



# Teaching Speaking Skills through Project-Based Learning for the Eighth Graders of Junior High School

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Received: 2022-02-28 Accepted: 2022-06-05

DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v10i1.2555

## Abstract

The objective of the study is to see whether or not project-based learning improves students' speaking skills and their perceptions towards the implementation of PBL. The author used the quasi-experimental method. The population was 120 students. The research sample was class VIII A consisted of 16 students as an experimental group, and class VIII B consisted of 16 students as a controlled group. The instrument of the research was a speaking test and questionnaire. The author collected data through pre-tested the students, giving treatment, post-tested, and spreading questionnaires through Google form. The data were analyzed by using SPSS program version 28. The students' result of average score in the pre-test of the experimental group was lower than the average score in the post-test (35.81 < 64.94). Meanwhile, the average score of the students in the pre-test of the controlled group was lower than the average score in post-test (41.00 < 50.75). It means that the average score of post-test in the experimental group is better than the average score of post-test in the controlled group (64.94 > 50.75). The result of the questionnaire shows the "very high" category which means that project-based learning is beneficial for students. The author revealed that project-based learning significantly increases the students' speaking skills. This research can be used by the teachers as a reference to improve the quality of the English teaching and learning process, especially in E-Learning classes and provide fun classroom activities for the students.

**Keywords:** e-learning; project-based learning; teaching speaking

**Introduction**

Speaking is an interaction between two or more persons who are both speakers and listeners to obtain information. According to Richards & Renandya, one of the components of communication is speaking (2002). Therefore, speaking is a crucial skill for communicating and sharing ideas. People communicate by expressing statements, asking questions, and negating. According to Brown (2007) states that speaking is a collaborative process that involves the production, reception, and processing of information. In learning English, speaking appears to be the most important English skill to learn because it is a productive skill in the verbal form that can be used to demonstrate a learner's output. Speaking can increase a person's confidence; we can share and find much information directly; besides, speaking is one of the most significant parts of mastering other English skills. According to Syam (2020), producing, receiving, and digesting information are all part of the interactive process of generating meaning that is speaking. To perfect the speaking skill, Indonesian students must practice English on a regular basis, especially when pronouncing English words in a foreign language, and they must be familiar with the language's sounds, structure, vocabulary, and culture subsystem. Learners can master the speaking skill by participating in activities such as project-based learning, games, and role-playing.

Based on observations of the teaching process in junior high schools, students face several problems in speaking. First, students lack sufficient vocabulary, so they are hesitant to express their thoughts. Second, students are unable to pronounce the words properly. It makes them feel ashamed, and it can make them more anxious while speaking because they are frightened of making a mistake; third, they have few opportunities to practice English outside of the classroom.

In Indonesia, teaching and learning activities must currently be carried out from home. Because of the Covid-19 outbreak spread throughout Indonesia; Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Anwar Makarim, issued Circular Number 4 of 2020 on Education in a Coronavirus (Covid-19) Emergency, one of which emphasizes the need of online learning (distance learning) in providing a relevant learning experience. During the Covid-19 outbreak, e-learning is the best choice for education.

E-learning can give one effective teaching technique, according to Ghiardini (2011: 9), such as practicing with relevant feedback, tailoring learning routes based on student needs, mixing collaborative activities with autonomous study, and using simulations and games. However, Indonesian students are not all familiar with the E-Learning system. The author observed that some students had difficulty learning English based on research observations, especially during online classes. Students say that the teacher's monotonous teaching methods or strategies make them less interested in learning. Also, students consider English is a complicated subject, making students less enthusiastic about learning, primarily when the E-Learning system is implemented. Less efficient learning strategies in online classes make students less involved in the learning process.

Based on the explanation above, one of the methods that should be used is project-based learning. Project-based learning, according to Dimmitt (2017), is an instructional model that focuses on learners and engages them in getting to know understanding and skills by studying more about issues and undertaking investigations to resolve these challenges through actual projects that require resourcefulness and preparation on the part of the learners. Through PBL method, students will speak in front of many people. PBL is a strategy that allows students to design, problem-solve, make, or investigate activities while also allowing them to work relatively independently for long intervals of time and presentations or publishing results (Patton, 2012). Besides, Bell (2010) stated that PBL (Project-Based Learning) is a new way of learning that offers a variety of skills that are essential for success in the twenty-first century. Students use inquiry to drive their own studying and collaborate to research and produce projects that represent their understanding. Students benefit from this approach to training in a variety of ways, from learning new, useful technology skills to becoming proficient communicators and advanced problem solvers. Project-based learning can make learners active in learning because it uses a student center system that can help improve student's speaking skills, make English lessons fun and motivate them to learn more.

