

Authentic Projects in Teaching Listening: An Overview of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in Listening for Professional Contexts

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on how project-based learning (PBL) is applied as a demonstrative learning method to foster the listening skills of second-year students of the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) in Universitas Negeri Gorontalo (UNG) for a real-world purpose. This qualitative case study explored the implementation of project-based learning (PBL) to develop listening skills among university students, utilizing classroom observations, student interactions, and document analysis for comprehensive insights. Thematic analysis of classroom observations and document analysis unveiled three significant themes: Critical Listening Competence; Active Engagement and Collaboration; Real-Life Context of Listening Skills. The results show that students made considerable progress with their listening skills by utilizing real-world projects that emulate authentic communication situations. Collaborative activities provide opportunities for peer engagement and critical thinking, creating a supportive learning environment. The study also emphasizes that educators need to adapt teaching methods, incorporating technology, and provide a variety of listening resources to prepare students for the complexities of professional listening demands. To address these challenges, recommendations for improving the implementation of PBL, including additional educator's training and the use of effective assessment tools, were made. In conclusion, the research shows how experiential learning can enhance students' listening skills.

Keywords: PBL; Listening Skills; Professional Contexts; Authentic Projects

INTRODUCTION

It is globally recognized that the ability to understand spoken language in professional settings is increasingly essential for those in the workplace context. Given that English is the most widely used language in international communication in all professional settings (Crystal, 2003), mastery of English including spoken English is very important. In other words, listening ability in English is crucial for people for them to function well in all aspects of global life, especially in the workplace. This means that the teaching of listening in English is crucial.

Unfortunately, the traditional way of teaching English listening, as Field (2010) argued, fails to prepare students for the complexities of real-world listening situations including preparing students for real-world professional environments. The conventional pedagogical approaches to developing listening skills, which often involve passive activities such as listening to lectures or audio recordings and completing comprehension exercises, are inadequate for accurately replicating the complexity and dynamic nature of real-world listening demands. These methods typically lack active engagement and fail to provide the contextual and interactive elements necessary for developing practical listening skills. As a result, students may find it challenging to transfer the listening skills they learn in the classroom to professional environments. In such settings, listening requires not only understanding the content but also interpreting tone, context, and non-verbal cues and responding appropriately. To bridge the gap, the PBL can be used to teach listening with the real-world professional listening context.

According to Laurienti, (2023), project-based learning (PBL) is an instructional approach that engages students in real-world and meaningful projects, requiring active participation and practical application of skills. PBL emphasizes hands-on, experiential learning, and is designed to foster critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities among students. PBL proposes a promising alternative to traditional methods by engaging students in real-world and meaningful projects that require active engagement and practical application of listening skills (Laurienti,2023). PBL is a student-centered pedagogy that emphasizes on active and engaged, experiential learning. It allows students to work on projects that reflect the complexity of real-world professional tasks.

The most outstanding feature of PBL is that it creates the situation of real life in classroom activities. Markham (2011) claims that PBL provides students with opportunities to participate in authentic tasks that replicate real-life challenges, which gives them experience for future professional environments. Markham further argues that in PBL students are trained to collaborate, communicate and solve the problem, skills essential in modern workplaces. This, in my opinion, will provide ample opportunities for teachers to create authentic projects to teach listening skill for professional setting.

In the department, the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) of Universitas Negeri Gorontalo (UNG), the teaching of listening skills has gradually shifted from the traditional approach to a more student-centered approach such as PBL. It has been a common belief among the lecturers, myself included, who teach listening skills, that unlike in content subjects, the implementation of project-based approaches in the teaching of receptive skills such as listening skills is regarded as challenging. The lecturers find it to be challenging to design a project-based learning experience that would test students' ability to complete projects while assessing their listening skills. This is supported by the finding of two studies conducted by Bakar et al. (2019) and Rita et al. (2016). Both studies indicated that although there are significant improvements on listening competencies shown by the students, these studies agreed on the similar challenges that the design of PBL activities that effectively target listening skills requires a considerable amount of effort and expertise on the part of the teacher. That it is demanding task to create projects that are engaging and relevant, while at the same time ensuring that they align with the learning objectives.

