



Examining the Efficacy of the Project-Based Learning in Enhancing English-Speaking Skills among Students

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the efficacy of implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) as a pedagogical model in improving students' English-speaking skills. This study used a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis. The research subjects were divided into two classes: an experimental class and a control class, using a purposive sampling technique. The experimental class used PjBL, while the control class used the conventional learning model. Quantitative data was obtained through pre-test and post-test of speaking ability, then analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U test. Simultaneously, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews to describe students' responses to the implementation of the PjBL. The results showed that PjBL model had a significant impact on students' English-speaking ability than the conventional method. Thus, it is recommended to teachers of English to implementing the PjBL model in teaching English language, especially in improving speaking skills among students.

Introduction

English, recognized globally as an essential language, holds an essential place across numerous disciplines, including education. In Indonesia's current educational environment, there is a strong emphasis on encouraging students to communicate effectively in English. Mastery of English communication is increasingly regarded as a critical skill for students, serving as a foundational competency that supports their overall learning journey (Trianasari et al., 2024). The ability to speak English effectively is often seen as a key indicator of a person's readiness to meet the demands of modern educational environments. However, many students face ongoing difficulties when trying to speak in English. Common challenges include limited vocabulary, low confidence, and struggles in forming grammatically correct sentences (Rusdin & Purwati, 2023).

According to Hidayati et al. (2023), to address these issues, the Indonesian government has taken steps to enhance English communication skills through the implementation of

innovative curricula such as the Merdeka Curriculum, which aims to encourage transformational changes in education. One prominent teaching approach employed is Project-Based Learning (PjBL), offering a comprehensive and interactive learning experience. Prior studies support this approach. Shi et al. (2024) in their studies found that engaging students in authentic PjBL activities could encourage active participation, assist collaboration, and provide opportunities to learn in diverse, real-world contexts. Additionally, Ulfah Hoesny et al. (2024) demonstrated that PjBL considerably improved students' oral proficiency, positively affecting grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension. Similarly, Elsa et al. (2021) revealed that PjBL promoted vocabulary development, accuracy, fluency, and confidence, largely due to its practical, hands-on nature that encouraged active learning and real-world communication.

Considering teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), enhancing students' communicative competence is of utmost importance. Given the rising popularity of PjBL, it is essential to evaluate its effectiveness compared to traditional teaching approaches. This study aims to examine several key aspects related to English-speaking proficiency and the application of the PjBL model. Initially, it evaluates the current level of English-speaking skills among students before implementing the PjBL approach. Subsequently, it compares the progress in English-speaking abilities between students participating in PjBL activities and those receiving conventional instruction. Also, it investigates students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the PjBL model in improving their English communication skills. These objectives collectively offer a well-rounded framework for assessing how PjBL can enhance language proficiency among high school learners. Thus, this current research specifically seeks to address the following questions:

1. What is the difference in English speaking proficiency between the students using the Project-Based Learning model and those students using traditional teaching methods?
2. How do EFL students qualitatively perceive project-based learning in speaking skills, as well as their challenges?

Project-based Learning (PjBL) in English Learning

The incorporation of innovative teaching strategies by skilled English educators, along with engaging and effective learning methods, is essential for student success. The goal is to encourage active participation so that learners can fully grasp the material being taught. One of the instructional approaches that has proven effective in promoting student engagement is project-based learning (Rampes et al., 2025). PjBL is rooted in Vygotsky's constructivist learning theory, emphasizing authentic tasks and questions within real-world contexts to motivate students to explore and create collaboratively and independently.

This methodology supports understanding key concepts such as experiential learning, problem-solving, teamwork, and encouraging skills like collaboration and responsibility. It encourages learners to develop various abilities while boosting motivation, eventually helping them derive maximum benefit from the learning experience (Guo & Yu, 2023). As Bell (2010) explains, PjBL is an instructional strategy that enables students to take charge of

their learning through inquiry, working collectively to research and develop projects that demonstrate their understanding.

Findings from a study by Lintang Pertiwi et al. (2024), which surveyed Indonesian junior high school English teachers, corroborate this view. Teachers reported that adopting PjBL increases student engagement and motivation, provides authentic learning experiences, and offers valuable feedback. The benefits of PjBL include enhancements in pronunciation, vocabulary, creativity, and confidence. Nonetheless, implementing this approach presents challenges such as limited time, diverse learning styles, and varying levels of student participation. Therefore, educators must plan carefully and strategize to support and involve all learners effectively.

