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Integrating Discussion Technique in Project-Based Learning for Vocational School Student

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Abstract

In the context of a suburban school setting characterized by low motivation and poor engagement, this study seeks to examine the potential of integrating the Discussion Technique and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) to enhance vocational high school students' comprehension of procedural text. The study was conducted over a period of six meetings, utilizing a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. The data was gathered using a variety of methods, including semi-structured interviews with four students, field notes, pre-test and post-test findings, and classroom observations. The findings indicate that the integrated approach enhances students' ability to recognize the linguistic elements and structure of procedure texts, generate more cohesive written outputs, and engage more fully in group-based learning activities. As demonstrated by the descriptive comparisons between the pre-test and post-test results, students exhibited enhanced step sequencing, more suitable use of imperative verbs, and improved structure in their procedure text composition. The observation data revealed positive behavioral changes, including a reduction in passive participation in classroom activities and an increase in discussion participation and project work. The validity of these findings was further supported by interview data, which demonstrated that structured conversations led to improvements in students' confidence in sharing ideas, a reduction in confusion, and enhanced subject comprehension as the students approached the assignment completion stage. The present study indicates that enhancing English learning results in vocational school environments, as well as effective pedagogical scaffolding for low-motivation vocational learners.

Keywords: *Discussion Technique; Project-Based Learning; Procedure Text; Vocational School*

Introduction

The ability to communicate in English has become an essential skill in today's globalized world, as it provides individuals with access to higher education, more employment opportunities, and broader communication networks (Deshmukh, 2024). English is not exclusively an academic subject for vocational high school students, but it is also a necessary skill for many industrial and service-based jobs (Rosyida & Effendy, 2022)

However, it should be noted that memory alone is insufficient to achieve meaningful English proficiency, especially in written forms such as procedure texts (Rahayu et al., 2023). In order to produce written texts that are both effective and functional, students must first develop an understanding of the structure of text, the linguistic characteristics that are unique to the written form, and the communication objectives that are intended to be achieved (Zanaty, 2021). It is unfortunate that this level of comprehension is frequently lacking in classes where learning English is viewed more as a formal requirement than as a process of skill development.

A review of previous research and empirical observations indicates that vocational schools are facing persistent challenges. A considerable number of students demonstrated substandard learning outcomes, diminished motivation, and reduced engagement. They often perceive education as an obligation rather than a valuable educational opportunity. The findings of this study demonstrate that students' involvement, self-assurance, and independence in the classroom are significantly influenced by their socioeconomic circumstances (Goudeau et al., 2023). Preliminary observational research at the research site has indicated that pupils demonstrate minimal active engagement in the learning process. This is evidenced by two distinct phenomena. Firstly, pupils frequently copy the teacher's writing without comprehending it. Secondly, pupils adopt a passive approach during lessons.

Recent research has focused on the development of student-centered teaching strategies as a solution to these problems. Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has proven to be a successful educational paradigm, encouraging active learning, teamwork, and the production of significant products. Studies such as those by (Anggraeni, 2022); Chung & Jin, (2024); and Hsiao et al., (2022) have shown that PjBL improves learners' motivation, critical thinking, and English performance in a variety of circumstances. The efficacy of PjBL in enhancing relevance and engagement in vocational education has been demonstrated (Syafriyani et al., 2024)

However, a study has indicated that PjBL may not be sufficient to assist pupils who are unmotivated or possess inadequate language skills (Hujjatusnaini et al., 2022). Before producing written outputs, these learners require systematic scaffolding, especially in the early stages of learning. The employment of techniques for guided discussion is of crucial importance to this process, since they facilitate students' communication of their thoughts, the resolution of any confusion, and their collaborative negotiation of meaning. DeLisi et al. propose that academic conversations facilitate student comprehension through interaction, fostering engagement and understanding (DeLisi et al., 2025).

