety and helping them understand the lesson objectives. Classroom observations showed that students who initially hesitated to speak began to respond more actively when instructions were clarified in both languages. The teacher also initiated the lesson by asking simple and relatable questions, encouraging students to share personal experiences. This strategy helped build students' confidence and created a comfortable environment for participation.

During the planning stage, students were organized into small groups and engaged in brainstorming activities to generate ideas for their projects. They collaboratively created mind maps, which helped them organize their thoughts and structure their speaking tasks. The teacher played a crucial role in guiding this process by assisting students in assigning roles, managing time, and ensuring that each group member contributed to the task. Evidence from observations indicated that students actively exchanged ideas, negotiated meanings, and respected different opinions, which reflects the development of collaborative skills alongside language learning.

In the execution stage, students began working on their projects through group discussions, information gathering, and repeated speaking practice. The teacher provided scaffolding by modeling appropriate sentence structures, correcting pronunciation, and giving examples relevant to the task. This support enabled students to gradually improve their fluency and accuracy. Observational data showed that students who initially relied heavily on their first language began to incorporate more English expressions during discussions and rehearsals. The integration of technology, particularly in creating video projects, also enhanced students' engagement and allowed them to present their ideas more creatively.

During the monitoring stage, the teacher consistently observed students' progress and provided immediate and constructive feedback. This included correcting errors in vocabulary and pronunciation, as well as offering suggestions to improve sentence structure and clarity. The teacher's active involvement ensured that students remained focused and continued to develop their speaking skills. Evidence

from classroom observations showed that students responded positively to feedback and made noticeable improvements during subsequent speaking activities.

In the presentation stage, students presented their final projects in the form of videos. This stage served as an important opportunity for students to demonstrate their speaking abilities in a more structured and prepared manner. The use of video was particularly beneficial in reducing speaking anxiety, as students were able to rehearse before presenting. Additionally, peer feedback sessions were conducted, allowing students to evaluate each other's performance and learn from different presentations. Observations indicated that students showed increased confidence and enthusiasm during this stage.

Finally, in the reflection stage, students were guided to evaluate their own learning experiences. The teacher facilitated this process by asking reflective questions that encouraged students to identify their strengths, recognize their weaknesses, and consider ways to improve. Evidence showed that students were able to express their thoughts about the learning process and demonstrate greater awareness of their progress. This stage not only reinforced learning outcomes but also promoted learner autonomy and self-regulation.

Teacher's Role in PBL Implementation

The findings indicate that the teacher played a central role as a facilitator in the implementation of PBL. Unlike traditional teacher-centered approaches, the teacher did not dominate the learning process but instead guided and supported students throughout each stage of the project. Evidence from classroom observations showed that the teacher consistently provided scaffolding by modeling correct language use, offering examples, and giving constructive feedback. For instance, before asking students to perform speaking tasks, the teacher demonstrated appropriate sentence structures and pronunciation. This helped students understand expectations and reduced their fear of making mistakes. Furthermore, the teacher created a supportive environment by encouraging students, acknowledging their efforts, and providing positive reinforcement. The teacher also demonstrated flexibility in managing the classroom by adapting strategies based on students' needs. When students faced difficulties, the teacher provided additional explanations or simplified instructions. This facilitative role not only supported students' language development but also encouraged them to take greater responsibility for their own learning.

Student Engagement and Speaking Development

The implementation of PBL had a positive impact on students' engagement and speaking development. Students were actively involved in various activities, including group discussions, project creation, and presentations. Observational evidence showed that students participated more actively compared to traditional classroom settings. They were engaged in meaningful interactions, such as sharing

ideas, asking questions, and negotiating meaning with peers. The collaborative nature of PBL allowed students to practice speaking in a less formal and more supportive environment, which helped reduce anxiety. In addition, the use of video projects increased students' motivation and interest in learning. Students showed enthusiasm in creating their projects and were eager to present their work. This process allowed them to practice speaking repeatedly, which contributed to improvements in fluency, pronunciation, and confidence. As a result, students became more willing to express their ideas in English and participate in classroom activities.

Challenges in Implementing PBL

Despite its advantages, several challenges were identified during the implementation of PBL. One of the main challenges was the shift from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered model. This transition required the teacher to adopt new roles and strategies, which was not always easy to manage. Observations indicated that maintaining student focus and ensuring active participation required continuous effort. Time management was another significant issue. PBL involves multiple stages that require sufficient time for completion. However, limited class time often resulted in incomplete activities or rushed presentations. This affected the overall quality of students' work and learning experiences. Mixed student ability also posed a challenge. In group work, students with higher proficiency tended to dominate tasks, while those with lower proficiency were less active. This created an imbalance in participation and required the teacher to provide additional support to ensure equal involvement.

Furthermore, limited technological resources, such as unstable internet connections and insufficient digital tools, constrained the implementation of multimedia-based projects. These limitations affected students' ability to fully explore creative aspects of their projects. Student motivation also varied. Some students were initially reluctant to participate in speaking activities due to lack of confidence. However, the teacher addressed this issue by using engaging materials, providing encouragement, and selecting topics relevant to students' daily lives. Over time, these strategies helped increase students' interest and participation.

