

## THE USE OF PROJECT BASED LEARNING TO IMPROVE THE STUDENTS' SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

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### Abstract

English as a foreign language has important role in our life especially for students who want to reach their dreams to work or study in abroad. They must have a skill to speak and communicate in English. There are many problems for teachers to teach English in the classroom, Such as low motivation, lazy to practice and a little time to teach. These problems are familiar to students who learn English as a Foreign language. Therefore, teachers need strategies to motivate and encourage students to learn, read and practice English. In order to help students to speak effectively, a strategy can be used. Project based learning is a suitable strategy to develop students to speak and it motivates students to practice and show their performance in speaking English.

**Keywords:** project based learning, speaking, performance

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### Introduction

English is very important to help many people who want to communicate from over the world. The use of English can make us easy to get information, find scholarship and have many friends. Nowadays, English has been used to all countries in the world to communicate. People can use English as first language, second language and foreign language. Indonesia uses English as Foreign Language. Therefore, there are many problems in teaching English at school. Kayi (2006) states that speaking refers to the gap between linguistic expertise and teaching methodology. Linguistic expertise concerns with language structure and language content, teaching speaking is not like listening, reading, and writing, it needs habit formation because it is a real communication.

Speaking is a productive skill so it needs practicing as often as possible, so it will be the main problem for the students because they have problem to

speak English well and fluently. The students may feel reluctant to use the target language as they may be afraid of making mistakes. Students may have the feeling of discomfort using the target language as it deprives them of their normal means of communication (Nascente, 2001). According to Education First (2014), Indonesia is the 24<sup>th</sup> rank among 63 countries in the world. This result shows the ability of speaking practice is still low. It is important for teachers to encourage and motivate them to speak English, especially in class. Giving motivation to students is very important. They must have self-confidence to use English. In order to help students, a strategy can be used to motivate, ask and persuade them to practice English.

Project Based Learning is one of the strategies to motivate students to speak English. Project Based Learning can prepare students for future life with

basic life and social skills in 21<sup>st</sup> century. This will allow them to analyze the optimal conditions for their life. Project Based Learning stimulates productive learning behavior; for example, students are responsible for creating, managing, planning, and seeking answers to bring their project work to meet its goals. Likewise, learners acquire receptive behavior from the experience of working as part of a team and dealing with obstacles during the work process. It is believed that various life skills are practiced automatically through the work project process, and these particular achievements will serve as useful guidelines to support lifelong learning in the future, this is stated by Solomon (2003) that due to the fact that project-based learning produces an equitable learning environment, it is a positive contribution to students' academic achievement.

To improve the students' speaking performance by using the Project Based Learning, it is hoped that it can encourage and guide students to be able to work in the context of real problems in their speaking, directing students to be able to work together using technology in learning, and apart from that it can direct and encourage students to be able to manage their own speaking skill. Larmer, Mergendoller & Boss (2015) states that in learning to read, Project Based Learning is believed to have a positive impact on students' learning motivation.

Students can play character in a group. Role-playing is the changing of one's behavior to assume a role, either unconsciously to fill a social role, or consciously to act out an adopted role. In the field of psychology, the term is used more loosely in four senses:

- a. To refer to the playing of roles generally such as in a theatre, or educational setting;
- b. To refer to taking a role of an existing character or person and

acting it out with a partner taking someone else's role, often involving different genres of practice;

- c. To refer to a wide range of games including Pictures, painting and drawing
- d. To refer specifically to Project Based Learning.

Based on the explanations above it can be concluded that Project Based Learning is an interesting strategy for students in learning to improve their speaking performance, the researchers hope that there would be improvement of students' speaking performance. So the students can more easily understand the learning context, so that they can foster a more focused, structured and systematic learning process for students and achieve speaking learning goals for students. This is reinforced by the research results of Abu maid, A., & Mohammad, A. (2020) which shows positive attitudes among students (both online and in class) through Project Based Learning showed that the PBL approach is written as one of the solutions to the problems highlighted, Project Based Learning has advantages in helping teachers and making the learning experience more engaging and impactful for the students. So Project Based Learning strategy can mutually foster and combine learning activities in such a way to create an optimal learning experience.