Project-based Learning (PjBL) in Improving Speaking Skills

Speaking is an indispensable and significant competency in interaction. Through speaking, humans can comprehend ideas and emotions during communication (Quispe-Vargas et al., 2024). In addition to speaking, it is also necessary to understand the rules that govern speaking. For one's words to be easily understood. This assertion likewise pertains to English proficiency. The ability to speak English fluently is imperative. A fundamental component of acquiring a foreign language is possessing this capacity (Cahyana et al., 2022). Proficient communication in English entails a multifaceted approach, encompassing various linguistic elements such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and intonation (Nguyen & Le, 2024).

The ability to communicate in English entails more than merely acquiring formal linguistic competencies such as grammar and pronunciation; it also necessitates the development of practical skills that enable one to utilize the language in a manner congruent with the social and cultural context. This underscores the importance of bilingualism in students exposed to multiple languages (Cahya Utari et al., 2023). Kusmaryani et al. (2024) underscore the significance of structured, varied, and continuous practice to enhance daily life, interactive simulation, and digital media. Integrative teaching methods prioritizing linguistic, sociocultural, and pragmatic principles aim to facilitate students' comprehension of these principles.

Implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has been identified as a practical approach to enhance students' speaking abilities in the English language learning. This pedagogical approach involves the active involvement of students in authentic projects, which promote communicative and contextual applications of language. Projects that may be implemented include presentations, drama performances, debates, and conversation simulations (Ayu et al., 2022). Implementing these activities has been demonstrated to enhance linguistic fluency and precision and cultivate confidence, critical thinking, and collaborative skills (H Wijaya et al., 2025; Husnu et al., 2024). As found in a study by Ayy & Afrianto (2025) conducted at the vocational high school level in Lampung, Indonesia, English teachers believed that implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) could improve students' speaking skills. Through engagement in projects relevant to students' areas of expertise,

learning becomes more contextualized and meaningful, thus encouraging students to more actively use English orally.

Research Method

Research Design

This research employed a mixed-method design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2014). Specifically, the quantitative approach aimed to measure the numerical impact of PjBL on students' speaking ability, and this was gained through post-tests in the form of individual speaking tests after the implementation of PBL. In addition, the qualitative approach was utilized to explore students' experiences and perceptions of the PjBL process. This was conducted by analyzing their reflections which offered deep insights into their learning engagement throughout the project.

Context and Participants

This study was conducted at one state senior high school in West Jakarta and involved 72 purposively selected students. The participants were drawn from two eleventh-grade classes: one assigned as the experimental class and the other one as the control class, with 36 students in each. The selection was purposive based on some predetermined criteria to ensure the suitability of the participants for the research objectives. These criteria included: (1) the students' enrollment in regular English classes with similar instructional schedules, (2) comparable English competency levels based on their previous semester grades and teacher recommendation, and (3) the school's willingness to assign two intact classes with minimal disruption to the regular curriculum. The students were between 17 to 18 years old and comprised both male and female students. This purposive sampling techniques allowed the researchers to select participants who were most likely to provide relevant and meaningful data for examining the efficacy of PjBL on speaking ability. The demographic details of the participants are presented in the table below.

Table 1 Participant demography

Class Type	Number of Students	Age (years old)	Gender
Experimental	36	17–18	Male and Female
Control	36	17–18	Male and Female
Total	72	17–18	Male and Female

The Instruments and the Teaching Design

In collecting the quantitative data, speaking test was used to assess students' speaking skills after the implementation of PjBL. The speaking test made by the researchers specifically for this study, drawing on established speaking assessment criteria to ensure relevance and consistency. It evaluated five key aspects of speaking performance: structure and content, fluency, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, and pronunciation. For the qualitative component, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, providing rich insights into students' experiences and perceptions of the PjBL process.

In implementing the PjBL in the classroom, learning activities were carried out through several stages. In the first meeting, the teacher presented the material to be learned, namely descriptive text, and provided examples of texts and related explanations, and group distribution. In the second meeting, the teacher set the project theme that students worked on and provided examples of topics relevant to the theme. Furthermore, in the third meeting, students were allowed to find as much information as possible about the theme that had been determined, both through online and offline sources, and then started compiling a draft based on the information obtained. In the fourth or final meeting, all the students conducted an individual speaking test as a form of evaluation of the project they had worked on. Each meeting was conducted within 90 minutes.

Table 2 Teaching design of implementing PjBL

Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3	Meeting 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material explanation • Giving examples • Group distribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving the project theme • Giving examples (relevant to the theme) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding the information with group (relevant to the theme) • Compiling a draft based on the information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual speaking test • Evaluation

Data Analysis Procedure

After the data are collected, quantitative data were analyzed using statistical techniques, such as the Mann-Whitney U test, to ascertain significant differences in students' speaking abilities before and after the implementation of the PBL model. These quantitative data provided an objective overview of the effectiveness of PjBL in improving students' speaking skills. For the qualitative part, in-depth interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into students' experiences during the PjBL process. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data. This method allowed the researcher to explore students' perceptions, challenges, and strategies used in preparing and delivering their presentations. Thematic analysis followed the phases suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006), which included familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report.

