



## **IMPLEMENTING PROJECT-BASED LEARNING (PjBL) TO ENHANCE SPEAKING SKILLS: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

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### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh rendahnya keterampilan berbicara (*speaking*) siswa sekolah menengah pertama dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, yang ditandai dengan kurangnya kepercayaan diri, keterbatasan kosakata, serta minimnya kesempatan untuk praktik komunikasi bermakna di kelas. *Project-Based Learning* (PjBL) dipandang sebagai salah satu pendekatan yang mampu mendorong partisipasi aktif dan penggunaan bahasa secara kontekstual. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi perspektif guru terhadap pengimplementasian PjBL dalam meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara siswa di jenjang SMP. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan desain studi deskriptif. Subjek penelitian adalah dua orang guru bahasa Inggris SMPN 1 Garut yang menerapkan PjBL dalam pembelajaran *speaking*. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam terstruktur dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru memandang PjBL sebagai strategi yang efektif untuk meningkatkan keberanian, kelancaran, serta kolaborasi siswa dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris. Namun demikian, guru juga menghadapi beberapa tantangan, seperti keterbatasan waktu, perbedaan kemampuan siswa, dan kesiapan perencanaan proyek. Secara keseluruhan, dapat disimpulkan bahwa implementasi PjBL berpotensi meningkatkan keterampilan *speaking* siswa apabila didukung oleh perencanaan yang matang, *scaffolding* berjenjang, dan pengelolaan kelas yang efektif.

**Kata Kunci:** *Project-Based Learning (PjBL); Keterampilan Berbicara; Perspektif Guru; Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris*

### **ABSTRACT**

The problem discussed in this study arises from the poor oral performance of junior high school students in learning the English language. Students often lack self-confidence, possess narrow vocabularies, and encounter limited opportunities for meaningful communicative practice. Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is recognized as an effective approach to actively engage students in contextual language use. This study aims to investigate English teachers' perspectives regarding the implementation of PjBL to enhance students' speaking skills at the junior high school level. A qualitative descriptive research design was employed. The participants were two English teachers at SMPN 1 Garut who actively implemented PjBL in their speaking classes. Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews and documentation, then analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that teachers perceive PjBL as an effective strategy for developing students' confidence, fluency, and collaborative skills in oral communication. Nevertheless, teachers faced notable challenges, including instructional time constraints, student proficiency gaps, and complex project planning demands. In conclusion, PjBL implementation holds significant potential for fostering students'



speaking competence when supported by thorough instructional design, scaffolded tasks, and adaptive classroom management.

**Keywords:** *Project-Based Learning (PjBL); Speaking Skills; Teachers' Perspective; English Language Teaching*

## INTRODUCTION

Speaking is widely considered the most vital skill in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) because it empowers learners to articulate their ideas, express thoughts, and engage in social interaction. However, many EFL learners experience persistent difficulties in mastering speaking skills. A primary cause is the lack of opportunities to practice English in authentic, real-life contexts. In many conventional classrooms, instruction remains heavily focused on grammar drills and writing exercises rather than communicative tasks. Consequently, learners frequently experience anxiety, insecurity, and fear when speaking English publicly. Fostering speaking competence requires meaningful interactive environments where students actively use the target language (Irawan & Ahmad, 2025).

A major impediment in EFL speaking instruction is the prevalence of teacher-centered practices, where teachers dominate classroom talk while students remain passive recipients. This imbalance restricts student participation and limits opportunities for oral communication, resulting in low self-confidence, reduced motivation, and language anxiety (Abrar et al., 2024; Elisathusilawani, 2023; Hatiza & Sujatmoko, 2025; Muluk et al., 2021). To address these conventional barriers, instructional practices must shift toward student-centered methodologies that promote collaborative communication and active inquiry.

*Project-Based Learning (PjBL)* has emerged as a promising instructional model in language education. PjBL engages students in exploring real-world problems through collaborative inquiry, leading to authentic products and meaningful target language practice. Through discussions, peer negotiations, and final oral presentations, students practice English in realistic settings that enhance their critical thinking and communicative fluency (Muzri et al., 2024; Suryani & Argawati, 2023). Empirical evidence confirms that PjBL significantly improves EFL learners' speaking performance, self-efficacy, and classroom engagement (Siregar et al., 2024).