### Speaking Skill

Speaking English is not easy to students who learn English as foreign language. Nunan (1999) states that speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the uses of verbal and non-verbal symbol in various contexts. Furthermore, speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information (Nunan, 2003).

Speaking skill is one of the language skills that are very essential to support further oral communication especially in English, but it is the most difficult skill to develop (Ur, 1996). However, today's world requires that the goal of teaching speaking should improve students' communicative skills, because, only in that way, students can express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rules appropriate in each communicative circumstance.

Teaching speaking for EFL learners to produce the English speech sounds and sound patterns, use word and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second language, select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter, organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence, use language as a means of expressing values and judgments, use the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called as fluency (Nunan, 2003).

In addition, there are five components generally recognized in analysis of speaking process. They are pronunciation (including the segmental features-vowels and consonant and the stress and intonation / pattern), grammar, vocabulary, fluency (the ease and the smoothness of the flow of speech), and comprehension (Lado, 1995). Speaking has five dimensions or components for rating key aspects of language proficiency: (1) comprehension is the ability to interact with the meaning, context, and understand the conversation (2) fluency is described as the ability to report acts or situation, in precise words, or the ability to converse or to express a sequence of ideas fluently (3) Vocabulary is the high proportion of words and expressions that express their attitude (4) Pronunciation is the student's

ability to produce pitch, intonation, individual sounds, sounds, spelling, and stress (5) Grammar is the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence.

There are the elements of speaking, they are stated below.

1. Pronunciation (including the segmental features- vowels and consonants and the stress and intonation patterns. As stated by Harmer, if students want to be able to speak fluently in English, they need to be able pronounce phonemes correctly, use appropriate stress and intonation patterns and speak in connected speech. The speaker must be able to articulate the words and create the physical sounds that carry meaning.

2. Grammar

It is obvious that in order to be able to speak foreign language, it is necessary to know a certain amount of grammar and vocabulary. Grammar is the sounds and sound patterns, the basic units of meaning, such as words and the rules to combine them to form new sentences

3. Vocabulary

As we know, vocabulary is a basic element in language. Vocabulary is single words, set phrases, variable phrases, Phrasal verbs, and idioms. It is clear that limited vocabulary mastery makes conversation virtually impossible.

4. Fluency

In simple terms, fluency is the ability to talk freely without too much stopping or hesitating. Meanwhile, according to Gower et-al fluency can be thought of as the ability to keep going when speaking spontaneously. When speaking fluently students should be able to get the message across with whatever resources and abilities they have got, regardless of grammatical and other mistakes.

### 5. Comprehension

The last speaking element is comprehension. Comprehension is discussed by both speakers because comprehension can make people getting the information they want. Comprehension is defined as the ability to understand something by a reasonable comprehension of the subject or as the knowledge of what a situation is really like

### Project Based Learning

Project Based Learning is a strategy to learn speaking English with student's creation like as picture and photo. Students can express their ability in speaking English. They can draw a picture which is familiar with them. It will improve their vocabulary and Speaking Skill. Project Based Learning is very interesting, so the participants assume that Project Based Learning makes speaking easily. Participants determine the illustration of their characters based on their characterization, and the actions succeed or fail according to a formal system of rules and guidelines. Within the rules, they may improvise freely; their choices shape the direction and outcome of the games.

Project Based Learning is a speaking activity where learners participate either as themselves or as somebody else in a specific situation. In this way they can act in various interaction patterns.

- 1) A real need in the learners' lives (at the doctor, at the station), the learners may or may not have the direct experience;
- 2) The events that few learners will ever experience but which are easy to play such as being a journalist;
- 3) Fantasy roles which are imaginary, absurd and have nothing to do with reality.

