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Persepsi Mahasiswa terhadap Efektivitas Pembelajaran Berbasis Proyek dalam Mengembangkan Keterampilan *Speaking*

Students' Perception of the Effectiveness of Project-Based Learning in Developing Speaking Skills

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to explore students' perceptions of the effectiveness of project-based learning (PBL) in developing speaking skills in the Speaking course. Using a qualitative approach and descriptive method, this study involved 20 students from the English Language Education program who had participated in project-based learning. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and students' reflective notes, then analyzed using thematic analysis. The results show that most students felt more confident and skilled in speaking English after participating in PBL. However, challenges such as anxiety when speaking in public and unequal contribution in group work remain obstacles. This study recommends improving group dynamics management and reducing anxiety in project-based learning.

Keywords: project-based learning, speaking skills, student perceptions



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INTRODUCTION

The ability to speak English is an important competency that must be possessed by students in the era of globalization. In the Indonesian context, these skills not only support academic and professional needs, but also become an indicator of individual readiness to face global challenges. Students are required to be able to express ideas, express opinions, and establish cross-cultural communication in various international contexts. However, in practice, the development of speaking skills still faces various obstacles, ranging from psychological obstacles such as anxiety and low self-confidence to the limitations of pedagogical approaches that emphasize theoretical aspects more than real practice. As a result, students tend to be passive and less skilled in actively using English, especially in formal or interactive situations.

Theoretically, the development of foreign language speaking skills demands active involvement and direct exposure in the communication process. Several studies have shown that speaking skills develop optimally when students engage in collaborative and meaningful activities that require the use of language in real-life contexts (Richards, 2008; Brown, 2007). One approach that is in line with this principle is Project-Based Learning (PBL), which puts students in project-based learning situations, where they are required to complete collaborative tasks, deliver presentations, or construct simulations related to the real world. This method is believed to be able to increase student motivation, involvement, and confidence in communicating verbally (Thomas, 2000; Beckett & Slater, 2005). On the other hand, the implementation of PBL in the context of English learning requires the readiness of students to actively speak and cooperate, which is not always easy to realize in practice.

Although many studies support the effectiveness of PBL in language learning, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding students' perceptions of the application of this method in the context of learning speaking skills in college. Most of the existing studies place more emphasis on learning outcomes or academic performance, while the affective aspects and perceptions of students are still rarely explored in depth (Stoller, 2006; Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2006). In fact, student perception is very important to understand the effectiveness of the learning approach from the perspective of the main actors of the learning process. Without understanding how students interpret their experiences in PBL, the development of this method risks not answering the actual needs and challenges in the field. Therefore, it is important to explore students' understanding directly to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the strengths and weaknesses of PBL in the context of teaching speaking skills.

The urgency of this research is even more evident when looking at the fact that Speaking courses in universities have not fully integrated the principles of PBL systematically. Many higher education institutions in Indonesia still apply

traditional learning models with minimal interaction and language practice. Projects such as debates, group presentations, or simulated discussions are often done incidentally and are not an integral part of curriculum design. On the other hand, when the project is implemented, not a few students have difficulty adapting, especially in terms of role sharing, time management, and active use of English in groups. This shows that there is a gap between the ideals of PBL as a learning strategy and the reality of implementation in the field, which needs to be further analyzed from the perspective of students.

Based on this background and analysis, this study aims to investigate in depth students' perceptions of the effectiveness of project-based learning in improving English speaking skills. This study not only wants to evaluate the benefits of PBL in terms of improving oral skills, but also examines the challenges faced by students while participating in these projects. The key question to be answered is: how do students assess the contribution of PBL to the development of their speaking skills? To what extent do they feel helped or even experience obstacles in the process? By answering these questions, it is hoped that empirical insights will be obtained that can be used to improve project-based learning practices in the Speaking course.

Thus, this research is expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution to the development of English learning strategies at the university level. Theoretically, the findings of this study will enrich the treasure of literature on the implementation of PBL in teaching speech skills. Practically, the results can be input for lecturers and curriculum developers in designing learning that not only emphasizes the final project results, but also pays attention to the process, experience, and readiness of students as active participants. This approach is expected to be able to produce more contextual, relevant, and empowering learning for students in facing global communication challenges.

RESEARCH METHODS

Data collection was carried out using two main techniques: semi-structured interviews and students' reflective journals. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain in-depth information, allowing participants to articulate their experiences openly and narratively. Sample interview questions included: "How was your experience participating in group projects in the Speaking class?" and "What was the biggest challenge you faced when speaking English during the project?" Each response was transcribed and analyzed using an inductive thematic analysis approach, as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2021), which allowed the researcher to identify key themes emerging from the data. Reflective journals were collected at the end of each project session, in which students were asked to evaluate their engagement, difficulties, and achievements throughout the learning process. The interview guide was developed based on indicators of students' perceptions of PBL and was content-validated by two language

education experts. Instrument reliability was enhanced through readability testing and member checking procedures to ensure consistency and accuracy of the data obtained from participants.

