



Aprendizaje basado en proyectos para mejorar las habilidades de expresión oral de los estudiantes de Séptimo Grado

Project-Based Learning to Improve Speaking Skills of Seventh Grade Students

Aprendizagem baseada em projetos para melhorar as habilidades de fala de alunos da sétima série

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Resumen

Este estudio investiga la efectividad del Aprendizaje Basado en Proyectos (ABP) para mejorar las habilidades orales en el idioma inglés de los estudiantes de séptimo grado de la escuela Veinticuatro de Julio ubicada en Santa Elena. Para la investigación se implementó una serie de actividades de ABP diseñadas para promover el aprendizaje activo y la práctica del lenguaje. Se aplicó el enfoque de métodos mixtos para evaluar el progreso de los estudiantes en la habilidad oral. El fenómeno fue observado sistemáticamente a través de un cuestionario que permitió medir la preferencia de los estudiantes sobre sus experiencias con el ABP y actividades convencionales. Los datos se recopilaron en la práctica docente a través de múltiples métodos: evaluaciones orales previas y posteriores, que midieron la fluidez, la precisión y el uso del vocabulario. Los 41 estudiantes participantes demostraron mejoras en sus habilidades orales y exhibieron mayor confianza al momento de comunicarse frente a una audiencia. Los resultados resaltan la efectividad del ABP como estrategia de enseñanza para desarrollar la capacidad de expresión oral y recalca que su implementación puede impactar positivamente las habilidades de habla inglesa de los estudiantes ofreciendo implicaciones valiosas para las prácticas de enseñanza del idioma.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje basado en proyectos; habilidad oral; idioma inglés; estrategia; mejoramiento.

Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of Project Based Learning (PBL) to improve the oral skills in the English language of seventh grade students at the Veinticuatro de Julio school located in Santa Elena. For the research, a series of PBL activities designed to promote active learning and language practice was implemented. The mixed methods approach was applied to assess students' progress in oral skill. The phenomenon was systematically observed through a questionnaire that made it possible to measure the students' preference regarding their experiences with PBL and conventional activities. Data were collected in teaching practice through multiple methods: oral pre- and post-assessments, which measured fluency, accuracy, and vocabulary use. The 41 participating students demonstrated improvements in their oral skills and exhibited greater confidence when communicating in front of an audience. The results highlight the effectiveness of PBL as a teaching strategy to develop oral expression skills and emphasize that its implementation

can positively impact students' English speaking skills, offering valuable implications for language teaching practices.

Keywords: project-based learning; oral ability; English language; strategy; improvement.

Resumo

Este estudo investiga a eficácia da Aprendizagem Baseada em Projetos (PBL) para melhorar as habilidades orais na língua inglesa de alunos da sétima série da escola Veinticuatro de Julio localizada em Santa Elena. Para a pesquisa, foi implementada uma série de atividades PBL destinadas a promover a aprendizagem ativa e a prática da língua. A abordagem de métodos mistos foi aplicada para avaliar o progresso dos alunos nas habilidades orais. O fenômeno foi observado sistematicamente por meio de um questionário que possibilitou mensurar a preferência dos alunos em relação às suas experiências com PBL e atividades convencionais. Os dados foram coletados na prática docente por meio de múltiplos métodos: pré e pós-avaliações orais, que mediram fluência, precisão e uso de vocabulário. Os 41 alunos participantes demonstraram melhorias nas suas habilidades orais e demonstraram maior confiança ao se comunicarem diante de um público. Os resultados destacam a eficácia do PBL como estratégia de ensino para desenvolver habilidades de expressão oral e enfatizam que sua implementação pode impactar positivamente as habilidades de língua inglesa dos alunos, oferecendo implicações valiosas para as práticas de ensino de línguas.

Palavras-chave: aprendizagem baseada em projetos; habilidade oral; Língua Inglesa; estratégia; melhoria.

Introduction

Speaking occupies a significant place in the communication process. In the journey of the English language acquisition, speaking is commonly the center of attention between the users of the language and learners because is the skill to communicate with others. “Without speaking skills, non-native speakers of English cannot communicate with the people of other countries who speak different languages” (Akhter et al., 2020). That is why it is so vital to promote speaking strategies from the early years of schooling for a better comprehension of the language.