The findings demonstrate that the implementation of PBL created a collaborative, interactive, and meaningful learning environment. Students were not only engaged in completing tasks but also actively involved in the learning process. Evidence from observations showed that students became more confident in speaking, more willing to participate, and more capable of expressing their ideas in English. The combination of collaborative learning, teacher support, and the use of multimedia contributed to the development of students' speaking skills. Although challenges such as time constraints, mixed abilities, and limited resources were encountered, the teacher's adaptive strategies and supportive approach helped mitigate these issues. Therefore, PBL can be considered an effective approach for enhancing students' speaking skills and promoting active learning in EFL classrooms

The findings of this study highlight how the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) supports the development of students' speaking skills through structured stages and active teacher facilitation. One of the most significant aspects observed was the consistent use of scaffolding by the teacher throughout the learning process. The teacher modeled sentence structures, provided direct examples, and offered immediate feedback during classroom interactions. This practice aligns with Aksela and Haatainen (2019), who emphasize that scaffolding in PBL helps learners gradually construct their knowledge while reducing anxiety. In this study, scaffolding was not only used to correct linguistic errors but also to encourage students to participate more actively. As reflected in the findings, students who initially hesitated to speak began to engage more confidently during group discussions and presentations, indicating that scaffolding functioned both as instructional and motivational support.

In addition to scaffolding, the structured stages of PBL played a crucial role in promoting student engagement. The progression from preparation to reflection allowed students to actively participate in meaningful tasks, such as brainstorming ideas, creating mind maps, and producing video projects. This finding supports García-Sánchez (2022), who argues that PBL enhances student engagement by connecting learning activities to real-life contexts. In the present study, students showed increased participation when working collaboratively and discussing familiar topics, suggesting that meaningful task design contributes significantly to speaking development. Compared to traditional teacher-centered approaches, PBL created more opportunities for students to practice speaking in authentic and interactive situations.

However, the implementation of PBL was not without challenges. Time management emerged as a major issue, as the teacher needed to allocate sufficient time for each stage of the project while also fulfilling other instructional responsibilities. This finding is consistent with Becker et al. (2021), who identify time constraints as a common limitation in PBL implementation. The results showed that some activities were rushed due to limited classroom time, which may affect the depth of student learning. This suggests that successful implementation of PBL requires careful planning, flexible scheduling, and institutional support to ensure that all stages can be carried out effectively.

Another challenge identified in the findings was the presence of mixed student abilities, which influenced group dynamics and participation. Higher-proficiency students tended to dominate discussions, while lower-proficiency students were less active. This issue reflects the findings of Kormos and Csizér (2018), who note that learner characteristics significantly affect speaking performance and classroom interaction. To address this, teachers need to apply differentiated strategies and provide additional support to ensure balanced participation. The teacher in this study attempted to manage this challenge by offering guidance and encouragement, although further strategies could be explored to maximize equal involvement.

Despite these challenges, the integration of technology, particularly through video-based projects, contributed positively to students' speaking development. The findings revealed that students became more confident when presenting through video, as they had opportunities to rehearse and refine their performance. This supports Sung and Lee (2019), who argue that multimedia tools can reduce speaking anxiety and create a more engaging learning environment. In this study, the use of video not only improved students' fluency but also enhanced their creativity and collaboration skills. Students demonstrated greater enthusiasm and ownership of their learning, which indicates that technology can play a significant role in supporting PBL implementation.

The findings suggest that the effectiveness of PBL in teaching speaking lies in the combination of structured learning stages, teacher scaffolding, collaborative activities, and the integration of technology. While challenges such as time constraints and mixed abilities remain, these can be addressed through careful planning and adaptive teaching strategies. Therefore, PBL can be considered a valuable approach for promoting communicative competence, provided that it is implemented with sufficient support and flexibility in the classroom context.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in teaching speaking provides meaningful opportunities for students to actively engage in the learning process. The teacher applied several strategies, including scaffolding, modeling, and collaborative activities, which supported students in developing their speaking skills. Through structured stages of PBL, students were encouraged to participate in authentic tasks, resulting in increased confidence, motivation, and willingness to communicate in English. The findings also indicate that the teacher's role as a facilitator was essential in guiding students, providing feedback, and creating a supportive learning environment. The integration of technology, particularly video-based projects, further contributed to reducing speaking anxiety and enhancing student engagement. However, the implementation of PBL also presented several challenges, including time management, mixed student abilities, and limited resources. These challenges highlight the need for careful planning, flexible classroom management, and adequate support to ensure effective implementation. This study suggests that PBL is a valuable approach for improving students' speaking skills in EFL classrooms, particularly when supported by appropriate instructional strategies and learning conditions. For future research, it is recommended to explore how individual differences, such as motivation levels and language proficiency, influence the effectiveness of PBL, as well as to examine its long-term impact on students' communicative competence.

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