



Students' Perceptions of Project-Based Learning EFL in Grade 7 Junior High School

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the project based learning learning model according to student perceptions, student views and the constraints faced by students in the project based learning learning process. Project based learning is a learning model that makes students the subject or center of learning, which focuses on learning processes that have results in the form of products. The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative, with questionnaires and interviews as instruments. one out of three students interviewed was a student who had high enthusiasm for project based learning, while the other two students had learning difficulties. In this study the researchers found that most students were very enthusiastic in the learning process, but there were still some students who experienced difficulties or obstacles in the learning process. In conclusion, the learning-based learning model according to students' perceptions is fun and easy to understand because it is directly practical. The limitation in this research is that there are few participants who are willing to be interviewed. Therefore, future studies are expected to have more participants.

Keyword : Model, Project Based Learning, Student

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Introduction

Learning is a complex and purposeful activity that encompasses far more than simply the transmission of information from teacher to student. At its core, the learning model functions as a framework that provides a systematic description for carrying out learning in order to help students learn in a particular way to achieve educational goals. In essence, a learning model represents a generalized description of the instructional process, yet it precisely focuses on achieving specific learning outcomes. This dual character – generalized but goal-oriented – makes learning models an essential component of educational planning and implementation.

The scope of learning extends beyond the confines of formal classroom instruction. While schools play a prominent role, learning occurs in a variety of contexts commonly referred to as the *tri-education centers*: family life (informal), school (formal), and society (non-formal). The tri-education framework recognizes that children receive knowledge, values, and skills not only from organized institutional settings but also from their daily interactions with family members, peers, and community environments. In these diverse contexts, learning happens deliberately and incidentally, shaping the cognitive, social, and emotional development of students throughout their lives. Such holism in learning environments underscores the necessity for instructional strategies and models that are flexible, student-centered, and capable of responding to the changing needs of learners.

In the learning process, the active involvement of every student is vital to achieving learning goals. Student engagement fosters a deeper understanding, enhances retention of knowledge, and fosters self-efficacy. For engagement to occur, teachers must intentionally design learning environments that motivate and encourage students to participate fully in the learning process. This requires teachers to possess not only content knowledge but also mastery of instructional strategies that effectively motivate and sustain student involvement (Sinead et al., 2022). Without this dual competence, instruction risks becoming ineffective, as students may remain passive recipients of information rather than active constructors of

knowledge.

To meet the diverse needs of learners, teachers must be well-versed in multiple learning models. Among such models are Discovery Learning, Project-Based Learning (PjBL), Self-Directed Learning (SDL), Contextual Learning, Role Playing and Simulation, Cooperative Learning, and Collaborative Learning (Amalia, Dianingati, & Annisaa', 2022; Aktif et al., 2020). Each model presents unique instructional principles, processes, and outcomes. One model that has emerged with significant relevance in contemporary education is Project-Based Learning.

Project-Based Learning (often referred to simply as *PBL*) shifts the traditional teacher-centered paradigm to one where students take on an active role in constructing knowledge through meaningful project work. In a PBL environment, students engage in exploration, assessment, interpretation, synthesis, and information processing to produce various forms of learning outcomes. Rather than merely memorizing content, students undertake tasks that resemble real-world projects, fostering inquiry, investigation, and problem-solving (Sari, 2020). The essence of PBL lies in positioning students as active agents in their learning processes, requiring them to ask questions, engage in research, gather data, analyze information, and create outputs that demonstrate understanding.

Historically, project-based pedagogies have been implemented across disciplines such as engineering, business, and the natural sciences for decades, long before gaining traction in language learning contexts (Beuchat, Bradford, & Buskes, 2022). In these fields, project-oriented approaches helped learners contextualize theoretical knowledge within practical tasks, fostering deeper cognitive engagement and authentic application of skills. Today, the influence of project-oriented thinking extends into social environments and institutional structures, such that project management concepts increasingly shape how organizations function and produce results (Wagner, Huemann, & Radujkovic, 2021). As such, the principles of projectification – the tendency to organize work and tasks around projects – have informed educational practice, including curriculum design and instructional models.

Over the past 25 years, projectification has captured growing attention within educational research, as scholars seek to understand how project-based methodologies can be integrated into teaching and learning processes to motivate learners to engage in purposeful inquiry beyond rote memorization (Kuura, 2020). A central question has been how PBL helps maintain student motivation while providing meaningful opportunities to study complex subjects such as project management itself (Jääskä et al., 2022). In language classrooms, this emphasis on authentic inquiry transforms the learning experience from passive reception to active knowledge creation.

In contemporary education, technology has become a significant enabler of project-based learning. Digital tools such as text editors, image libraries, video platforms, and collaborative cloud applications support students in generating, sharing, and presenting project outcomes. The integration of platforms like Microsoft Teams and social media into instructional design has further facilitated communication and collaboration between instructors and students, both inside and outside the traditional classroom space (Arias et al., 2018; Zen et al., 2022). Such digital affordances enable student access to instructional content and peer learning opportunities beyond temporal and spatial limitations, making PBL more accessible and dynamic in execution.