Generally, teachers do not include speaking activities in the classroom and focus more on grammar, vocabulary, and other skills making it challenging to have an improvement in the language.

Educational institutions must offer an integral instruction of English as a foreign language to ensure a meaningful learning experience. Therefore, implementing activities related to speaking skills in the teaching of English contributes to increasing students' interest and motivation. Project-Based Learning is presented as an alternative to improve the speaking skill.

Ecuador is one of the countries that has embraced the use of PBL as a transformative educational approach in its education program. The school projects which were initially called clubs were developed for two hours per week for the sublevels of Elementary and Middle General Education, and three hours for higher education, in force through Ministerial Agreement No. 020-A16 of February 17, 2016. Which pretended to enhance the emotional, social and cognitive skills of the students through interdisciplinary spaces. The application of PBL within English language classes now presents an opportunity to further advance this innovative teaching method while simultaneously improving language proficiency and practical communication skills among students (Ministerio de Educación, 2017).

The PBL is a method that encourages students to practice their language skills in a real context. From the perspective of Almulla (2020), PBL is a suitable approach to develop 21st-century skills that deepen the understanding of academic content by connecting it to practical, real-life contexts. Students work on projects that require critical thinking, problem solving, interpersonal communication, information and media literacy, cooperation, leadership and teamwork, innovation, and application of knowledge to find a solution to the problem or present a product.

The approach is established on the assertion that students acquire knowledge and skills most effectively when engaged in meaningful and practical projects, contrasting memorization activities and traditional classes where the teacher is the center of the class. In contrast with PBL, where the student becomes an active learner, and the teacher is a facilitator (Artama et al., 2023). Therefore, PBL is a methodology that contributes significantly to the acquisition of the language providing opportunities for the natural integration of the speaking skills. Students can develop their speaking skills during the project when they discuss, carry out their work and present their findings to the class, where they will answer questions and address comments (Sutomo et al., 2021).

Considering its contributions in certain aspects of speaking such as vocabulary, fluency, grammar, pronunciation, comprehension, classroom participation, engagement and confidence at the moment of speaking, PBL is highly recommended (Maulana & Suparmadi, 2024). This paper aims to analyze the use of Project-Based learning as a teaching strategy to improve the speaking skills of

seventh graders in the school Veinticuatro de Julio and find solutions to existing issues that affect the clarity, fluency and effectiveness of verbal communication, as well as provide a contribution to English Language teaching. To support the implementation of the research, it is necessary to conduct a literature review of previous research related to this study.

Literature review

An important contribution to Project-Based Learning (PBL) in improving speaking skills can be traced to Lev Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and sociocultural theory. According to Vygotsky (1978), learners achieve higher levels of understanding and skills through interactions with more knowledgeable peers or adults. In the context of PBL, this means that projects that imply peer collaboration, feedback, and discussion provide students with scaffolding needed to enhance their speaking skills where learning is a socially mediated process (Handrianto & Rahman, 2018). Thus, Vygotsky's contributions underscore the importance of interactive and communicative practices in PBL environments to foster and improve speaking skills.

According to Guslyakova et al. (2021) PBL is a relevant method to work with children in L2 teaching that can awaken their interest and motivation to participate in class. It is an effective tool for shaping and developing the personalities of young learners, equipping them with the ability to navigate today's information landscape, extract its core meaning, synthesize and investigate the content, make informed decisions, think critically, collaborate with others, manage their time well, and acquire other essential skills needed for future professionals in the 21st century.

Speaking requires several components and one of them is the regular practice to help students improve fluency, pronunciation, and overall speaking ability. Alfatihah et al. (2022) outlined that the use of PBL can create a supportive environment for practicing English, boosting student participation and developing speaking skills. Through collaborative tasks and real-world scenarios, students are encouraged to engage in meaningful communication, which enhances their language proficiency.

As stated by Dewi (2019) there is a considerable difference in using Project-Based Learning and other conventional methods to teach speaking. It is vital to prioritize fundamental learning methods that can improve students' competencies, especially on speaking skills. Through Project-Based Learning, the student is immersed during the entire process and is given the opportunity to

participate equally in the classroom becoming active learners as they gain not only knowledge of the language but also a variety of skills (Simbolon et al., 2019).