According to Fragoulis (2009), PBL has several positive results when it comes to teaching speaking skills. It can, for example, create an ideal setting for practicing English, encourage students to actively participate in speaking lessons, and help them enhance their speaking skills. Dewi (2016) conducted classroom action research in two-cycle and her findings are PBL approach can foster the learners' speaking skills. Ultimately, facts from the questionnaire show that most of them agree to the usage of the PBL technique. Bani-Hamad & Abdulllah (2019) recommended multiplied uses of project-based studying with all college students in schools and universities in an effort to equip them with the future abilities that they need in existence and future work. Roessingh & Chambers (2011) argued that PBL improved a teaching quality and contributed to a higher level of cognitive development concerning student's speaking skills. PBL can increase students' 4-C (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication). The researcher above conducted research in offline class; meanwhile, this research is conducted online and the author shared a students' perception questionnaire through Google form.

For that reason, the author aimed to discover whether or not project-based learning significantly increases the eighth graders' speaking skills and to discover the students' perceptions towards the usage of project-based learning.

## **Method**

The study was designed utilizing quasi-experimental method, particularly non-equivalent control group designs. To select the sample, this approach used cluster sampling. There were two classes in this approach: the experimental and controlled group. The population was the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 4

Palopo with 120 students in the 2020/2021 academic years. The author chose VIII A as an experimental group, while VIII B as a controlled group. There were 16 students in each class, for a total of 32 students. The students were chosen as participants because they lacked of communication skills. The experimental group was treated through project-based learning; meanwhile the controlled group experienced a lecture method.

The instruments used by the author were an oral test and a questionnaire. Oral test was aimed to assess the speaking performance of the students. Furthermore, the author gave questionnaire to find out their perception after they were taught by using project-based learning. It contained 16 questions. The statements in the questionnaire were arranged by using Indonesian to make students understand all the statements easily.

The author scored students' speaking by using a rubric for evaluating speaking which is consist of fluency, accuracy, and comprehensibility. All items were adapted from Heaton (1989). The author measured the results of the questionnaire using a Likert scale. The author used SPSS 28.0 to calculate the average score, standard deviation, t-test, and frequency and rate percentage of oral tests.

## Results

### ***Scoring Classification of the Students' Pre-Test and Post-Test in the Experimental Group***

Table 1 below shows the pre-test result in the experimental group. No student got excellent and good scores, while 4 or 25% students got average score. 7 out of 44% got poor scores, while 5 out of 31% got very poor scores. In the post-test of experimental group, 2 or 12% got excellent score, 3 or 19% got a good score, 7 or 44% got an average score, 4 or 25% got poor, and none of them got a very poor score.

*Table 1. The Rate Percentage and Frequency of Students' Scores of Pre-Test and Post-Test in Experimental Group*

Criteria	Score	Pre Test		Post Test	
		F	%	F	%
Excellent	86-100	-	-	2	12%
Good	71-85	-	-	3	19%
Average	51-70	4	25%	7	44%
Poor	25-50	7	44%	4	25%
Very Poor	0-25	5	31%	-	-
Total		16	100%	16	100%

The students' scores in each component of speaking improved significantly, as shown in the table 2 below. In the fluency component in the pre-test, most students got the "very poor" category; on the accuracy and comprehensibility components, students got the "poor" category. After treatment, the post-test results from the experimental group, the students' fluency and accuracy were average and the

students' comprehensibility was excellent.

Table 2. The Result of each Speaking Components

Criteria	Pretest			Posttest		
	F	A	C	F	A	C
Very Poor	9	5	-	-	-	-
Poor	3	6	8	4	-	-
Average	4	5	4	6	6	5
Good	-	-	4	1	5	3
Excellent	-	-	-	5	5	8
Total	16	16	16	16	16	16

F = Fluency

A = Accuracy

C = Comprehensibility

### Scoring Classification of the Students' Pre-Test and Post-Test in the Control Group

In table 3 below, none students in the controlled group got excellent and good scores, 4 or 25% students got average scores, 10 or 63% got poor scores, and 2 or 12% of the students got very poor scores. According to the post-test result in the control group, none of the students got excellent scores, 2 or 12% of students got good scores, 6 or 38% of the students got average and poor scores, and 2 or 12% students got very poor scores.