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) can be precisely defined as “an inquiry-based instructional method that engages learners in knowledge construction by having them accomplish meaningful projects and develop real-world products” (Guo et al., 2020). Under this approach, the teacher acts as a facilitator who guides learners through a structured process of inquiry and creation, while students assume responsibility for planning, executing, and presenting their projects. This framework positions students at the center of

the learning process, encouraging autonomy, collaboration, and critical reflection.

One of the defining features of PBL is that it cultivates not only academic knowledge but also higher-order skills such as creativity, innovation, critical thinking, communication, coordination, and problem-solving. These competencies are essential for students to navigate complex real-world challenges and are increasingly valued in higher education and future workplace environments. As education evolves, there has been a paradigm shift in assessment techniques as well, moving away from solely measuring rote recall to evaluating a comprehensive set of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills (Goyal, Gupta, & Gupta, 2022). Such assessments align with the goals of PBL, which emphasize performance tasks, authentic problem solving, and the application of learning to real-life scenarios.

Despite its potential benefits, the sustained implementation of PBL is not simple. While innovative practices like PBL can engage students and enhance learning outcomes, their continued use often depends on ongoing professional development (PD) and administrative support within educational institutions (Morel et al., 2019). Teachers require structured training to design effective projects, manage diverse learner needs, integrate technology thoughtfully, and assess complex student outcomes. Without such support systems, PBL implementations can become inconsistent or superficial, limiting the potential benefits for learners.

The body of educational research provides growing evidence that PBL approaches are beneficial for both students and teachers. PBL has been shown to enhance student motivation, deepen conceptual understanding, and foster transferable skills. This evidence suggests that PBL is worth implementing long-term in classrooms and school systems committed to preparing learners for 21st-century challenges (Steffen, Fly, & Stobart, 2022). However, high-quality enactment of PBL remains challenging due to its demanding nature and the extensive instructional planning it requires.

In language education, the application of PBL has been explored extensively, yet gaps remain in understanding its effects within specific domains such as literacy learning. Research indicates that while PBL can engage students and improve outcomes, its successful integration into literacy instruction requires specialized strategies that account for language development, textual analysis, and communicative competence (Duke et al., 2021). This complexity highlights the necessity for scholars and practitioners to continue investigating how PBL can be adapted to different language learning contexts, including EFL classrooms where learners are acquiring English as an additional language.

Moreover, although many recent studies indicate that student outcomes are positive and that teachers and students find PBL engaging and relevant, the transition from traditional instruction to project-based approaches is substantial. This shift often demands extensive professional learning support, including coaching, collaboration with peers, and reflection on instructional practices (Center for Economic and Social Research, 2021). Without such scaffolding, teachers may revert to conventional methods that are less student-centered, undermining the transformative potential of PBL.

Despite these challenges, PBL holds promise as a vehicle for equitable educational experiences. It has been recognized as a means to support students in developing competencies across multiple subject areas by creating relevant and authentic learning spaces that emphasize real-world problem solving and skill development (Grossman et al., 2019). When thoughtfully designed and implemented, project-based learning provides pathways for students to connect academic content to their interests, cultural backgrounds, and communities, thereby making learning more meaningful and engaging.

In conclusion, Project-Based Learning represents a powerful instructional model that aligns effectively with contemporary educational goals, particularly in preparing students for success in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. By centering instruction around authentic projects, encouraging active inquiry, and supporting the cultivation of

higher-order skills, PBL helps shift classrooms from passive knowledge transmission to dynamic knowledge construction. While challenges exist in sustaining high-quality PBL enactment, the accumulated research evidence supports its continued use and refinement, particularly when supported by robust professional development and systemic instructional redesign.

Method

The method of this study is descriptive qualitative method. The qualitative method, in-depth individual interviews, was chosen to allow very detailed data about students' experiences in the learning process using project based learning. Qualitative methods generally include individual and focus group interviews, participant observation, ethnography, and several other approaches (Ataş, Cenk, and Bozkurt 2021). Traditionally, qualitative methods have been used across a variety of disciplines to explain how things are; such as, for example, participant observation in early cultural anthropology, which documented the beliefs and practices of specific cultural groups (Hamilton and Finley 2020). This method will produce different evidence or results, which will then provide a view different ones will obtain reliable truth. (Sari 2020). the difficulty faced by students in the project-based learning model is memorizing new conversations that have never been learned. Validity is a test for describes how well the data was collected research instruments (Amalia, Dianingati, and Annisaa' 2022) Validity can be done with several type, i.e. construct validity, content validity and validity based on criteria (validity related to criteria)(Amalia, Dianingati, and Annisaa' 2022).