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From a theoretical perspective, this method aligns with social constructivist theory, emphasizing that learning occurs through group meaning-making and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). This notion is reflected in Project-Based Learning and the Discussion Technique, which present students as active participants who create knowledge through discussion and group activities. Therefore, the implementation of structured discussions within the PjBL framework provides a framework of educational support that fosters more comprehensive understanding among students prior to engaged in project-based learning activities.

Despite the encouraging results, there remain research gaps that require attention. The utilization of discussion strategies as a form of scaffolding within the context of PjBL to facilitate the instruction of procedure text writing has received minimal attention, particularly within the context of vocational high schools that enroll students who demonstrate low levels of motivation and academic performance. The majority of current research concentrates exclusively on PjBL, or places greater emphasis on speaking abilities than on writing in underprivileged educational settings. Furthermore, there has been a lack of research conducted on the specific challenges faced by students in vocational school settings, who often encounter a combination of academic, financial, and motivational difficulties.

This study is based on the gap mentioned above and is guided by two research questions:

1. Do the learning outcomes of vocational high school students in terms of their ability to comprehend procedural literature increase when the Discussion Techniques and Project-Based Learning are combined?
2. What impression do students have of applying these integrated methods in the educational process?

Therefore, the objective of the present study is to investigate the extent to which the integrated approach improves students' understanding and creation of procedural texts, as well as how students perceive this learning model. The integration of structured conversation as a pedagogical framework within Project-Based Learning for procedural text instruction in a disadvantaged vocational educational setting represents a novel contribution of this study. The present study proposes a context-responsive teaching methodology that addresses both academic and motivational issues in the domain of vocational English education, utilizing a Classroom Action Research (CAR) paradigm.

Method

Research Design

The present study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design with a qualitative approach. The CAR model was selected due to the study's objective being to implement iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection to identify changes in the learning process as they occur naturally in the classroom environment, with a view to enhancing students' learning outcomes. This objective

is supported by a qualitative approach, which emphasizes the documentation of real-world behaviors, attitudes, and reactions in an organic learning setting (Cho et al., 2024). As posited by Lubis et al., qualitative research employs descriptive data as opposed to numerical measurement, with the objective of comprehending phenomena in their entirety (Lubis et al., 2023). Consequently, this approach enabled the researcher to comprehensively examine the impact of the integration of the Discussion Technique and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) on vocational high school students who exhibited low motivation and limited academic preparation.

The researcher's active involvement in the teaching process is a fundamental aspect of qualitative classroom action research. This active engagement is consistent with the fundamental objective of qualitative research, which is to ascertain the underlying meanings, processes, and contextual elements that influence learning phenomena within specific contexts. It is evident that direct observation and interaction with participants in their natural classroom environment are essential for achieving such an objective (Im et al., 2023). Pyo et al. assert that qualitative research is particularly beneficial in exploratory educational settings, as quantitative approaches are often unable to effectively capture complex experiences, emotions, and learning dynamics (Pyo et al., 2023). The researcher can interpret how students create meaning, react to teaching methods, and engage socially throughout the learning process by closely interacting with participants.

The present study concentrated on the quality of learning interactions and the developmental changes that occurred during the educational intervention. It did not address experimental manipulation, controlled variables, or statistical assessment. In order to capture changes in student involvement, participation, and learning behavior across time, qualitative CAR emphasizes the necessity of characterizing, analyzing, and comprehending classroom events as they occur (Im et al., 2023). A qualitative case study design was deemed the most suitable framework to investigate the efficacy of integrating the Discussion Technique and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in this context, given that learning in vocational schools, especially in suburban contexts, is heavily influenced by social, behavioral, and motivational factors.

Research Setting and Participants

The majority of pupils at the suburban vocational high school, located in a district-level area, come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In such circumstances, students often perceive education as a formal obligation rather than an opportunity for intellectual or personal growth. The motivation, engagement, and involvement of students in the classroom are often influenced by such contextual variables. This makes the setting especially relevant for the examination of alternative teaching strategies.