To find ways of helping lecturers using project-based in teaching skill, this report is written as a best practice in project-based in the course of *Listening for Professional Context*. This paper provides an overview of the use of project-based teaching in the listening skills. One of the objectives of the course is demonstrating listening competencies in topics of professional setting through the project-based method. In this report I show how PBL can be utilized to develop listening skills specifically tailored for professional purposes while at the same time examine the students' abilities in completing an authentic project. This paper also explores the theoretical foundations of project-based learning (PBL), its benefits, and its application in teaching listening skills for the students the ELESP of UNG.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Listening skill is probably the most challenging language skill to teach. Prominent scholars in the field largely have agreement on this perspective. For example, Richards (2008) claims that that teaching listening is challenging task because in listening process there are many things coming into play such as syntax, vocabulary, and discourse, in a dynamic environment. In an attempt to facilitate learners in learning listening, the scholars in the field of teaching listening capitalize on the findings in constructivist theories on how learners best learn including learn language. One of the teaching approaches that has been the focus of studies on how it facilitates learners to learn language is project-based teaching, as Ellis (2003) argued that tasks offer ample chances for learners to use language in real-life context. The effectiveness of project-based teaching in enhancing listening skills is well-documented as shown by the studies conducted across the globe (Freeman, D, (2012); Vandergrift, L (2007); Helle et.al. (2006)).

The effectiveness of PBL in improving listening skill has been shown by several studies. At least there are two broad areas related to listening skill that can be improved when using PBL. The first, is improving listening competency. The fact that PBL can improve students listening skill has been supported by finding in recent research such as that found by group of researchers in Malaysia TVET saying that Project-based learning can improve listening competency (Bakar et al., 2019). In that study they showed that those taught using PBL perform better than those who were not. Also, similar research finding on the effectiveness of PBL claims that the inclusion of PBL with higher order thinking skills facilitates the development of listening skill because in PBL students are driven to think critically and creatively while engaging in listening activities.

Secondly, PBL can promote active engagement and real-world application. This supported by study done by Kristianti & YP (2023) claiming that PBL promotes active engagement and real-world application attributed to the development of listening skill. Similarly, study by Purwati et al (2024) found that the use of PBL with higher order thinking skill supported the development of listening skill because the students have to think critically and creatively in doing the learning tasks.

Some prominent features of project-based learning that help learners in their learning. First, Project-based teaching offers real-world activities for students which is why the learning process is. This is in line with Thomas's finding (2000) claiming that PBL facilitates deeper engagement by allowing students to use the language in real-world contexts. When it comes to listening, this feature is important because the students directly involve in real -life listening situation. Secondly, Project-based teaching promote collaboration and active interaction among students which believed to aid students' skills both in speaking and listening. Helle et. al (2006) found that students involved in Project-based learning will drive students to actively participate in th elearning process that will eventually improve listening skill.

While PBL offers numerous benefits, it also has weaknesses. One major challenge is the significant time required for planning and implementation. Designing effective projects that align with learning goals demands considerable effort from educators. Another was the issue of what specific vocabularies the students should master to have an impact on how well they perform the task (Purwati et al., 2024). Other findings indicated issues related to students' level of proficiency and the design of the tasks in the projects (Silitonga & Susanti, 2023). Additionally, assessments in PBL can be subjective, complicating evaluations of student performance and understanding (Torp & Sage, 2002). These are some issues that have been a concern for educators and researchers to address and find solutions for.