Result and Discussion

In this study I interviewed 3 junior high school students. The results of research conducted based on our findings on research conducted in the field show that students who are taught with a project-based learning model in class are very enthusiastic and according to them project-based learning provides new knowledge, is fun, increases creativity. and make me more confident. However, some students also said that they had problems in learning-based learning projects, which were difficult to think, read, pronounce, memorize English conversations, memorize in a limited time. And when asked whether it is better to learn using the PBL learning model or using other learning models, there are those who agree more with PBL and some who agree more with other learning models. It was found that Project-Based Learning are quite influential in increasing the creative thinking abilities (Pedroza-toscano and L 2023).

| NO | Information | A | B | C |
|----|---------------|---|---|-------|
| 1 | knowledge | √ | √ | PBL |
| 2 | Do you like | √ | √ | PBL |
| 3 | Difficulties | √ | √ | PBL |
| 4 | PBL or Other? | √ | √ | other |

From the research above, we can find that learning foreign languages, especially English, using project-based learning models can increase student creativity in the classroom. therefore, project-based learning should include the following stages: 1) teaching content through knowledge and skills, 2) creates the need to know important and basic content, 3) requires critical thinking, problem solving and collaboration, 4) growing investigation, 5) provide continuous feedback and 6) present or deliver the final product (Gomez-del Rio and Rodriguez 2022).

Project-based learning is a learning model that involve projects in the learning process. Project done by students can take the form of individual or group projects and

implemented within a certain period of time collaboratively, produce a product, whose results will then be displayed or presented. Application projects are carried out collaboratively, innovatively, uniquely, and focus on solving problems related to student life. (Sari 2020).

Our results show that using the Project Based Learning model (PBL) has a direct effect on students' personal growth and improvement on parallel programming and their soft skills. (Younis et al. 2021) with a project-based learning model implemented in class is able to foster student creativity. However, there are still some students who complain about difficulties in speaking English. Many students also feel happy with this learning model because it is considered fun.

The findings from this study provide meaningful insights into the implementation of the Project-Based Learning (PBL) model in junior high school EFL classrooms. Interviews conducted with three students revealed a generally positive perception of PBL, indicating that it significantly enhances student motivation, creativity, and confidence in learning English. Two of the three students reported that PBL offered new knowledge, was enjoyable, and increased their creativity, aligning with previous studies that suggest project-based learning fosters higher-order thinking skills and active engagement (Pedroza-Toscano & L, 2023; Sari, 2020). Students also expressed that working on projects allowed them to feel more confident in using English, likely because PBL situates language learning within meaningful, authentic tasks rather than rote memorization, thereby providing practical opportunities for applying linguistic skills (Guo et al., 2020; Goyal, Gupta, & Gupta, 2022).

However, the study also highlights some challenges faced by students during PBL activities. A few students reported difficulties with speaking, memorizing English dialogues, reading, pronunciation, and completing tasks within a limited timeframe. These findings are consistent with research emphasizing that while PBL can improve student engagement and creativity, it also requires sufficient scaffolding, instructional guidance, and ongoing feedback to ensure all students can navigate challenging tasks successfully (Morel et al., 2019; Steffen, Fly, & Stobart, 2022). Indeed, not all students preferred PBL over other learning models; one participant explicitly indicated a preference for more traditional learning approaches. This variation suggests that learner differences, including language proficiency, learning styles, and confidence levels, play a critical role in how PBL is experienced and perceived (Duke et al., 2021).

The data further supports the notion that PBL can enhance student creativity, as students are actively engaged in critical thinking, problem solving, investigation, and collaboration, which are key stages of project-based learning as outlined by Gomez-del Rio and Rodriguez (2022). By allowing students to take ownership of their projects—whether individually or collaboratively—they develop not only linguistic skills but also **soft skills** such as teamwork, communication, and time management (Younis et al., 2021; Grossman et al., 2019). Despite the reported challenges, students expressed enthusiasm and satisfaction with the model, indicating that PBL creates a more interactive and student-centered learning environment, which can increase intrinsic motivation and overall learning outcomes (Zen et al., 2022; Arias et al., 2018).

Overall, this analysis suggests that while PBL is highly effective in promoting creativity, independence, and engagement, successful implementation requires careful attention to student support mechanisms, scaffolding, and differentiated instruction to accommodate diverse learner needs. The results indicate that PBL is not only an effective instructional strategy for English language le

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study indicate that the implementation of project-based learning (PjBL) models in a second language classroom provides significant benefits

for students' overall learning experiences. Through the use of PjBL, students are able to acquire and practice a second language in a more natural and unconscious manner, as the learning process emphasizes active engagement, exploration, and meaningful interaction rather than rote memorization or passive reception. This approach allows students to focus not only on language acquisition but also on developing essential 21st-century skills, including creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving, as they are required to design, execute, and present projects as part of the learning process. The study further demonstrates that project-based learning encourages student independence, as learners are given the freedom and responsibility to plan, manage, and complete tasks collaboratively with their peers. By participating in these projects, students cultivate essential collaborative skills, learning how to communicate effectively, negotiate roles, and work together toward a shared goal, thereby enhancing their social and interpersonal competencies. Additionally, the results show a high level of student motivation and enjoyment when engaging in PjBL activities, suggesting that this model not only improves learning outcomes but also fosters a positive and stimulating classroom environment. Overall, this research provides valuable insight into how project-based learning can be utilized to enhance both language proficiency and personal development, emphasizing the importance of creativity, independence, and teamwork. Consequently, educators are encouraged to incorporate PjBL into second language instruction to promote meaningful learning experiences that prepare students for both academic success and real-world applications.

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