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Integrating Project Based Learning To Enhance Speaking Skills In ESL Classroom

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Abstract

Project Based Learning (PBL) is a teaching method that encourages students to solve real-world problems. This work focuses on project-based learning and culminates in Indian universities as teachers find ways to make learning meaningful and engaging for boys and girls. Project-based learning begins with a problem or task. Practical and realistic issues or problems that affect students' knowledge and development levels form the -basis of project-based learning teaching. Teachers teach students by asking questions, finding information, and looking at information. Encourages important skills such as teamwork, independent work, self-evaluation, time management, study, or oral and written communication. There are many benefits of using PBL in Indian universities. First, PBL can help students develop 21st-century skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaboration. These skills are essential to being successful at work and in life. Second, VET can help students learn better by engaging in active learning.

Keywords: Instructional approach, group work, autonomous learning, self-assessment skills, time planning, problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, etc.

Introduction

Incorporating Project-Based Learning (PBL) into English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom offers a powerful strategy to enhance students speaking abilities. Traditional language learning often limits speaking practice to structured exercises, leaving little room for real-world interaction. PBL, on the other hand, creates an engaging environment where learners actively use language to solve real-world problems and collaborate with peers. This approach allows students to engage in tasks that require them to apply English in authentic contexts, enhancing their fluency and accuracy. Moreover, PBL encourages confidence, as students must present their findings and ideas to others, thus providing continuous opportunities for speaking practice. By integrating PBL, ESL teachers can create a more interactive, participatory learning atmosphere, where students not only improve their language skills but also develop critical thinking, teamwork, and presentation abilities. This approach makes language learning more meaningful and relevant, as students engage in activities that mirror real-life communication and problem-solving, preparing them for both academic and everyday interactions in English.

Project Based learning

According to R. Mergen Doller Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an instructional approach that focuses on students working on real-world problems or projects over an extended period of time. Unlike traditional teaching methods, which often emphasize passive learning through lectures or rote memorization, PBL encourages students to take an active role in their learning process. It is a student-cantered method that encourages inquiry, exploration, and collaboration, fostering deeper understanding and long-term retention of knowledge. In a PBL environment, students typically begin by investigating a complex question or challenge, and throughout the project, they gather information, analyse data, and collaborate with others to develop solutions. The projects are often interdisciplinary, requiring students to apply knowledge and skills from multiple subject areas.

The key elements of PBL include:

1. **Real-World relevance:** Projects are designed around real-world issues or questions that connect to students' interests or concerns, making the learning process more meaningful and engaging.
2. **Collaboration:** Students work together in teams, learning valuable communication and teamwork skills while tackling the project collectively.
3. **Inquiry-Based Learning:** Rather than passively receiving information, students actively ask questions, research, and develop answers through their exploration of the topic.
4. **Student Choice and Voice:** Students are often given a degree of autonomy in how they approach their projects, which fosters ownership and motivation.
5. **Assessment:** Both formative and summative assessments are integrated into the project, with students evaluating their own work as well as receiving feedback from peers and instructors.
6. **Reflection and Presentation:** Throughout the project, students reflect on their learning process, and at the end, they present their findings, solutions, or products to an audience, enhancing their public speaking and presentation skills.

PBL has been found to improve critical thinking, problem-solving skills, creativity, and communication, while also helping students develop practical skills that are essential for their future careers. By immersing students in real-world problems, PBL not only deepens their academic knowledge but also prepares them for the challenges to face in the workplace and in life.