The results of a previous study conducted to seventh graders participants from an Islamic private school in Kudus showed that using PBL method for teaching speaking significantly enhanced students' speaking abilities. The pre-tests results showed average scores of 68.97 and 68.71, which increased in the post-test to 77.24. additionally, the class that used the PBL approach outperformed the control class, which followed a traditional teaching method. The post-test scores for the experimental class were 77.07 and 77.24, while the control class scores for the experimental class were 77.07 and 77.24, while the control class scores were 69.42 and 68.50. (Widiyati & Pangesti, 2022).

Another research carried out by Tyas and Fitriani (2021) showed that using video tutorials as a Project-Based Learning approach effectively enhanced students' speaking skills. The results revealed that the experimental group, which used this method, had higher average scores compared to the control group. Students displayed increased enthusiasm for the project, experienced new challenges, and demonstrated more confidence in their speaking skills. This study reveals the variety of projects that a teacher can use with PBL to increase speaking skills in students. Similarly, the use of PBL through Vlog, where students can post their public speaking videos and construct arguments contributed to the improvement of students' speaking skills and thinking skills (Nugroho & Anugerahwati, 2019).

Laddawan and Yimwilai (2021), argues that presenting various of digital resources and using the available technology for speaking improvement is essential. Project-Based Learning offers diverse opportunities for enhancing students' speaking skills through a range of engaging and interactive projects. Research underscores that integrating speaking-focused projects provides students the opportunity to become more independent in learning as they are in control of the process, they can decide what to say, what materials or resources to use, and what to create. In other words, students take ownership of their own learning.

The final stage of PBL challenges students to present a product in front of an audience allowing them to increase their self-confidence. Sirisrimangkorn (2021) mentions that presentation has a positive effect on language learners' as it involves them in an authentic atmosphere which allows them to use language in real life situation. The use of speaking skills in a presentation marks the

gap between language study and language use providing a wider perspective on learner competence and performance.

In their conceptual paper Sayuti et al. (2020) support through evidence the effectiveness of implementing Project-Based Learning to enhance pupils' four skills and confirmed their validity in speaking through the study of diverse gold standard activities based on the use of PBL. In addition, We (2020) argues that PBL offers students the chance to practice their English in real time during the whole process where the use of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, comprehension, and fluency is required in speaking. By applying PBL other important factors such as confidence, reduction of shyness, self-centeredness, activeness, motivation, and students' interest were unraveled in the classroom, very essential aspects for their academic future in the 21st century.

Methodology

This study employed an experimental design as the research method. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze the data. The quantitative data consisted of students' pretest and post-test scores from speaking rubrics. The qualitative data consisted of the information obtained from a questionnaire.

Population

The participants of this study were the seventh-grade students of the Escuela de Educación Básica Veinticuatro de Julio which consisted of 162 students. This study used a random sampling method to get a sample from the population. The total sample of the study is 41 students, who were divided into two groups. (Class A) as the experimental group which consisted of 20 lower proficiency speaking students and (Class B) as the control group which consisted of 21 higher proficiency speaking students.

Instruments

To respond to the research objectives of this study, several instruments were used to collect and analyze data such as a scoring rubric, speaking test, and questionnaire. The scoring rubric consisted of 5 criteria in the speaking skill such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension which was used to score the speaking test. In the beginning of the study the participants were individually pre-tested to measure the degree of their speaking skills. After

implementing Project-Based learning students were individually post-tested on their speaking skills.

Procedure

The experiment had a duration of 8 weeks, and 4 projects were carried out by students in the process. A pre-test was conducted to all students to measure their oral proficiency before applying the experimentation. After obtaining the first results, the application of PBL was directed to the experimental group (class A) while other conventional methods were applied to the control group (class B). In class A, the PBL activities included creating and presenting VR glasses, constructing a cardboard city to ask and give directions, producing a video showcasing daily routines, and developing and presenting a balanced diet based on the food pyramid. Each activity was designed to engage students in hands-on, collaborative tasks that emphasize real-world applications of English language skills. Conversely, Class B engaged in traditional methods, which involved delivering expositions about VR glasses, role-playing direction-giving scenarios, presenting individual routines in front of the class, and discussing the food pyramid using flipchart paper. These methods focused on direct instruction and individual performance, contrasting with the interactive, project-based approach of Class A. This structured comparison allowed for a thorough evaluation of the effectiveness of PBL versus traditional methods in enhancing students' speaking skills and engagement.