The study involved a total of 35 students from an entire class of a tenth-grade vocational high school. The pupils represented a range of academic skill levels, from those with extremely poor skills to those with relatively strong skills. The typical

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characteristic of vocational classrooms in marginalized contexts, where students demonstrate varying degrees of preparedness, motivation, and previous English exposure, was reflected in this heterogeneity.

Four students were purposively selected from the student population for participation in semi-structured interviews. The researcher was able to record a variety of learning experiences throughout the application of the Discussion Technique and Project-Based Learning (PjBL), since the selection was based on differences in students' engagement levels, learning motivation, and academic achievement. As the objective of this qualitative Classroom Action Research was to obtain in-depth insights rather than statistical generalization, the small number of interview participants was considered sufficient. This approach aligns with the principles of qualitative research, which prioritize the representativeness of experiences, the diversity of data, and the depth of knowledge over the size of the sample.

The study ensured that both collective classroom dynamics and individual learner views were represented, by integrating whole-class participation fdata with in-depth interview data from a sample of students. In the context of a vocational school setting characterized by diminished motivation and inadequate academic preparation, the participant structure facilitated a comprehensive examination of how pupils with diverse characteristics responded to the integrated educational method.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Four primary data collection techniques were employed to ensure rich and triangulated findings.

Table 1. Data Collection Methods

Instrument	Purpose/goal	Administration Method and Timeline
Classroom Observation	Observe the learning process of students, their level of engagement, the interaction with the group, their level of concentration, and their response when the Discussion Technique is employed in conjunction with Project-Based Learning (PjBL). The purpose of the tool was to record classroom dynamics and behavioral shifts in real time during the intervention.	Researchers conducted observations during all six meetings. Observation checklist was used to record student engagement, attention, collaboration, and classroom dynamics from start to finish.

Field Notes	Document important events. Document spontaneous student responses. Document behavioral changes. Document obstacles. Document the classroom atmosphere. Do all of the above in the naturalistic manner. The field notes, which were used to supplement the observation data, captured a range of details that were not included in the checklist.	They were written directly during the learning process and immediately afterwards. Field notes captured details that the checklist did not, such as student comments, non-verbal expressions, and pivotal moments during project activities and discussions. The utilization of this instrument enabled the researcher to systematically document contextual information, which in turn enhanced the interpretation of observations made in the classroom setting.
Learning Outcome Tests (pre-test and post-test)	The intervention was designed to assess whether students had gained a deeper understanding of learning from the utilization of the Integrated Discussion Technique and Project-Based Learning. The assessments focused on evaluating pupils' comprehension of linguistic elements, text organization, and fundamental procedural writing.	A pre-test was conducted at the second meeting to assess the students' initial understanding of procedure texts. A post-test was given in the sixth meeting, after the entire series of actions had been completed. The tests consisted of questions about identifying language features and composing brief process texts were created by the researcher in accordance with the curriculum objectives. In order to identify trends in the improvement of learning, a descriptive analysis of the data was conducted.
Semi-Structured Interviews	To investigate how students view the learning process, how they interact with PjBL and the Discussion Technique, the advantages they see, the challenges they face, and their overall learning experiences during the intervention.	This was conducted after the post-test. Four students were purposively selected to represent different levels of ability and participation. The interviews were conducted directly and the questions were phrased in simple language to suit the characteristics of vocational students. In order to gain a more profound understanding of how students responded to the learning model, both cognitively and emotionally, face-to-face interviews were utilized.

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Study Procedures

The study was conducted in accordance with the principles of Classroom Action Research (CAR), encompassing the cyclical steps of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The study was conducted over a period of six meetings. In order to ensure the continuous enhancement of the teaching and learning process, these phases were implemented in an integrated and methodical manner.