Table 3. The Rate Percentage of Students' Scores of Pre-Test and Post-Test in Controlled Group

Criteria	Score	Pretest		Posttest	
		F	%	F	P
Excellent	86-100	-	-	-	-
Good	71-85	-	-	2	12%
Average	51-70	4	25%	6	38%
Poor	25-50	10	63%	6	38%
Very Poor	0-25	2	12%	2	12%
Total		16	100%	16	100%

Table 4 below shows the results of the pre-test and post-test on the speaking component in the controlled group. In the pre-test, students' fluency was in poor category. Student's accuracy was in "average" category and the students' comprehensibility was in "good" category. On the post-test results of the students, for the fluency and accuracy components, students got "good" category, and for the comprehensibility component, students got "average" even "good" and "excellent" scores.

Table 4. The Result of each Speaking Components

Criteria	Pretest	Posttest
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	F	A	C	F	A	C
Very Poor	4	5	-	2	2	-
Poor	6	4	5	7	3	3
Average	6	6	5	5	5	4
Good	-	1	6	2	6	5
Excellent	-	-	-	-	-	4
Total	16	16	16	16	16	16

**The Comparison between the Students’ Scores of Pre-Test and Post-Test in Experimental and Control Groups**

The controlled group average score was 41 and its standard deviation is 13.387 while the experimental group was 35.81 and its standard deviation is 13.814. Because both groups were in the same category, the author argued that the students speaking performance in experimental and controlled group were the same.

The experimental and control groups had different average scores following treatments. The experimental group average score (64.94 > 50.75) is greater than the controlled group, and the experimental group standard deviation is 15.788, while the controlled group is 17.392. It signifies that the students in experimental group have better achievement than the students in controlled group after giving treatment.

**Paired Sample t-test Analysis in Experimental group**

The significant value is 0.001, which is less than 0.05, as seen in the table above. The research hypothesis (H1) was accepted, whereas the null hypothesis (H0) was rejected. This shows that there was a significant difference in students' speaking skill before and after the use of the project-based learning method.

Table 5. The Paired Samples Test of Experimental Group

	Paired Differences					t	df	Significance		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				One-Sided p	Two-sided p	
				Lower	Upper					
Pair 1	Pretest - posttest	29.125	6.582	1.645	32.632	25.618	17.701	15	<0.001	<0.001

**Paired Sample t-test Analysis in Controlled Group**

Table 8 below shows that the significant value is 0.001, which is less than 0.05. (0.001 < 0.05). The null hypothesis (H0) was rejected and the research hypothesis (H1) was accepted.

Table 6. The Paired Test in Controlled Group

	Paired Differences						t	df	Significance	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		One-Sided p			Two-sided p	
				Lower	Upper					
Pretest										
Pair 1	-9.750	7.188	1.797	13.580	-5.920	-5.426	15	<0.001	<0.001	

### Questionnaire Result

The questionnaire consisted of eight positive items and eight negative items based on the student-centered learning concepts, PBL, speaking, and motivation. The concepts helped the author find out students' perception of project-based learning in improved students' speaking skills in e-learning classes. On a Likert scale with values ranging from 1 to 5, namely, strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2), strongly disagree (1) were used to score the items. The results of students' questionnaire are presented below:

Table 7. Questionnaire Result

No.	Questions	Score	Mean	Criteria
1.	Project-Based Learning allows me to speak English more actively.	73	4.56	Very High
2.	Tasks in project-based learning help / provoke me to be more courageous in speaking English.	71	4.43	High
3.	Learning through project-based learning motivates me to speak	73	4.56	Very High

4.	English. Project-based learning assignments in the form of talk shows helped me dare to speak English, converse with friends in front of the class according to the content of the talk show displayed. I feel happy and comfortable learning speaking using Project-Based Learning in online classes. I work on project-based learning tasks with pleasure and not because I have to. The teacher explained each command in each task, but my friends and I worked on the project to completion.	74	4.62	Very High
5.		69	4.31	High
6.		70	4.37	High
7.		67	4.18	High



	Project-Based Learning			
8.	makes online learning more fun.	75	4.68	Very High
9.	Learning to speak using Project-Based Learning makes it difficult for me to understand the material. I lack confidence in answering questions from the teacher after	26	1.62	Poor
10.	a presentation or discussion in which project-based learning takes place. For me, project-based learning has no effect on	38	2.30	Poor
11.	learning motivation and is not suitable for learning speaking. Project-Based Learning	25	1.56	Poor
12.	makes the learning process tedious.	25	1.56	Poor

13.	The learning materials delivered by the teacher are not related to the project assignments given.	24	1.5	Poor
14.	Without motivation, I can learn harder.	33	2.06	Poor
15.	Project-Based Learning has less effect on student/class activity in online learning.	31	1.93	Poor
16.	The application of Project-Based Learning in online learning does not affect my speaking ability.	30	1.87	Poor

As may be observed from the table above, the results of the questionnaire indicate that students agree with positive statements and disagree with negative statements. It means that project-based learning benefits students. The highest prone score is 4.51-5.00 in the “very high” category. As a result, it can be inferred that students strongly agree that PBL can be used to teach speaking and well-received by students, as evidenced by the results of the questionnaire data that have been distributed. The score was calculated based on the number of participants who replied positively to the questionnaire's approval items.