Data analysis

Afterward obtaining the required data. The scores were processed through independent sample T-test. Statistical computation and data analysis was applied to obtain the quantitative results. A questionnaire was taken to analyze the perspective of students towards PBL.

Results and discussion

Table 1. *Pre-test and post-test results of the experimental group and control group*

Group	Mean	SD	SEM	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	N
Experimental group pre-test	6.300	0.923	0.206	9.2535	38	20
Experimental group post-test	8.900	0.852	0.191			20
Control group pre-test	7.857	0.655	0.143	5.9594	40	21
Control group post-test	8.976	0.558	0.122			21

A t-test was used to analyze the speaking level of the students through a pre-test and post-test. Based on the results, the difference is extremely statistically significant in the pre-test and post-test mean score of lower speaking proficiency students ($t=9.2535$, $p<0.05$). The pre-test mean score of lower speaking proficiency students was 6.300 (SD=0.923) while the post-test mean was 8.900 (SD=0.852). Therefore, the post-test mean score was significantly higher than the pre-test mean score. In the higher speaking proficiency students, the results showed statistically significant in the pre-test and post-test score ($t=5.9594$, $p<0.05$). The pre-test mean score of higher speaking proficiency students was 7.857 (SD=0.655) while the post-test mean was 8.976 (SD=0.558). Therefore, the post-test mean score was higher than the pre-test score.

Table 2. *Comparison of speaking skills of lower proficiency students to high proficiency students*

Group	Mean	SD	SEM	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	N
Experimental group pre-test	6.30	0.92	0.21	6.2534	39	20
Control group pre-test	7.86	0.65	0.14			21
Experimental group post-test	8.900	0.852	0.191	0.3402	39	20
Control group post-test	8.976	0.558	0.122			21

After the implementation of ABP, the results indicated that there were not statistically differences ($t=0.3402$, $p=0.000$) in the post-test mean scores of lower speaking proficiency students ($M=8.900$,

SD=0.852) and the higher speaking proficiency students (M=8.976, SD=0.558). This indicates, after the treatment, there were no statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the speaking skills post-test of the lower speaking proficiency students and higher speaking proficiency students.

Questionnaire results

The questionnaire consisted of ten questions based on the contents and projects that students applied in the classroom including the methodology used for both groups. The responses helped the author find out the sensitivity students had about PBL during the process.

Table 3. Questionnaire result

Questions	Response options	Number of students	Percentage
1. Which method do you believe most effectively improves your speaking skills?	Project Based Learning (PBL)	23	56%
	Traditional teaching method	8	20%
	Both equally	17	10%
	Neither	7	7%
2. Which type of activity do you find most beneficial for enhancing your speaking skills?	Group projects	18	44%
	Individual presentations	5	12%
	Role plays	10	24%
	Discussion	6	15%
	Other	2	5%
3. Which method has been most effective in developing your teamwork and collaboration skills for speaking tasks?	Project-Based Learning (PBL)	27	66%
	Traditional teaching methods	6	15%
	Both equally	6	15%
	Neither	2	4%
4. Which method better fosters a collaborative learning environment among students?	Project-Based Learning (PBL)	26	63%
	Traditional teaching methods	7	17%