In the initial phase of the study, an inaugural classroom observation was conducted in collaboration with the classroom instructor as a constituent element of the planning stage. The objective of this phase was to ascertain the learning styles, motivation levels, learning challenges, and general classroom atmosphere of the pupils. The design of instructional actions, the selection of relevant learning resources, and the creation of discussion-based project activities were all informed by the findings of the preliminary observation.

In order to assess students' initial comprehension of procedure materials, a pre-test was administered during the second meeting, thereby marking the commencement of the performing stage. In the third meeting, a review of the fundamental ideas of procedure documents was conducted. This review encompassed the text structure and significant linguistic elements, including the utilization of action verbs, imperative sentences, the simple present tense, and sequence connectives. The objective of these exercises was twofold: firstly, to enhance students' conceptual knowledge, and secondly, to prepare them for the project stage.

The primary implementation phase of the action, which employed the integrated Discussion Technique and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) approach, was represented by the fourth meeting. Students collaborated in groups of five to develop a method text based on a topic of their choice, with the aim of clarifying comprehension and exploring ideas. Prior to the initiation of the project, structured dialogues were convened to facilitate students' comprehension and encourage engagement.

The observation phase occurred alongside the action's execution, particularly in the fourth and fifth sessions. The students presented their group projects at the fifth meeting. This allowed them to develop their communication and teamwork skills, while also providing an opportunity to explain, defend, and consider their work. Utilizing observation checklists and field notes, the researcher systematically monitored students' engagement, interaction patterns, and learning behaviors during these sessions.

Following the sixth meeting, the reflecting step was carried out, which included the administration of the post-test to assess changes in students' comprehension and writing skills in process texts. In order to evaluate improvements in learning outcomes and classroom engagement, as well as to reflect on the efficacy of the instructional intervention, the post-test data were merged with observation records, field notes, and interview findings.

Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis of the study's data was conducted utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach. The initial phase of the analytical process entailed a meticulous examination of all the data collated from learning outcome tests, field notes, interviews, and classroom observations. In the course of the implementation of the Integrated Discussion Technique and Project-Based Learning, recurrent analysis of observation sheets and field notes revealed trends concerning students' learning behavior, degree of participation, group interaction, and responses.

In order to identify recurring patterns, such as shifts in student engagement, desire to participate in discussions, teamwork during project work, and attention to learning activities, comparable behaviors and responses were grouped together during this process. The utilization of field notes, incorporating contextual information such as students' spontaneous responses, encountered challenges, and the classroom environment during each meeting, served to reinforce and illuminate the findings from observational studies.

In this study, interview data were examined to identify common perspectives and experiences. To this end, each student's response was analyzed individually and then compared across participants. An analysis of the students' answers was conducted to ascertain the extent to which conversations facilitated their comprehension of the subject matter, the impact of project activities on their motivation levels, and the challenges they faced during the learning process. In order to provide a more robust interpretation of the results, the study incorporated the utilization of representative student statements.

A comparative analysis of students' performance before and after the intervention was conducted to facilitate a descriptive evaluation of the outcomes. The comparison concentrated on discernible gains in students' comprehension of imperative sentences, action verbs, sequence connectives, procedure text structure, and procedural step clarity. As the objective of this classroom action research was to examine learning growth and instructional impact rather than to test statistical significance, no statistical computations were performed.

In order to guarantee the validity of the conclusions, data from a variety of sources were collectively compared and evaluated. In order to verify the consistency of findings across data sources, observations, field notes, interview responses, and learning outcome tests were cross-checked. The reliability of the analysis and the validity of the results obtained were reinforced by extensive classroom observation over the course of six sessions and the use of various data-gathering methods.

Results

An evaluation of data from six Classroom Action Research meetings was conducted to ascertain how students learned and engaged in class when the Discussion Technique was used in conjunction with Project-Based Learning (PjBL). A variety of data collection methods were employed, including semi-structured interviews, pre-test and post-test findings, field notes, observation checklists, and

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classroom observations. The results obtained are presented in accordance with the sequential phases of the learning process.