Previous Related Study

There has been abundant research on the world-wide use of Task-based approach in teaching including the teaching of listening. For example, Johnson & Johnson (1998) examined the how cooperation and technology can enhance listening skill. They found that cooperative learning methods which is coupled with technology can improve listening skills by way of active engagement and collaborative problem-solving. The key advantages of this study are, firstly, it proposes a robust theoretical framework that is based on theories of cooperative learning and technology which proves to be effective in founding solid academic skill. Secondly, the results have immediate relevance in educational settings, offering teachers easy-to follow strategies to improve listening comprehension by integrating technology and cooperative learning. However, it should be noted that this study has its limitation too in that it is context-dependent, that is, the results is dependent on the technology and cooperation strategies which can be different based on the situation or technology development.

Similar studies by Smith & Graham (2010) which focused on the impact of project-based learning (PBL) on listening comprehension in English as a foreign language showed that PBL promotes students' listening comprehension in which it offers contextualized, interactive, and real-life listening.

The essential points of this research are, firstly, its main focus which is on the influence of PBL on English as foreign language especially on improving listening comprehension. Secondly, it is strongly related to the pedagogy in which it shows how project-based can improve language learning. However, the study also has weakness since it was conducted on limited sample and limited context which means that the result can not be generalized in all contexts.

METHOD

Design and Participants

This is a qualitative study that aimed to explore the implementation of PBL in a listening classroom using a case-study design. The case study method was selected over other research methods due to its ability to provide rich, detailed information about how PBL is implemented in the context of teaching listening skills. Unlike quantitative methods that may overlook the nuances of classroom dynamics, a case study allows for the examination of specific cases, making it possible to capture the complexity of student interactions and learning processes (Yin, 2018). This method was used to gain detailed information about how authentic projects help teach listening skills for professional purposes. According to Creswell (2012), case study design is appropriate for investigating complex problems and obtaining rich data. Which permits researchers to write detailed descriptions of specific cases but does not limit procedural knowledge. Utilizing this design, the current study focused on conducting a detailed exploration through classroom observation, including student interactions,

engagement, and application of listening skills during project activities. Document analysis was also conducted to support observation data. The participants who were involved in this study were comprised of students and one lecturer of ELESP-UNG. The students included 21 second-year students who enrolled while *Listening for Professional Contexts* in the even semester of the academic year 2023-2024. The lecturer was the one scheduled to teach in the course. In this study, the lecturer was also the researcher, often refer as lecturer-researcher.

Instrument and Procedures

In this case study, classroom observations were embraced as the primary data instrument, while document analysis was adopted as the secondary data instrument. Observations in the classroom were to directly see how the students interact, engage and utilize listening skills in their project-based work. This meant that naturalistic data could be collected in the learning context (Creswell, 2012). The notes documented observations based on a checklist of indicators such as peer collaboration, active involvement, responsiveness and application to the real-world skills in listening tasks.

In addition, the analysis of the course syllabus was utilized to provide a comprehensive understanding on how the syllabus supports or hinders the implementation of PBL in the classroom. The document analysis involved activities of reviewing learning objectives, examining course contents; identifying assessment methods, analyzing the instructional strategies, cross-referencing the syllabus contents with classroom observation (Anderson & Krathwohl (2001), Bell (2010)). For the purpose of providing supporting insights, the 2023 version of the syllabus for the *Listening for Professional Contexts* course was analyzed. This is the latest version of the syllabus.

The study was conducted during the even semester of the 2023-2024 academic year in the *Listening for Professional Contexts* class at ELESP-UNG. The procedure followed these steps:

1. Preparation and Planning
 - Oral consents were obtained from the students to conduct classroom observations. An informed consent process was carried out to ensure ethical compliance, emphasizing participant confidentiality and voluntary participation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).
 - The researcher developed a structured observation checklist based on the objectives of the study and previous frameworks for evaluating student engagement and learning (Reeve et al., 2004).
2. Classroom Observations
 - The lecturer-researcher observed a total of four sessions, each lasting 200 minutes (2 credits) focusing on authentic project-based activities designed to enhance listening skills.