Despite abundant literature documenting the benefits of PjBL on student outcomes, previous research has predominantly focused on learner-centered metrics such as test scores, participation rates, and affective motivation (Muzri et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2025). Considerably less attention has been given to the teachers who design, facilitate, scaffold, and evaluate project-based instruction. Teachers encounter practical challenges during PjBL implementation, including instructional time limitations, classroom management constraints, and resource scarcity (Lengkoan et al., 2024; Ummah & Priyana, 2025). Understanding the instructional cycle step-by-step from the teacher's perspective is essential for establishing sustainable and replicable PjBL practices (Rahmawati & Kusumaningtyas, 2024; Tahir, 2026).

This study addresses this gap by investigating junior high school English teachers' perceptions and practical experiences regarding PjBL implementation in speaking instruction. Specifically, this study explores teachers' knowledge, lived classroom experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and pedagogical beliefs regarding the effectiveness of PjBL for enhancing students' speaking skills.



## RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design to examine English teachers' perceptions of implementing *Project-Based Learning* (PjBL) to enhance students' speaking skills (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative descriptive design is suitable for exploring educators' authentic experiences, practical judgments, and pedagogical reasoning in natural school settings. The study was conducted at SMPN 1 Garut, West Java, Indonesia, during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year (between February and April 2026). Two English language teachers were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct experience in implementing PjBL in their speaking classrooms (Campbell et al., 2020). To preserve participant confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned: Participant IS (over ten years of teaching experience, actively implementing PjBL within the *Kurikulum Merdeka* framework) and Participant HR (over ten years of teaching experience with extensive background in project-based oral assessment).

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and documentation review. The semi-structured interview guide comprised 15 open-ended questions categorized into three sub-variables: (1) Knowledge (understanding of PjBL definitions, stages, and teacher roles); (2) Experience (classroom implementation practices, student passivity strategies, memorable projects, and oral skill assessment); and (3) Beliefs (perceived impact on confidence, motivation, equity of benefits, and future implementation plans) (Kallio et al., 2016). Each individual interview lasted approximately 7 to 12 minutes, was audio-recorded with consent, and was transcribed verbatim. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following systematic procedures of data familiarization, initial coding, theme generation, review, and narrative interpretation (Ahmed et al., 2025). High ethical standards were maintained throughout the research process, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and data anonymization.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

#### Teachers' Knowledge of Project-Based Learning

The first category examined how the English teachers conceptualized *Project-Based Learning* (PjBL). Both participants demonstrated a functional understanding of PjBL as a student-centered methodology that prioritizes practical language production over theoretical instruction. Participant IS conceptualized PjBL as "*a method where students learn through projects and practice rather than just theory*", emphasizing the transition toward active learning. Participant HR framed PjBL as a process-driven approach structured around distinct stages to generate a concrete end-product. These definitions align with Thomas's (2000) foundational conceptualization of PjBL as an instructional model organized around complex, authentic tasks.

**Table 1. Teachers' Knowledge of PjBL**

| No | Sub-Variable / Question    | Participant IS                                                                             | Participant HR                                                                        |
|----|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Definition of PjBL         | A practical method where students learn by doing projects, fostering active collaboration. | A process-oriented method with structured stages required to produce a final product. |
| 2  | Implementation in Speaking | Requires extra time; teachers must motivate students and                                   | Students facilitate themselves with digital/visual tools to ease                      |



|   |                       |                                                                                             |                                                                                      |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|   |                       | eliminate reluctance to speak.                                                              | speaking tasks.                                                                      |
| 3 | Stages of PjBL        | Linking material to a dialogue project, practicing, and contextualizing to real situations. | Three major phases: preparation, process, and final product evaluation.              |
| 4 | Teacher's Role        | Motivator, guide, and provider of corrective feedback (pronunciation and grammar).          | Facilitator; students should dominate up to 70% of classroom interaction time.       |
| 5 | PjBL vs. Conventional | A shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning through contextual tasks.        | Closer to real-life communication; more meaningful than abstract grammatical drills. |

Based on table 1 both participants recognized a fundamental shift in their instructional roles. Participant IS viewed the teacher as a guide and motivator who provides targeted corrective feedback on pronunciation and grammar. Participant HR emphasized the role of a facilitator, asserting that students should control 70% of classroom activities. This corresponds with Krajcik and Blumenfeld (2006), who noted that PjBL repositions the teacher as a scaffold rather than the sole knowledge authority.

#### Teachers' Experience in Implementing PjBL

The second category captured the teachers' lived classroom experiences, including implementation obstacles, coping mechanisms, and successful project outcomes. Both participants identified student language anxiety and fear of making mistakes as the primary barriers during oral projects. Participant IS noted the difficulty of "*building confidence so students are not afraid of making mistakes*", while Participant HR highlighted the challenge of managing proficiency gaps between active and passive learners.