1. Initial classroom conditions

During the first meeting, the regular English instruction of the subject teacher was observed in the classroom. The state of the classroom reflected the typical issues encountered in underperforming vocational school settings. Throughout the session, most of the children seemed uninterested and apathetic. Some pupils did not write anything at all, while others copied the information presented on the board without showing any understanding. A few pupils were off task or resting their heads on their desks. The majority of students either remained silent or engaged in quiet conversations with their peers. Just two or three students responded to their teacher's questions. There was little student participation and a lot of teacher-centered interaction in the classroom. These findings were consistent with previous data from the school indicating low motivation, engagement, and understanding of process manuals among pupils.

2. Pre-Test Outcomes.

In order to assess the students' initial comprehension of procedural texts and their linguistic characteristics, a pre-test was administered during the second meeting. The findings indicated that the majority of pupils experienced difficulty in identifying action verbs, imperative phrases, and sequence connectors. It was observed that a number of students failed to provide responses to several of the questions posed, while others offered answers that were either not relevant to the subject or lacked sufficient detail.

As indicated by the field notes, a significant number of students appeared hesitant to articulate their responses verbally, demonstrating a preference for reliance on copying techniques over demonstrating their comprehension of the material. The findings of this study indicate that the students' prior understanding of process books was limited and often superficial.

3. Reiterating the Procedure Text Content.

The third meeting focused on the re-teaching of procedural text concepts, with the utilization of straightforward explanations and real-world examples, such as the preparation of instant noodles. At the commencement of the lesson, the students were predominantly reticent; however, as specific illustrations were presented, their level of concentration increased progressively.

In response to the request for the identification of specific passages in the text, a number of pupils began to demonstrate clear signs of recognition, and further students exhibited their comprehension by nodding and uttering remarks such as "Oh, gitu" Despite the fact that attendance levels were higher than in previous meetings, some student continued to rely on the researcher's cues to respond to questions.

4. The implementation of the project and the subsequent group discussion.

In the fourth meeting, the students were divided into groups consisting of five to six individuals with the objective of completing a process text the project. Initially, a number of students expressed dissatisfaction with the group projects and requested the ability to select their own participants. Following a period of deliberation, a balanced grouping arrangement was implemented.

A notable change in students' behavior during group work was observed, as indicated by the collected observation data. In the context of group discussions, the majority of students exhibited active engagement, while a minority of previously passive students began to contribute suggestions. A significant number of students independently researched words, requested explanations, and provided suggestions to their fellow group members. Peer support was frequently observed, particularly among individuals with lower levels of proficiency.

In comparison to previous sessions, the classroom environment exhibited increased engagement and collaboration, with fewer students demonstrating off-task behavior.

5. Group Presentations

In the fifth meeting, each group presented their completed procedure texts to the class. During the course of peer presentations, the majority of students demonstrated an attentive behavior, and disruption in the classroom was minimal. In a classroom setting, a number of children who had formerly exhibited indications of shyness were able to read and discuss their work.

In instances where certain presenters encountered difficulties in articulating specific words, group members provided discreet assistance. In comparison to previous lectures, students' responses during feedback sessions demonstrated increased engagement and focus.

6. Final results and post-test findings.

During the sixth meeting, the post-test was administered. The majority of students demonstrated an enhancement in their capacity to identify imperative phrases, action verbs, and sequence connectors when compared to the pre-test. It was observed that a number of students demonstrated an increased ability to formulate procedural procedures in a more organized and comprehensible manner, resulting in a reduction in the number of unanswered questions.

As was articulated by numerous students during the concluding discussion, the topic proved to be more readily absorbed when it was presented in a combination of group projects and discussions. In comparison to previous courses, which primarily relied on note-taking, students reported that utilizing examples, fostering teamwork, and conducting practical projects resulted in a more significant learning experience. Furthermore, several students reported an increased awareness of task management when working in groups.