Cognitive skills

Theories of language and cognitive skills explore the complex relationship between how people learn, process, and use language, as well as how these abilities are tied to overall cognitive development. One of the most influential theories is **Noam Chomsky's Nativist Theory,** which argues that humans are biologically predisposed to acquire language. He introduced the concept of a *Language Acquisition Device* (LAD), suggesting that children are born with an innate ability to learn language, regardless of the specific language they are exposed to. This theory emphasizes the idea that language learning is a natural and universal process driven by an inborn cognitive mechanism. In contrast, **Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory** views language acquisition as being closely linked to broader cognitive development. Piaget believed that children pass through specific stages of cognitive growth, and language development occurs once they reach the cognitive ability for symbolic thought. According to this view, the development of other cognitive skills, such as problem-solving and memory, supports the acquisition of language. Meanwhile**, Lev Vygotsky's Social Interactionist Theory** stresses the role of social interactions and cultural influences in language development. Vygotsky proposed that children learn language through guided interactions with more knowledgeable individuals, such as parents or teachers, within their *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD). He argued that language is not simply an innate skill but something shaped by social and cultural experiences. On the other hand**, Connectionist Theories,** put forward by researchers like James McClelland and Jeffrey Elman, suggest that language is learned through repeated exposure to patterns in the environment. These theories argue that language acquisition happens as neural connections strengthen based on the input children receive, emphasizing experience and statistical learning over innate structures. **Jerome Bruner's Cognitive Tool Theory** emphasizes that language serves as a tool for

organizing and structuring thought. According to Bruner, language helps children solve problems, think critically, and understand the world, thereby enhancing cognitive abilities. Finally,

TBL VS PBL

Tasic-based learning (TBL) and project-based learning (PBL) are both collaborative educational approaches that engage students in active learning, yet they differ in their structure, emphasis, and learning objectives. Tasic-based learning, developed by Michael Michaelsen, is a structured, team-oriented approach that focuses on applying knowledge to real-world problems in a systematic way. Thomas, J. W. (2000). In Tasic-based learning, students first work individually on a pre-class assessment, then collaborate in teams to apply their knowledge to solve problems, often in the form of case studies or scenarios. This process encourages immediate feedback and emphasizes accountability within the team, fostering a sense of responsibility among participants. In contrast, PBL, a student-centered approach developed in medical education, focuses on learning through solving complex, open-ended problems that require critical thinking and collaboration. Unlike Tasic-based learning (TBL), project-based learning (PBL) often starts with an ill-defined problem, which students work on over an extended period of time, requiring them to gather information, formulate hypotheses, and discuss potential solutions. The key distinction lies in PBL's focus on the investigative process, where students drive their learning through inquiry, whereas TBL-based learning (TBL) emphasizes application and assessment in a team-based environment. While both methods encourage active learning and critical thinking, one tends to offer more structure and immediate application, while PBL offers flexibility, allowing students to engage more deeply with the problem-solving process. Therefore, the choice between Tasic-based learning (TBL) and project-based learning (PBL) depends on the educational context and the specific learning objectives desired. Each approach has its strengths in fostering collaboration, enhancing problem-solving skills, and promoting deeper understanding, but they serve different educational needs. Savery, J. R. (2006)

Characteristics of Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning can differ across courses but it is typically defined by the following characteristics;

1. Students learn to think critically and solve problems
2. PBL connects classroom learning to real-life situations
3. Students learn to manage projects and deadlines
4. Project-based learning develops skills useful in future jobs, like teamwork and problem-solving

Definition of project

A project article format is a structured way of presenting the details of a project. It typically includes a title page, an abstract summarizing the project, and an introduction explaining its purpose. Thomas, J. W. (2000). The methodology section describes the process and materials used, while the results present the findings. The discussion analyzes the results and their significance. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the main points, and the references list the sources used. This format ensures the project is clear, organized, and easy to understand.

Definition of PBL

According to Bell, Stephannie Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an instructional approach that encourages students to learn through hands-on projects rather than traditional lectures. In project-based learning, students work on real-world problems or challenges, applying their knowledge and skills to find solutions. This method promotes critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities. Instead of simply memorizing information, students actively research, analyzse, and create something meaningful. Project-based learning also enhances communication skills as students often present their findings. By connecting learning to practical experiences, project-based learning makes education more engaging, relevant, and effective, preparing students for real-life situations.