- During the class sessions, the researcher-lecturer, actively monitored students' engagement, interactions, and application of listening skills during project-based tasks. Take detailed notes during and after each session. The observation checklist used is the following:

Observation Checklist for Project-Based Learning in Listening Skills

Date : _____

Session No. : _____

Time : _____

No.	Observation Criteria	Indicators	Yes	No	Comments
Enhanced listening competency					
1	Students demonstrate effective listening strategies (e.g., note-taking, summarizing)	Able to summarize content accurately			
2	Students engage in critical listening (e.g., interpreting tone and emotion).	Reflects understanding of nuances in speakers' dialogue			
3	Students ask clarifying questions during discussions.	Actively seeks further understanding			
Active Engagement and Collaboration					
4	Students participate actively in group activities.	Shows involvement in discussions and role assignments			
5	Students collaborate on project tasks	Works cooperatively with peers			
6	Peer feedback is provided during group presentations.	Engages in constructive critique			
Real-World Application of Skills/Authenticity					
7	Projects reflect real-life scenarios relevant to professional contexts.	Uses authentic materials (e.g., interviews, podcasts)			
8	Students demonstrate application of listening skills in presentations.	Applies listening comprehension during project discussions			

9	Students adapt their listening approaches based on project tasks.	Modifies strategy for different listening contexts (e.g., interviews)			
General Observations					
10	The lecturer facilitates engaging and supportive classroom environments.	Encourages student participation and interaction			
11	The syllabus is effectively aligned with project goals.	Clear presentation of learning objectives and assessments			
12	Technology and resources aid in project implementation.	Utilizes tools that enhance learning experiences			
Additional Notes					
	Overall Impression on Student Engagement				
	Effectiveness of Group Collaboration				
	Challenges Observed in Implementation				
	Suggestions for Improvement				

Data Analysis

Data from the class observation and document analysis were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was employed to synthesize findings, as this method is effective for analysing qualitative data in educational research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using observation key indicators as the framework for identifying and interpreting themes, the analysis was done in three phases, which were:

a. Coding

Data from classroom observations and document analysis will be transcribed and systematically coded to identify key themes about the way authentic projects support listening skills. The coding will be based on observation indicators like involvement, understanding, and use of listening techniques.

b. Theme Development

Codes will be organized through the observation indicators into global themes. These themes will highlight important components of student prowess: efficacy in engaging with authentic content, applying listening

skills in a professional setting, and working collaboratively on project-based activities.

c. Interpretation and analysis

The recurring themes will be analyzed to comprehend how the authentic works transform the listening skills of the students. Emerging patterns from classroom interactions and fieldnotes as well as analyzed documents will reveal rich data on the range of learning experiences that students had and how effective project-based learning was to develop students' listening skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis of the data collected through classroom observations and document analysis uncovered three primary themes illustrating the application of authentic project in PBL in developing listening skills for professional contexts: enhanced listening competency; active engagement and collaboration; and real-world application of skills. Each theme emphasizes the various dimensions through which PBL influenced students' listening abilities and overall learning experiences.

Enhanced Listening Competency

The research revealed significant improvements in students' listening abilities when engaged in PBL activities. Feedback indicated that students were increasingly able to understand spoken language, identify salient points in conversations, and detect others' speech features, like tone and emotion_ skills that are essential for communicating in professional workplaces. The results are supported by the study of Bakar et al. (2019) suggested that students who learned through PBL outperformed those who were taught using traditional.

Students were asked to listen to different kinds of real conversational scenarios, such as business interviews, selling things in the marketplace, and podcasts recounting what went on in one's vacation; this provided one kind of solution as well as skill development exercises. Using authentic speech inputs from everyday life, students consequently had to modify listening strategies in response to their perception of contexts, reflecting what Richards (2008) described as the complexities inherent in the listening process. For example, the lecturer-researcher noted instances where students actively engaged in discussions about the clarity and effectiveness of the speakers' communication styles, contributing to a deeper understanding of effective listening.