The research procedure was conducted over a three-month period, encompassing planning, interview implementation, reflection collection, data transcription, analysis, and results verification. The entire process took place from October to December 2024. No special tools or materials were used during the research, except for audio recording devices and transcript sheets for interview documentation. Data analysis was performed systematically by coding each transcript, then grouping the codes into conceptual themes such as learning experiences, collaborative challenges, and the impact of PBL on students' speaking confidence. The limitations of this method lie in the subjectivity of data interpretation and the limited number of participants, which may not allow for broad generalization. Nevertheless, the findings of this study provide rich contextual insights into the effectiveness of project-based learning in enhancing students' speaking skills at the tertiary level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that *Project-Based Learning* (PBL) has a significant positive impact on the development of students' speaking skills in *the Speaking* course. Most students report a fairly clear improvement in speaking skills after following this method. In interviews, 15 out of 20 participants revealed that they felt more confident in using English, especially in situations that required spontaneous communication. They state that through projects that involve group discussions and presentations, they learn to speak more fluently and more structured. One student even mentioned, "By speaking in front of my friends and presentations, I feel more accustomed and less afraid to speak in class." This shows that the use of the PBL method that involves direct interaction plays a very important role in increasing students' confidence in speaking.

However, although many feel that there is an improvement, not a few students feel dissatisfied with the results they have achieved. A total of 5 students revealed that they found it difficult to speak in public, especially when they had to speak in English without careful preparation. They identified feelings of anxiety as a major barrier that limited their ability to speak fluently. One student stated, "I often feel nervous and afraid of making mistakes, especially when I have to speak in front of the class." This reflects that although PBL can improve speaking skills, public speaking anxiety remains a significant challenge for some students. In addition, some students also felt that although they were given the opportunity to speak in groups, some members of the group were more dominant in the discussion, so they could not fully contribute. This suggests that

although PBL provides a greater speaking experience, unbalanced group dynamics can affect learning outcomes.

The preparation of group-based projects is an important element found in this study. Most students, as many as 18 out of 20 participants, felt that working in a group gave them the opportunity to share ideas, exchange opinions, and learn from their peers. They feel that collaboration in projects like this allows them to be more sensitive to the context of using English in their daily lives. One student revealed: *"Working in a group allows me to discuss ideas and listen to my friends' opinions, which helps me understand the use of English in a more natural context."* Nonetheless, some students expressed concerns about uneven contributions between group members. Some feel that more active group members dominate the conversation, while others get less opportunities to speak. This shows the importance of more intensive mentoring from lecturers to ensure that each group member can participate to the fullest and benefit from this project-based learning.

Discussion

The main findings revealed in this study show that project-based learning is able to improve students' speaking skills in a more contextual and tangible way. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that PBL provides students with the opportunity to learn to speak directly in more natural situations. This is in line with constructivist theory which emphasizes that effective learning occurs when students are given the opportunity to learn through direct experience and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). In this context, students not only learn English theory, but also feel and practice using English in more realistic everyday conversations. The experience of speaking in front of a class or in group discussions gives them the opportunity to hone their speaking skills in a more relevant and applicable context.

However, challenges faced by some students, such as public speaking anxiety, remain a significant barrier in project-based learning. Previous research has also shown that speech anxiety is one of the main factors that hinder the development of speaking skills in English (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). This shows that while PBL can improve speaking skills, the need to create a supportive and safe environment for students is essential to reduce such anxiety. Lecturers need to ensure that students feel comfortable and not afraid to make mistakes, because mistakes are part of the natural learning process. In addition, providing constructive and positive feedback can also help students build their confidence in speaking.

The issue of unequal contributions in groups is also something that needs to be considered. Although PBL allows students to collaborate on projects, there are group dynamics that often make some students feel less involved. Previous research has shown that collaboration in groups can produce different results

depending on how the dynamics of the group are managed (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). Therefore, lecturers need to ensure that tasks in groups are divided fairly and that every student is given an equal opportunity to contribute. Stricter supervision of the division of tasks in the project and monitoring of the group process can ensure that each student gets the most speaking experience.

Another challenge faced by students is non-optimal time management in completing projects. Some students revealed that they had difficulty completing projects on time because there were other tasks that also required attention. This illustrates that while PBL provides great benefits in improving speaking skills, poor time management can be a major obstacle in the learning process. Previous research (Thomas, 2000) has shown that immature time planning in group-based projects can hinder the achievement of learning objectives. Therefore, lecturers need to provide better guidance in terms of time planning and project organization so that students can complete their assignments more efficiently.

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that project-based learning has great potential to improve students' speaking skills, but it also reveals challenges that need to be overcome in order for the benefits to be felt to the fullest. PBL can increase students' confidence in public speaking, develop their communication skills in more relevant contexts, and give them opportunities to collaborate. However, challenges such as speech anxiety, unequal group contributions, and time management must be addressed with a more structured and targeted approach in order for PBL to deliver more optimal outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that Project-Based Learning (PBL) has a meaningful contribution to improving students' speaking skills in the Speaking course. Through active engagement in collaborative projects, students gain firsthand experience in using English, enhance their confidence, and develop communication abilities in both academic and social contexts. Nevertheless, challenges such as public speaking anxiety and unequal group contributions persist, which may hinder learning effectiveness. Therefore, lecturers are expected to play a proactive role in providing intensive guidance, particularly in time management, group dynamics, and the creation of a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Future research is recommended to explore anxiety management strategies within PBL contexts and to develop collaborative facilitation approaches that foster balanced participation, thereby optimizing speaking skill acquisition in a more comprehensive manner.

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