Project Based Learning is one of communicative techniques which develops fluency in language students, which promotes interaction in the classroom, and which increases motivation the three elements in Project Based Learning: what the characters want, who they are, and their moods or attitudes at the time. These elements are affected by how the situation develops is an example of "learning by doing" The word *Project* indicates that the students must actively apply knowledge, skill, and understanding to successfully speak and act from different, assigned perspective. The term *play* indicates that the students use their imaginations and have fun, acting out their parts in non-threatening environment. Thus Project Based Learning engages students in a participatory activity that requires them to apply course concepts as they assume fictional identities or envision themselves in unfamiliar situation

According to Ments (1999), "role-play is motivational and effective because it involves activity". In Project Based Learning, the participant is asked to draw the part of anything. He is given details about the project and situation that he is supposed to be in. Project Based Learning must not be confused with drawing because, unlike drawing, project Based Learning is focused on how the roles of the players interact with and affect each other. Ments (1999) also comments that the most obvious uses of Project Based Learning are in those areas which deal primarily with aspects of communication. Project Based Learning is a communicative activity where the learners can use spontaneous language. It also helps learners to develop real life speaking skills.

### **Project Based Learning: An Approach to Teaching and Learning**

Project Based Learning is a technique that allows students to explore realistic situations by interacting with other people in a managed way in order to develop experience and trial different strategies in a supported environment. Depending on the intention of the activity, participants might be playing a role similar to their own (or their likely one in the future) or could play the opposite part of the conversation or interaction. Both options provide the possibility of significant learning, with the former allowing experience to be gained and the latter encouraging the student to develop an understanding of the situation from the opposite point of view. For the participants, they are given particular topic to discuss in group or individual, such as an email exchange, typical of their discipline. They may be given specific instructions on how to act or what to say, as an aggressive client or patient in denial, for example, or required to act and react in their own way depending on the requirements of the exercise. The participants will act out the scenario and afterwards, then there will be reflection and discussion about the interactions, such as alternative ways of dealing with the situation. The scenario can then be acted out again with changes based on the outcome of the reflection and discussion.

If you are interested in trying out Project Based Learning there are a few practical questions that you should answer:

1. Where in the course/module would this approach work best?
2. Are there situations and interactions that students would get benefit from being able to explore?
3. How much technology should be involved? Which tools are most suited? What support would be

needed?

4. Are the students (and other tutors) ready for this?

Having thought about these questions, you should have worked out whether role-play is an approach that makes sense in your context and have some ideas about how to introduce it. If you are still unsure, you could try a small exercise in a single session and see how the students respond

It is widely agreed that learning takes place when activities are engaging and memorable. Jeremy Harmer advocates the use of Project Based Learning for the following reasons:

1. It's fun and motivating
  - a. The creative aspect of the exercise will make it seem more like play than like work.
  - b. The pressure to solve a problem or to resolve a conflict for their character can motivate a student far more than the sort of pressure that they usually face preparing for an exam, and it is far more typical of the pressure that will be on them in real life.
  - c. Project Based Learning exercises are particularly useful in courses for non-majors to emphasize the intersection between science and daily life. Popular geoscience role-playing scenarios generally deal with hazards and environmental issues that combine natural and social sciences.
2. Quieter students get the chance to express themselves in a more forthright way
  - a. The primary purpose of Project Based Learning exercises is to get students to look at the material they are learning in a new light. The instructor is persuading them to alter their mental maps of the world instead of just filling them in (Blatner, 2002).

- b. Project Based Learning exercises show the world as a complex place with complicated problems that can only rarely be solved by a simple answer that the student has previously memorized (Ebata, 2009).
  - c. Additionally, the students learn that skills they learn separately (such as quantitative and communications skills) are often used together in order to accomplish many real-world tasks (Barir, 2000 ).
  - d. Adding a sympathetic, generally human element to science is often encouraging to students with science and math anxiety. Lessons can use Project Based Learning to emphasize the value of feelings and of creativity as well as of knowledge (Ebata, 2009)
  - e. Exercises emphasizing the importance of people and their viewpoints are important preparation for students who will go on in many professions, including business, academia, and politics.
3. The world of the classroom is broadened to include the outside world - thus offering a much wider range of language opportunities
    - a. Students need to understand the needs and perspectives of the people around them to get through life, and to understand themselves.
    - b. Project Based Learning exercises can be used to develop skills important inside and outside of science: the kind of skills needed to make learned information useful in the real world. Many of these are very difficult to teach using more traditional methods of instruction: self-awareness, problem solving, communication, initiative, teamwork (Blatner, 2002)
    - c. If an assignment includes research

or problem solving, students are more likely to retain knowledge that they have constructed themselves more than that simply handed to them in lecture (Solomon, 2003).