During the classroom observations, several students reported that their listening skills are better as a result of PBL activities. Some students reported increased confidence in their ability to understand spoken English in professional contexts. Another stated, "After working on the project, "I can now identify the key points in a conversation without having to rewind the audio multiple times." Another

said, "I feel more confident asking questions during discussions after listening to real-world examples." These are the responses that reflect an improvement in their ability to engage with spoken language and critical analysis.

Students were observed applying specific listening strategies, such as note-taking, summarizing spoken content, and asking clarifying questions. This, in turn, not only enhanced their comprehension skills but also fostered metacognition regarding their listening processes. It can be seen from this at different stages of teaching and learning how much flexibility aspects have changed, aligning with the findings of Vandergrift (2007), who stated that effective listening instruction should entail making students think actively about how they can work with this new information productively rather than just processing it passively.

Active Engagement and Collaboration

This discussion about this theme highlights the role of collaboration in enhancing student interactions during PBL activities. PBL, in essence, encourages collaboration and communication, where students' complete tasks that require shared listening and understanding, providing an environment suitable to active learning. As Helle et al. (2006) noted, students were seen not only listening to audio materials but also participating in peer discussions and problem-solving with colleagues during the observations.

Students were encouraged to participate in group projects where they had to provide information gathered from audio material, facilitating discussions to provoke discussion that needed critical listening. This collaborative context empowered students to share insights and pose questions to one another, creating an environment conducive to active learning. The findings are in line with Markham's (2011) assertion that PBL provides opportunities for authentic tasks that replicate real-life challenges, urging students to collaborate, communicate, and collectively produce knowledge.

Additionally, another student remarked, "I now ask questions during discussions, which I never did before," reflecting a shift toward active engagement with the content. These responses were documented through direct observation notes and post-activity reflections, which revealed that students were not only applying listening strategies, such as summarizing and note-taking, but also engaging in critical thinking about the materials presented.

In groups at least, students almost always listened because their exercises involved consideration of consensus or negotiation of meaning. This led this lecturer to observe that listening was an important element of group interaction. This cooperative engagement helped to create a sense of community among students, further motivating them to develop their listening skills in a supportive environment. Feedback from students indicated that they valued the group

dynamic, which not only enhanced their listening competencies but also bolstered their confidence in public speaking and interaction.

However, some challenges may arise when implementing PBL. First, different levels of students' proficiencies can affect the dynamics of groups and collaboration. Some may struggle to contribute effectively, leading to imbalanced participation. Second, resource availability can limit the feasibility of certain projects, especially if authentic materials or technology are needed. Last but not least, teachers need to take additional trainings and workshops so they could implement PBL confidently without apprehension, considering that the traditional classroom will never equip a teacher with skill or knowledge to do this (Silitonga & Susanti, 2023).

Real-World Application of Skills

Another important focus of this research is the importance of applying listening skills in meaningful, authentic situations as well as professional contexts. Students were assigned projects that mirrored the types of listening activities they would encounter in their careers, such as participating in mock interviews, engaging in professional presentations, and conducting focus group discussions. This hands-on approach aligns with Kreber's (2006) findings regarding the importance of experiential learning in higher education, suggesting that students benefit greatly when theoretical knowledge is linked to practical applications. Students in this study reported feeling motivated by the relevance of the tasks, which mirrored real-life professional expectations, thus enhancing their intrinsic motivation to improve their listening skills.

By utilizing observations and document analysis, including student reflection sheets and peer feedback, the research captured a qualitative measure of student improvement. This methodical approach allowed for a rich understanding of how PBL facilitated the development of listening skills, highlighting the effectiveness of authentic tasks in preparing students for real-world listening demands.