Project Based Learning in ESL Classroom

Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the ESL (English as a Second Language) classroom is a learner-centered approach that promotes language acquisition through practical, real-world tasks. Instead of

traditional rote learning, PBL encourages students to collaborate, research, and create projects that require the use of English in meaningful contexts. This method enhances language proficiency, communication skills, and cultural awareness. However, PBL in ESL settings also presents challenges. Learners with limited vocabulary or grammar skills may struggle to express complex ideas, which can hinder their participation. Additionally, without proper scaffolding, weaker students may feel overwhelmed. Yet, when effectively implemented, PBL fosters confidence and fluency, making language learning more authentic and engaging. It transforms the classroom into a dynamic, interactive space, promoting both linguistic and critical thinking skills. (Stoller, Fredricka L.)

- Group projects facilitate peer-to-peer interaction, helping learners develop better communication skills and cultural awareness.
- PBL encourages students to use English in real-world scenarios, which promotes practical language skills rather than just theoretical knowledge.
- Educators must be well-equipped with both content knowledge and facilitation skills to guide the PBL process effectively in an ESL context.

Benefits of PBL

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a powerful teaching strategy that provides students with several advantages. By working on real-world projects and resolving real-world issues, it aids students in developing a better comprehension of the material. Because students frequently work in groups to finish their assignments, project-based learning fosters critical thinking, creativity, and cooperation. Because students must explain their work and communicate their thoughts, it also helps them become more confident and enhances their communication skills. Furthermore, by relating classroom courses to real-world situations, project-based learning enhances learner engagement and significance. All things considered, project-based learning equips pupils with the information and abilities necessary for success in school and in life (Markham, Thomas).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Creswell, John, Methodology is an essential component of any research project, involving the systematic analysis of the techniques employed in the study. The overall research design outlines the steps to be taken and the way the research will be carried out. It serves as a structured approach to measure the outcomes of an investigation. This section addresses the processes and concepts related to the theoretical foundations of both qualitative and quantitative methods. A research approach must be logically and clearly planned, and the researcher should have a thorough understanding of the methods and techniques applied in the study. The methodology section should provide a detailed explanation for choosing specific methods or procedures. The current study adopts an experimental design. It includes the learning plan's procedures and strategies for its development. Being experimental in nature, this discusses research methods, study settings, the target population and sample, data gathering techniques and instruments, data analysis strategies, and the validity of the study.

Population and Sample

Sample

A sample refers to a smaller subset of data selected by a researcher from a larger population using a predefined method of selection. Creating a sample is an efficient way to conduct research. In this study, the researcher employed cluster sampling. According to L.R. Gay and colleagues, the main difference between the control group and the experimental group is that random assignment occurs at the group level rather than the individual level.

In this research, entire classes were selected through cluster sampling. Students from I B.A. I and II B.A. were chosen as the experimental group, while students from III B.A. formed the control group. The study was conducted at K.S. Rangasamy College of Arts and Science, located in Tiruchengode, Namakkal District, with a total of sixty students.

Recognizing that Project-Based Learning offers students various opportunities to enhance skills essential for the future, the researcher aimed to evaluate and confirm its effectiveness. Both a pilot study and the main study were conducted with students of English. Since the number of participants was sixty.

Population

The population for this research consisted of English students from K.S. Rangasamy College of Arts and Science, Tiruchengode, located in Namakkal District. There were three classes, and each class comprised 15 students. The total population included sixty students.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Result of Students on Project-Based Learning

Criteria score for questionnaire

S.NO	**Questions**	Score	Mean	Criteria
1	PBL has helped me to become more confident while speaking in a group.	292	4.86	Very High
2	PBL has improved my ability to speak my ideas.	287	4.78	Very High
3	PBL has helped to organize my thoughts before presenting the project.	286	4.76	Very High
4	PBL has encouraged to take responsibility for my part of the project.	296	4.93	Very High
5	PBL has made more comfortable working with people from different backgrounds.	294	4.9	Very High
6	PBL has helped me to analyse critically about the project.	294	4.9	Very High
7	PBL has allowed me to use my creativity to overcome challenges.	295	4.91	Very High
8	PBL has helped one to develop speaking skills.	295	4.91	Very High
9	PBL has taught me the importance of teamwork and collaboration.	295	4.91	Very High
10	PBL made learning more enjoyable and interesting for me.	300	5	Very High