	Both equally	5	12%
	Neither	3	8%
5. Which method makes the learning experience more relevant to your daily life and personal interests?	Project-Based Learning (PBL)	24	59%
	Traditional teaching methods	9	22%
	Both equally	6	15%
	Neither	2	4%
6. Which method provides you with more time to practice for speaking presentations?	Project-Based Learning (PBL)	20	49%
	Traditional teaching methods	12	29%
	Both equally	7	17%
	Neither	2	5%
7. Which method makes you feel more confident when speaking in public?	Project-Based Learning (PBL)	21	51%
	Traditional teaching methods	10	24%
	Both equally	8	20%
	Neither	2	5%
8. Which method do you think makes the topics we saw in classes more engaging?	Project-Based Learning (PBL)	28	68%
	Traditional teaching methods	7	17%
	Both equally	4	10%
	Neither	2	5%
9. Which method do you find more beneficial for understanding the practical applications of the topics you exposed in class?	Project-Based Learning (PBL)	25	61%
	Traditional teaching methods	9	22%
	Both equally	5	12%
	Neither	2	5%
10. Which method do you currently prefer for learning English?	Project-Based Learning (PBL)	25	61%
	Traditional teaching methods	9	22%
	Blended method	4	10%

Interactive tools	online	3	7%
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According to table 3, the results of the questionnaire indicate that students showed a strong preference for Project-Based Learning (PBL) over traditional methods. They consider PBL to be the most effective method for enhancing their speaking skills, surpassing traditional methods and an equal balance of both approaches. When it comes to activities that enhance speaking skills, group projects and role plays are highly valued, while individual presentations and discussions also receive recognition. PBL is particularly praised for its role in developing teamwork and collaboration skills, significantly outperforming traditional teaching methods. It is also favored for fostering a collaborative learning environment among students. Moreover, PBL is perceived as more relevant to students' daily lives and interest compared to traditional teaching methods. While traditional teaching methods are noted for providing some time for practice, PBL is highly rated in this regard. Additionally, PBL is recognized for its effectiveness in boosting confidence in public speaking. Students also believe that PBL makes class topics more engaging and is more beneficial for understanding practical applications related to the topics covered in class.

Discussion

The results of this study provide compelling evidence supporting the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in enhancing speaking skills among lower proficiency students compared to traditional teaching methods. The data show a clear preference for PBL over conventional approaches, with students identifying PBL as the most effective method for improving their speaking abilities. This preference aligns with existing research that suggests PBL's active, student-centered approach fosters deeper engagement and practical language use, which is crucial for developing speaking skills (Dewi, 2019).

The positive impact of PBL on speaking skills is further corroborated by the students' feedback on specific activities. Group projects were highlighted as particularly beneficial, echoing findings from previous studies that emphasize the role of collaborative and interactive tasks that make the teaching-learning process more interesting for the students and remarking on the importance of applying student-centered activities (Ngadiso et al., 2021)

These activities not only facilitate language practice but also enhance students' ability to communicate effectively in real-world scenarios.

Moreover, PBL was found to significantly improve teamwork and collaboration skills, a critical component for effective communication. This result is consistent with literature that underscores the role of collaborative learning environments in promoting interpersonal skills and language proficiency (Zhou, 2023). Students reported that PBL creates a more engaging and relevant learning experience in comparison with traditional teaching methods which is integral to maintaining motivation and interest, especially among lower proficiency speaking learners.

Another positive contributing factor in this study was the amount of practice opportunities provided by PBL to enhance speaking skills of the students allowing them to integrate their skills with real-world applications (Dharmayanti & Joni, 2022). However, this finding also showed a weakness. Although PBL provides with more time to practice, students also reported difficulties in completing activities within the designated time limits. This suggests that while PBL facilitates extensive language practice, it may also lead to time constraints that can affect the completion and effectiveness of certain tasks. This aspect of PBL necessitates careful planning and time management to ensure that activities are both productive and feasible within the available instructional time. Addressing this challenge may require strategic adjustments, such as more structures time and clearer milestones, to maximize the benefits of PBL while adhering to practical constraints.

Conclusion

In summary, the study's results affirm the advantages of PBL in enhancing speaking skills among lower-speaking proficiency students. The positive outcomes across various aspects such as activity effectiveness, teamwork development, confidence building, and practical application, demonstrate PBL's potential to address the specific needs of these learners. These findings contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting PBL as a valuable pedagogical approach for language education, particularly for students who may struggle with traditional methods. To maximize its effectiveness, educators should address time management concerns and continue to refine the implementation of PBL. By doing so, PBL can be optimized to fully leverage its strengths, ultimately leading to a more effective and engaging learning experience for students.

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