Additionally, students also showed an increased awareness in the nuance of professional listening, such as the ability to read between the lines and respond appropriately to both verbal and non-verbal cues. From students' enthusiasm, it can be concluded that there is a stronger link between their classroom learning and use authentic material from the real world. The exercises helped students to better picture the professional competencies necessary for their future careers. This is in line with the study done by Purwati et al. (2024), which found that the significance of authentic learning experiences, reinforcing the idea that when students perceive the relevance of their learning, their engagement and skill development dramatically improve.

The results of this study underline the effectiveness of PBL in enhancing listening skills specifically tailored for professional purposes. The thematic

analysis revealed that through engaging in authentic projects, students were better equipped to handle the complexities of listening tasks in real-world contexts. This supports Creswell's (2012) perspective on case study design which allows for in-depth exploration of the interaction between students and their learning environment.

Enhanced listening competency was indicated during the project activities, with students demonstrating significant progress in their ability to engage with authentic professional-related audio materials. Such findings are consistent with Vandergrift's (2007) argument that the benefits of contextualized language learning demonstrate a clear need for PBL in developing robust listening skills.

Participating in collaborative projects not only helped develop skills but also created a classroom culture of mutual support and shared learning experiences. As Smith & Graham (2010) noted, project-based approaches promote interactive and contextualized listening, leading to better comprehension outcomes. This was reflected in the students' ability to articulate their understanding of complex materials when assessed through peer discussions and presentations.

In addition, PBL projects allowed for students to further engage in using listening skills that they would otherwise demonstrate in the work field. Simulations during class provide students with a real-life listening environment where they have to listen to someone speak in English in a natural and authentic context, which is in accordance with the findings of Purwati et al. (2024) emphasized the need to take listening beyond just the listening skill as applied through higher-order thinking in authentic contexts.

Further, several recommendations for improvement following the results of the research can be presented. To conduct PBL successfully, the author recommended that professional development programs must enable educators with effective PBL strategies and emphasizing lesson planning and use of authentic materials (Bakar et al., 2019). The inclusion of technology, the use of tools like an audio editing program, the benefits of collaborative platforms where students can use resources (Coyle et. al, 2010).

Other recommendations are expanding listening activities to include NPR-style podcasts and TED Talks, which are able to fit many learning styles (Markham, 2011); one feature of focused vocabulary instruction is pre-teaching key terms, which is able to aid the learner in understanding what he/she is reading (Helle et. e.g., 2006); self-assessment and peer review allows students to know their and their peer strengths (Purwati et. al., 2024). For listening tasks, guided notes are another scaffolding strategy that will support students. Lastly, future research needs to follow the long-term effects of PBL to verify its efficacy. By implementing these suggestions, students will be more engaged and better prepared for professional listening requirements.

CONCLUSION

Overall, at a conclusion, this study, which explored the project-based learning (PBL) strategy as the use of a pedagogic approach implemented in listening class, provides impactful positive points. The themes of improved listening skills, participation and cooperation, and practical use of listening skills make it clear that PBL can help prepare students for the listening requirements of the workplace. To use PBL effectively, teachers should focus on key strategies. First, it's essential to define clear objectives by establishing learning outcomes that align with real-world tasks. Incorporating authentic materials is also crucial; using real-world audio sources relevant to students' professional contexts can significantly enhance engagement. Facilitating collaboration among students encourages teamwork, fostering peer learning, and improving communication skills. Well-crafted task design coupled with the integration of authentic listening materials will help navigate vocabulary and proficiency challenges, allowing learners to engage in meaningful project-based activities. Additionally, providing ongoing feedback through regular sessions can guide student progress and allow for adjustments in teaching methods, ensuring that the PBL approach is both effective and responsive to student needs. As PBL educators continue with strategies that shift their classrooms, so too should they adapt to develop creative approaches that move beyond helping students listen and cultivate authentic learning experiences for our students to enrich their professional readiness.

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