### Discussion

According to the pre-test given before the treatment, the experimental and controlled groups have the same level of speaking skills. The experimental group had a 35.81 mean pre-test score, while the controlled group had a 41.00 mean pre-

test score.

Based on the research findings, to improve the study's value, the following interpretations were recommended. The post-test results revealed a statistically significant difference in speaking skills between students who were taught utilizing project-based learning and those who were not. It is because the learning process in the experimental group used project-based learning so that at each meeting, students will be more motivated because project-based learning can increase students' creativity and curiosity and provide a new learning atmosphere for students, especially online learning. The learning process in the experimental group used an e-learning virtual classroom system (Google meet and WhatsApp), e-learning content (PowerPoint presentation and video), and collaborative learning. Meanwhile in the controlled group, the learning process used conventional methods (not project-based learning), which tend to be task-based learning. The experimental group post-test average score (64.94) was significantly higher than the controlled group average score (50.75). At a significant level of 0.05, the result  $t$ -obtained while testing two tails with a DF of 15 is -17.701. Because the significant value is 0.001, which is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected, but the research hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) was accepted. It means that students taught through project-based learning have significant differences in their speaking skills.

Based on the analysis of the result above, it can be interpreted that using project-based learning in teaching speaking can enhance the students' ability in speaking. Besides, most of them agreed that project-based learning could help them to improve their speaking skills.

The "very high" category given by students showed that project-based learning is beneficial to students. They agree on the positive statement and disagree on the negative statement. It means that students have positive perceptions towards the implementation of project-based learning.

This research matched the findings of Maulany (2013); Pratiwi (2016), who found that student' speaking skills and motivation can both improve from project-based learning. Project-based learning is more effective than the traditional technique in teaching speaking, especially in online classes. According to Zare-Behtash & Sarlak (2017), PBL significantly enhances speaking skills compared to the traditional teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, Project-based learning offers an approach that will involve the student's interaction and communication (Grant 2002). Kusumawati (2020) revealed that PBL activity has made students' construct understanding and suppose significantly.

According to Fragoulis (2009), several positive outcomes of implementing the PBL method in speaking skill areas are teaching and learning. PBL provides contextual and meaningful learning for students; it increases their interests, motivation, engagement, and enjoyment; it creates an optimal environment for speaking English and actively engages in project learning. The result of implementing project-based learning in this research showed project-based learning benefits as evidence of Grant and Fragoulis's theory.

This research has strengths and weaknesses. It can be used in online and offline learning. Besides that, this research can allow students to express their creativity through the given project assignments and this research can be used as an alternative tool in online learning. While the weakness of this research is that in online learning, this research requires a good network.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the questionnaire result, learning through Language learners can found project-based learning to be stimulating, powerful, and challenging. The students responded positively to the questionnaire, showing that project-based learning had several advantages for them. Through the task of talk shows can make them more confident to speak English. As a conclusion of the research, it can be concluded that Project-Based Learning has an influence and can encourage students in improving their speaking skills.

In overcoming students' problems in learning English, English teachers must be selective in choosing teaching methods expected to overcome students' difficulties in learning English, especially in online classes. Project-Based Learning (PBL) can be used to teach English online in a different way, especially in improving students' speaking skills and motivation in English e-learning classes. This research indicates that students have high scores in the speaking test and they are more enthusiastic to participate in learning. In addition, teachers can use project-based learning with various types of projects that can allow students to evaluate their language skills.

The authors hope that through PBL students can learn how to express their creativity and abilities by project-based learning. Using project-based learning will develop learners' self-confidence so that they can express their skills and creativity. In addition, it can improve their English to be more communicative and their motivation in learning.

Other researchers who conduct similar research studies should develop this research to improve students' speaking skills or in different materials, the author suggests. In addition, the author hopes that future researchers can cover limitations of this research and prepare everything as well as possible, such as network capabilities.

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