4. Blatner (2002) tried, with some success, to instill ethics in school children using Project Based Learning.
5. Accounting students from the University of Illinois had an easier time finding jobs after completing a curriculum that included role-playing than they did after the traditional curriculum (Ebata, 2009)

### **Key Steps in Constructing a Project Based Learning**

There are key steps in constructing Project Based Learning (Clark, 1977) they are stated below

1. The first step for the teacher is to define the aims and objectives of the role-play in order to practice skills, explore concepts etc.
2. Then the teacher is to determine external constraints like the class size or the space available.
3. Define time limit of the Project Based Learning. Construct the Project Based Learning by making use of the time effectively with maximum participants
4. Define the setting of the Project Based Learning. It has to be defined in brief. This enables the students to understand the context of the Project Based Learning setting.
5. Define clear role descriptors and at least few dialogues of major characters.
6. Define observer tasks like taking down the feedback on each Project Based Learning, new and improved dialogues etc.
7. Define debrief agenda and also

clearly define the facilitator tasks.

Furthermore, there are the roles of the teacher in project based learning (Clark, 1977)

1. A teacher should keep in mind learners' needs and interests in order to choose an appropriate situation for Project Based Learning. Ensure that the selected of Project Based Learning should be interesting and also it should give the students an opportunity to practice what they have learned. In order to make Project Based Learning interesting it is good to let the students choose the situation among them. Encourage them to suggest themes that intrigue them or to choose a topic from a list of given situations. Teacher can also ask them to write down situations which they encounter in their own life, or when they read a book or watch a movie as this will enable them to construct the Project Based Learning in a way which will be interesting to their class members.
2. Always provide important role to intelligent, smart students and leave the average students relaxed with less important roles. The good performance of the bright students will be an encouragement to other students and some of them will take up leading roles in the next Project Based Learning session. Teacher can also interchange the roles among students based on their ability.
3. While deciding on the composition of each group teacher should consider both the abilities and disabilities of the students. For example, a group consisting only of shyest students will not lead to a good performance in Project Based Learning, so teacher should mix each group with students of different abilities.
4. Provide the students with concrete information and clear role descriptions, so that they could play their roles with confidence. For example, in the situation at a bus station, the person who is assigned the act of giving the information should have relevant details like: the times and destination of the bus, price of tickets, etc. with him on a cue card. Information like a fictitious name, status, age, personality, etc. can also be given in it.
5. It is always better if the teacher can take one of the roles and act it out as a model at the beginning level instead of asking for volunteers to act out the assigned Project Based Learning in front of the class members.
6. Debriefing after the Project Based Learning session does not mean that pointing out and correcting mistakes. Pointing out mistakes will sometimes make the students less confident and less willing to do the other Project Based Learning assigned to them. So feedback should be on each students' opinion about the Project Based Learning and teacher should welcome their comments.
7. The aim of the feedback session should be to discuss what has happened in the role-play and what they have learned from it, their valuable suggestions and remarks. In addition to this teacher can also ask them evaluation questions on each Project Based Learning.
8. Teacher can also note down mistakes during the Project Based Learning. It will provide the teacher with feedback for further practice and revision.
9. Teacher should avoid intervening in the role-play with error corrections and do not to discourage the students during their participation in the Project Based Learning.
10. Teacher can also give the students home task on role play exercises

which will in turn help them to learn useful words and expressions. It also enables them to think about the language and to construct the sentence accordingly for an effective role play performance with confidence.