Findings

The Difference in English Speaking Proficiency between the Students Using PjBL and Those Students Using Traditional Teaching Model

In Table 3, before the normality test and homogeneity test were carried out, descriptive statistical tests were carried out first, where the experimental class had an average of 87.44 and the control class had an average of 80.50. Which means that the average experimental class is higher than the control class. While the experimental class had a maximum score of 64 and a maximum score of 100, the control class has a smaller minimum value than the experimental class which is 48.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experiment class	72	64	100	87.44	10.831
Control class	72	48	100	80.50	12.878
Valid N (listwise)	72				

As the normality test of the data obtained in the experimental class is 0.00 which means <0.05 , the data is not normally distributed. Then the homogeneity value > 0.2 of 0.05 means that the data is homogeneous. It turns out that if you look at the data, it is not normally distributed, so the researcher conducts the Man-Whitney U test non-parametric test to see the significant difference between the experimental class and the control class.

Table 4 Man-Whitney U Test

Values	
Man-Whitney U	1813.000
Wilcoxon W	4441.000
Z	-3.138
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.002

After the Man-Whitney U test was carried out on the data made, it resulted that the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.02 which means <0.05 so that H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. This means that the average of the experimental class is higher than the average of the control class so that it has a significant effect on the experimental class.

EFL Students' Perceptions of PjBL in Speaking Skills and Its Challenges

To support the quantitative data, this study conducted interviews with several students from the experimental class. The interviews addressed the learning experience while using PjBL, the impact of PjBL on speaking skills, individual and group learning experiences, perceptions, and suggestions for the PjBL method. As articulated by Norman K. Denzin (2011), the qualitative approach emphasizes the comprehension of individuals' meanings, experiences, and perspectives within the context of their learning model—this approach endeavors to unveil dynamics that are not quantifiable through numerical data alone.

Learning Experience while Using PjBL

The interview responses reveal that students generally had positive perceptions of the learning experience during the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL). Several students highlighted the enjoyable and engaging nature of the lessons, noting that the content was presented in a way that was both clear and easy to understand. For instance, S1 and S2 emphasized that the material was accessible and the activities were fun, suggesting that the instructional approach effectively supported comprehension. Similarly, S5 expressed appreciation for the interactive and enjoyable classroom environment, indicating that the teacher's ability to make lessons interesting contributed to a more collaborative and motivating learning experience. Overall, these responses suggest that PjBL fostered a

positive emotional and cognitive engagement among students by making learning both meaningful and enjoyable. Below are the excerpts from the participants.

“The lessons are fun and the material explained can be easily understood”. (S1)

“It’s very exciting and easy to understand too”. (S2)

“I like studying with my teacher because the material is not boring, and we can have fun learning together”. (S5)

The Impact of PjBL on Speaking skills

The interview data indicate that the implementation of PjBL had a meaningful impact on students’ English speaking skills, particularly in terms of confidence and fluency. S1 explicitly acknowledged a significant improvement in speaking ability as a result of participating in the project. S4 elaborated further, stating that the learning experience helped boost self-confidence and made speaking in English feel more accessible, which in turn led to greater fluency. Similarly, S8 reflected on noticeable personal progress, highlighting the project’s role in enabling them to begin speaking English, even if only at a basic level. Collectively, these responses suggest that PjBL created an encouraging and supportive environment that empowered students to take risks, practice speaking more actively, and gradually build both their linguistic competence and self-assurance in using English. Below are the excerpts from the participants.

“This project has made a significant impact on my English speaking”. (S1)

“This learning does help me, especially for me, my confidence to be easier to speak in English. I want to be more confident and anyway I become more fluent”, (S4)

“It’s very impactful for me because I can already speak a little bit”. (S8)

Individual and Group Learning Experiences

The interview findings highlight the diverse and complementary benefits students experienced through both individual and group learning activities within the PjBL framework. S1 and S6 emphasized the collaborative nature of group work, noting that it fostered teamwork and peer learning, as students were able to share knowledge and support one another. S3 acknowledged the challenges of differing opinions within group settings but viewed this as an opportunity to develop negotiation and consensus-building skills, essential components of collaborative learning. In contrast, S4 expressed a preference for individual work, valuing it as a means of self-expression and a chance to showcase personal identity. These responses collectively suggest that PjBL effectively accommodated multiple learning preferences, allowing students to benefit from both independent reflection and social interaction, thereby enhancing their overall engagement and communicative competence in English. Below are the excerpts from the participants.