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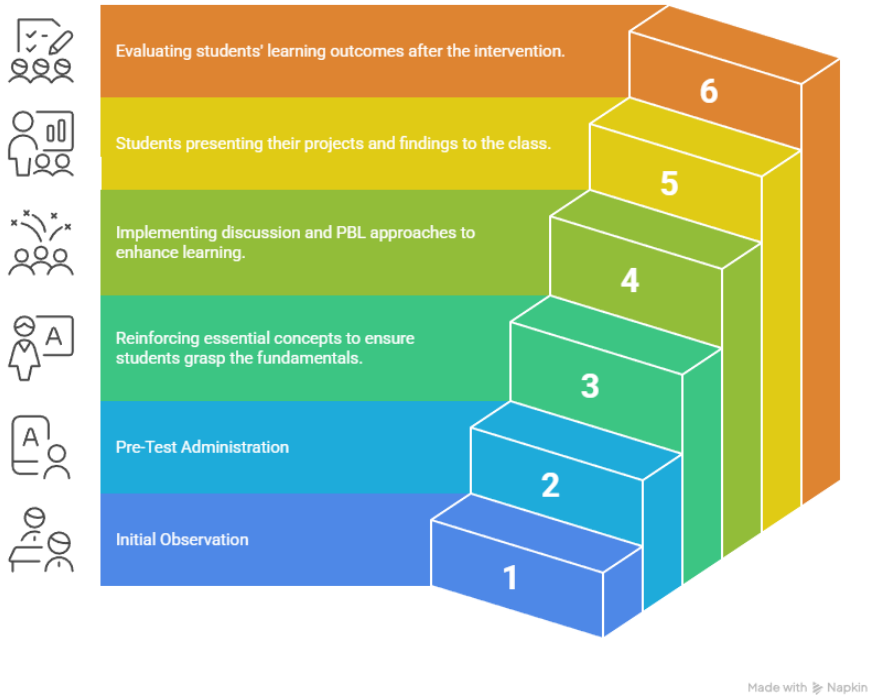
The instructor concluded the class by providing a synopsis of the subject for the subsequent meeting. A comparison of the classroom environment at the conclusion of the lesson with that at the start of the lesson revealed that the environment at the end of the lesson appeared to be more positive and organized.



Fiqure 1. Stage of the Research and Implementation Process

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of the Discussion Technique within Project-Based Learning (PjBL) enhances students' learning behavior, conceptual understanding, and engagement with procedural text instruction. This suggests that for students enrolled in vocational high schools, particularly those who demonstrate low levels of motivation and limited prior knowledge, integrating formal conversation with project-based activities fosters a more significant learning experience.

Theoretically, constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that students actively create knowledge via interaction and reflection rather than passively absorbing information, is consistent with these findings. The students participating in this study were able to negotiate meaning, clarify ambiguities, and develop a common understanding through discussion exercises before commencing project work. This process is reflective of social constructivism, in which learning occurs through social interaction and collaborative meaning-making.

Furthermore, the Discussion Technique functioned as an educational framework, providing students with guided assistance prior to being expected to complete increasingly challenging assignments independently. Participation in the discussion preceding project implementation enabled students to develop a more profound understanding of text structure, linguistic aspects, and work objectives. This finding aligns with other research that suggests structured conversation, particularly for students with lower academic performance, can reduce cognitive overload and enhance students' readiness for project-based work.

The integration of authentic, group-based projects into the curriculum serves to reinforce the efficacy of project-based learning in facilitating the application of students' knowledge in real-world settings. Group work was a fundamental component of the task, with the objective being the creation of a procedure text. The implementation of group work fostered active involvement, effective task organization, and the allocation of responsibility. These characteristics are consistent with the principles of collaborative learning, wherein peer connections promote sustained engagement and enhanced comprehension. The implementation of clearly defined responsibilities and a concrete learning objective resulted in a notable increase in engagement among previously passive students during project activities.