From the questionnaire was framed on the domains of learning, which are cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The range of the indicators from the highest score to the lowest one is clearly observed. The high score categories cover all 10 statements. It shows that most students agree with the statements in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire is based on five categories: very high, high, fair, low and poor. The score was analysed through the students' responses to the items in the questionnaire. Fifty-six students strongly agreed with the statement raised about the opportunity to learn in a team. The PBL opened up the

threshold for enhancing speaking skills through real-time projects. Fifty-four students strongly agreed to collaborative projects, and the mean score was 4.93. Concerning the statement related to supporting PBL, 55 students strongly agreed, with a mean score of 4.76 and very high criteria. Twenty-eight students strongly agreed. The statement PBL helped to express the idea coherently, and 32 students strongly agreed, with a mean score of 4.46. For the statement about improving conversation skills with peers, it was 57 students, with 4.95, strongly agreed that working in a group really helped them to enhance speaking skills.

The students felt that PBL provided them with a platform to clarify doubts and exchange information positively, with a mean score of 4.36. the next statement covers the PBL that allowed the students to engage in various activities meaningfully to the completion of the project .55 students strongly agreed with a mean score of 4.5 with very high criteria. The students showed a positive attitude towards a statement that PBL has helped to develop the ability to think critically and analytically. The score of 4.91 deserved to be much higher. The students strongly agreed that PBL has given them the opportunity to converse in English on a day-to-day basis. The mean score for the 10th statement is 4.46, which deserved a high score.

The result of the questionnaire showed that the students enjoyed PBL activities to enhance their speaking skills. The maximum number of statements scored very high criteria, which showed that they earned a lot of experience in enhancing speaking skills.

Future Of PBL

Project-Based Learning (PBL) has the potential to transform education in the future by making it more interesting, useful, and applicable to everyday situations. In order to improve learning experiences, PBL will progressively use technologies like virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and digital collaboration platforms as technology develops. With the use of these technologies, students will be able to work on intricate, multidisciplinary projects that reflect problems encountered in real life, fostering a deeper comprehension and problem-solving abilities. PBL fosters critical thinking, communication, creativity, and teamwork—skills that are crucial for success in the twenty-first century. As educational systems throughout the world move away from conventional rote learning techniques, PBL is probably going to be used more frequently in the future. By investigating subjects that pique their interest and creating solutions with practical uses, students will assume greater responsibility for their education. Future PBL settings' global focus will also encourage cultural sensitivity and global citizenship as students work together across national boundaries. Teachers will go from being the only people who can impart information to being mentors and facilitators. PBL can help kids in this changing educational environment not just get ready for tests but also for life, giving them the skills and mentality they need to prosper in a world that is always changing. (Bell, Stephanie pp. 39–43).

Conclusion

A teaching strategy known as project-based learning (PBL) involves students in real-world projects, encouraging participation and the application of information in real-world situations. Learning becomes more relevant and meaningful when this approach is used, as it has been demonstrated to improve communication, teamwork, and critical thinking abilities. PBL has shown considerable advantages in the setting of English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. According to research, PBL can help children with their pronunciation, fluency, understanding, grammar, and vocabulary, among other speaking skills. It also fosters creativity and active engagement, giving students the chance to apply English in real-world situations. In the future, PBL's efficacy is expected to be significantly increased via technological integration. New technologies like digital collaboration platforms, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence are generating immersive learning environments that add movement to PBL projects. These developments provide students the opportunity to work on challenging, multidisciplinary projects that reflect issues in real life, which helps them to better comprehend and solve problems. PBL is a revolutionary teaching approach that, in addition to strengthening academic abilities, equips pupils for the complexity of the modern world. PBL is a crucial method in modern

education because of its focus on real-world application and use of technology Beckett, Gulbahar H, vol. 1, 2002, pp. 1–18.

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