“It’s fun, because my friends can work together too”. (S1)

“I really like individual work because I can show my identity”. (S4)

“In a group, we can be taught by each other. We can learn from each other”. (S6)

“There must be many differences of opinion or thought. We have to work together to determine the ideas”. (S3)

Suggestions for the PjBL Implementation

The interview data reveal students' constructive suggestions for enhancing the implementation of PjBL, with a strong emphasis on increasing interactive and practical activities. S2 and S8 appreciated the shift from traditional, theory-based instruction to more engaging, practice-oriented learning, particularly the inclusion of speaking exercises, which they found more effective and enjoyable. S8 explicitly stated a preference for hands-on activities over theoretical content, suggesting that such approaches make learning easier to understand and more relatable. Furthermore, students recommended incorporating additional elements of fun into the learning process, such as educational games and more varied speaking practices. These suggestions reflect students' desire for a dynamic and learner-centered environment, where meaningful interaction and active participation are prioritized to support their language development more effectively. Below are the excerpts from the participants.

"Other lessons are usually just practice questions, but in this project, there are speaking exercises". (S2)

It's easier to understand, and I prefer practice to theory". (S8)

"Add games in between" (S2)

"Just increase the practice. Fun practice, which is easily accepted by us". (S8)

Discussion

The results reveal a notable distinction between the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) approach and traditional learning methods when it comes to developing students' speaking skills. PjBL is a student-centered pedagogical strategy that encourages active engagement and independence throughout the learning process. This is supported by Sirisrimangkorn (2021) study, which demonstrated that presentations as a form of project considerably enhanced students' speaking abilities. Similarly, vlogging projects also proved effective in improving speaking skills, especially when implemented within the PjBL framework (Jusmaya et al., 2022). What's more, incorporating debate motions into PjBL is highly effective in promoting speaking proficiency. Students are tasked with mastering the content of their assigned motions, which promotes deeper understanding and prepares them to confidently present oral arguments (Nurjannah & Sudarwinoto, 2020). These findings are further corroborated by Puspitasari & Sofiana (2024), whose research indicates that combining PjBL with digital English textbooks can considerably enhance students' speaking abilities. Such improvements are largely attributed to increased student engagement and active participation, allowing for the practical application of learned material in classroom settings. A comparable conclusion was reached by Huang & Sun (2022), who observed that PjBL positively influences students' speaking proficiency, especially through project implementation and energetic content presentation, which boost speaking fluency.

In applying the PjBL approach, which emphasizes enhancing students' oral communication skills, the researchers adopted a comprehensive framework to evaluate different facets of speaking ability. This aligns with previous research by Muzri S et al. (2024), who examined how PjBL impacts English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in

Indonesia. Their analysis indicated a notable improvement in students' speaking competence following the implementation of this method, particularly in accuracy, fluency, and clarity. Similarly, a study by Sudarso et al. (2024) reported that PjBL considerably boosted student engagement and communication skills in English language learning. The findings demonstrated that the gains from PjBL exceeded those achieved through traditional teaching approaches. What's more, beyond communication, students also showed progress in their foundational language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

The study incorporated both individual and group learning activities, serving as essential elements within the overall research framework. Students expressed that engaging in group learning was an exciting new experience, as it enabled collaborative efforts and assisted the exchange of ideas. Conversely, individual learning provided them with the chance to display their abilities more independently. This observation aligns with the findings of Mafruudloh & Fitriati (2020), who demonstrated that Project-based Learning (PjBL) effectively promotes cooperation and collaboration during transactional dialogues. This pedagogical strategy enables students to develop communication skills that are both more effective and meaningful. Besides, students have opportunities to enhance important soft skills, such as critical thinking and problem-solving (Kurniawan, 2025). Similarly, research by Tu (2024) indicates that implementing PjBL greatly improves English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' speaking abilities. The integration of culturally relevant content with engaging, project-driven tasks promotes a brighter learning environment that not only supports language skill development but also nurtures non-technical skills like collaboration and critical thinking.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that PjBL contributed meaningfully to students' development of speaking skills, particularly in promoting confidence, fluency, and engagement. These outcomes support the research objectives and reinforce the pedagogical values of PjBL as a student-centered approach that fosters authentic communication and active learning. Importantly, the integration of individual and group tasks within the project allowed students to benefit from both personal expression and peer collaboration, enhancing their overall language development in diverse and meaningful ways.

Despite the promising results, this study acknowledges several limitations. The sample was limited to two classes within a single senior high school, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the speaking assessment was researcher-developed and context-specific, which, while tailored to the learners' needs, may limit comparability with standardized measures. Future research is encouraged to expand the participant group across different educational settings and explore long-term effects of PjBL on various language skills. Further investigations might also examine how integrating digital tools or interdisciplinary content within PjBL frameworks can enhance English learning outcomes in more dynamic and scalable ways.

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