In addition to enhancing academic performance, the learning process facilitated the development of soft skills in students, including communication, teamwork, and fundamental time management. These abilities emerged organically during collaborative project work, despite not being the primary focus of training. This finding aligns with the findings of previous studies that have demonstrated the efficacy of PjBL in fostering transferability skills, a particularly crucial aspect for vocational students preparing for entry into the workforce.

In order for the integrated strategy to be successful, it was imperative that the teacher fulfil their role as facilitator. Rather than the conventional approach of directing instruction, the instructor adopted a facilitative role, fostering inclusive group interactions and ensuring fair participation. In addition to the establishment of a conducive learning environment that enabled all students to participate, this facilitative function served to prevent the dominance of more engaged students.

However, it is important to note that the study is not without its limitations. The study was conducted using a Classroom Action Research approach, and was carried out at a single vocational high school with a single class. Consequently, the outcomes are context-specific and not intended for extensive application. Moreover, given that the study concentrated on classroom development and learning processes as opposed to effect size assessment, learning outcomes were evaluated descriptively without recourse to statistical testing.

Nevertheless, the results have practical significance for English teachers in marginalized and comparable vocational contexts. In order to facilitate this process, it is recommended that educators consider the integration of structured discussion activities into their pedagogical approach, particularly in the context of text-based

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genres. This method can be employed in the context of process texts as well as other genres, including reports, recounts, and descriptive texts. Moreover, its application is also relevant to occupational courses that require step-by-step comprehension.

Taking all factors into consideration, the combination of Project-Based Learning and the Discussion Technique demonstrates considerable potential as a context-responsive teaching approach. This strategy provides a viable option for enhancing English learning outcomes in vocational high schools facing ongoing engagement and achievement issues by addressing both cognitive and motivational barriers.

Conclusion

According to the results obtained through the Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, the integration of the Discussion Technique and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) positively affects the learning process and outcomes of vocational high school students in their understanding of procedure texts. For students who were initially unmotivated and had little prior knowledge, this integrated strategy effectively transformed the formerly passive, teacher-centered classroom setting into a more engaging, collaborative, and meaningful one.

Before starting the project, the Discussion Technique was an important first step in helping students develop an understanding of ideas. Through peer interaction, the discussions enabled students to share ideas, clear up any confusion, and obtain simpler answers. This is particularly important in marginal vocational schools, where students often lack the confidence to speak with teachers face-to-face or ask questions. The obstacles were removed by facilitating small-group conversations, which enabled students to participate in the learning process with greater confidence and enthusiasm.

Additionally, PjBL gave students the chance to put their knowledge into practice by working together to create procedure documents. In this assignment, students were encouraged to collaborate, assign roles, look up language, and arrange the stages of the procedure logically. As well as improving students' understanding of the linguistic elements and structure of procedural texts, this approach helped them to develop critical career skills, such as responsibility, teamwork, and communication. The project work's energetic and creative nature also successfully engaged students who had previously shown little interest in studying.

In comparison to the pre-test results, the post-test data showed that students' comprehension had improved, as seen by their increased confidence in responding to questions and their improved capacity to recognize imperative verbs, action verbs, and sequence connectives. Students had favorable opinions of the use of debate and project-based learning, according to interview results. Compared to earlier teaching strategies, they thought the techniques were more entertaining, simpler to comprehend, and improved their retention of the subject.

Overall, this study shows that combining the Discussion Technique with PBL can be a useful teaching strategy. It can help to raise learning outcomes. It can also improve vocational students' educational experiences. This is particularly true in marginal school settings. These are settings where academic and motivational difficulties are common. Increased confidence and classroom involvement are fostered by this integrated approach, while students are assisted in developing deeper conceptual knowledge through the provision of space for debate, collaboration, and meaningful learning activities.

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