**Research Methodology**

To conduct this study, quasi experimental research using non equivalent control group pretest-posttest design was used. Fraenkel and Wallen (1991) state that “ an experiment usually involves at least two groups of subjects: an experimental group and a control or comparison group.” The study was conducted by using two groups: experimental and control groups. The experimental group received a treatment of some sort ( a new text book, a different method of teaching , and so forth), while the control group did not have treatment.

The population of this study was Seventh Grade Students of Junior High School. In this study, purposive sampling technique was used. The sample was taken by lecturer’s judgment and results of speaking performance were used. Finally, there were 14 students were taken as the sample into experimental group.

In collecting the data, this study applied Project Based Learning with the picture which is selected by the students. There are 14 students Who perform and describe the picture. To analyze the speaking test, in order to score the students’ speaking achievement, the scoring scale from Mid –continent comprehensive center (SOLOM) was used.

The scoring focused on five main aspects: pronunciation, fluency, comprehensibility, vocabulary, and grammar. The speaking test was recorded and then scored by two raters who fulfill the requirements of English background and have at least 525 TOEFL scores. The scores and the grades of the students’

speaking achievement were grouped as follow : 21-25 (excellent), 6-20 (Good), 11-15 (average), 6-10 (poor), <16 (very poor).

**Findings and Discussion**

The results of the speaking achievement in the experimental group was analyzed in using score distribution of Table 1 and the result was presented in the table 2.

**Table 1.** Score Distribution of Speaking Achievemet in the Experimental Group

Score Range	Category	Students’ score
27-31	Excellent	8
22-26	Good	6
17-21	Average	0
12-16	Poor	0
0-11	Very Poor	0
Total		14

**The scoring scale from Mid –continent comprehensive center (SOLOM) was used.**

Based on the table 1, in the experimental group, there were 8 students who got excellent category and 6 students who got good category.

**Table 2.** The Score of Speaking Achievement in the Experimental Group

Pretest		Posttest	
N	%	N	%
0	0	8	80
5	10	6	20
5	10	0	0
4	0	0	0
0	0	0	0
14	100	14	100

Based on the table 2, some interpretations could be described that teaching by using Project Based Learning can improve students’ speaking performance. The following is the interpretation in detail. First, it might be influenced by some activities in teaching by using Project Based Learning such as cases, arguments, rebuttals, listening, research and advanced issues. In which requires the students to discuss, learn, search the



information to respond and answer to the topic or to defend their argument, and to stimulate their interest in the topic. This is also supported by Krieger (2005) that Project Based Learning is assembling and organizing effective arguments, persuading and entertaining an audience, and using the language to convince people that your arguments outweigh your opposition's. In addition, after having Project Based Learning, the students can conclude and share their ideas to one another in a group, and finally, it will improve speaking performance among students.

Second reason is Project Based Learning could improve students' speaking performance was because the topics of Project Based Learning which exposed to real-life that can attract students' attention and make the teaching and learning process more alive. This statement is strengthened by Harmer (1991) that Project Based Learning is a method to force students to think about the multiple sides of an issue and it also forces them to interact not just the details of a given topic, but also with one another. The other reasons are Project Based Learning that could improve students' speaking performance might be caused by its implementation, the students seemed excited and enthusiastic to speak in a group discussion. In addition, in relation to the results of findings of each aspect of speaking achievement by using the Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis, there were some aspects in the aspect of speaking achievement such as comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar.

### Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis, it showed that there was a significant difference in speaking achievement between the students who were taught through Project Based Learning and those were taught without Project Based Learning.

Moreover, in terms of speaking aspects, there was contribution of speaking aspects to speaking achievement. The highest contribution was comprehension, but other aspects still gave contribution to speaking. Meanwhile, there was a contribution also of vocabulary to speaking aspect. The highest contribution was grammar, but vocabulary still gave contribution to other aspects.

Based on the explanations above, some suggestions are given to teachers and learners in learning English. First, the learners should be given more method in relation to the English speaking activity for instance using Project Based Learning in the classroom which explores critical thinking and arguments. Second, the teachers should help the students to have self-confidence to speak English by using group discussion and games. Third, teachers should be able to select appropriate and effective instructional technique and material to support the teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

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