**Table 2. Teachers' Experience in Implementing PjBL**

| No | Sub-Variable / Question    | Participant IS                                                                                    | Participant HR                                                                            |
|----|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6  | Implementation Obstacles   | Overcoming student passivity and fear of making spoken errors.                                    | Managing learning gaps between highly active and quiet students.                          |
| 7  | Overcoming Passivity       | Empathetic, personal approach: holding one-on-one encouragement talks with shy students.          | Providing grade-based incentives and offering private consultations outside class.        |
| 8  | Successful Project Example | <i>Procedure Text</i> project: students orally explained making something while demonstrating it. | Vocational/real-world context: students independently presented solutions in English.     |
| 9  | Student Responses          | Generally positive; higher-proficiency students felt challenged and eager to present.             | Mixed; motivated students excelled while less-proficient students required extra pushing. |
| 10 | Speaking Assessment        | Observed improvements in students' willingness and fluency compared to traditional drills.        | Incremental progress; most effective when target language exposure is consistent.         |



To address passivity table 2, the teachers employed complementary strategies. Participant IS used an empathetic approach, approaching shy students individually to offer personal encouragement. Participant HR utilized grade-based incentives and private consultations to motivate reluctant speakers. Both participants cited the *Procedure Text* project as the most successful application for speaking development. Students demonstrated step-by-step processes using physical props while delivering spoken explanations, illustrating Stoller's (2006) assertion that PjBL enhances oral skills by integrating content presentation with spoken output.

### Teachers' Beliefs on PjBL Effectiveness

The third category investigated the teachers' evaluation of PjBL's overall effectiveness and their intentions for future implementation. Both participants expressed positive beliefs regarding PjBL's impact on speaking development, though each noted specific contextual conditions. Participant IS noted that effectiveness depends on topic selection, asserting that tangible topics yield better oral outcomes than abstract grammar lessons. Participant HR viewed PjBL as unequivocally effective because it encourages authentic oral communication.

**Table 3. Teachers' Beliefs on PjBL Effectiveness**

| No | Sub-Variable / Question | Participant IS                                                                        | Participant HR                                                                              |
|----|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11 | Overall Effectiveness   | Material-dependent; tangible, communicative topics yield stronger speaking gains.     | Highly effective; authentic tasks compel students to practice real communication.           |
| 12 | Impact on Confidence    | Opens opportunities for oral expression, provided teacher scaffolding is present.     | Highly beneficial for preparing students for real-world English communication.              |
| 13 | Student Engagement      | Increases active participation, though individual motivation levels vary.             | Essential for fostering communication skills needed for future careers.                     |
| 14 | Equity of Benefits      | All students benefit if fully engaged; effort and participation are key determinants. | Benefits vary; students who see English as less relevant require contextualized motivation. |
| 15 | Future Implementation   | Intends to continue using PjBL when topics match project-based outcomes.              | Plans to expand PjBL into <i>Storytelling</i> and <i>Procedure Text</i> video projects.     |

Regarding equity table 3, both teachers acknowledged that benefits are not automatically uniform across all proficiency levels. Participant IS emphasized that student engagement and effort determine individual success. Participant HR noted that students with lower interest in English require additional contextualized motivation. Both teachers affirmed their commitment to continuing PjBL, with Participant HR planning to expand PjBL into digital *Storytelling* and *Procedure Text* video presentations.

### Discussion

The findings provide critical insights into how junior high school EFL teachers perceive and implement Project-Based Learning for speaking development across three main dimensions: knowledge, experience, and beliefs. While these educators frequently acknowledge the pedagogical value of project-based instruction in fostering student motivation and collaborative fluency, many report significant systemic barriers, including rigid time





constraints and inadequate prior training (Sartika et al., 2022; Walhidayah et al., 2025). Furthermore, these logistical hurdles are compounded by varying levels of student English proficiency, which often impede the seamless integration of autonomous, inquiry-based tasks (Damayanti, 2025).

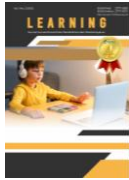
Regarding knowledge, both teachers conceptualized PjBL as a product-oriented and student-centered methodology, which aligns with Thomas's (2000) definition. However, their descriptions focused primarily on procedural stages rather than the deeper inquiry-based dimensions emphasized by Krajcik and Blumenfeld (2006). This indicates a need for professional development that grounds practical project execution in underlying inquiry-based learning theories. Nevertheless, their recognition of the teacher's role as a facilitator and scaffold reflects an accurate internalization of 21st-century language teaching frameworks (Dias & Brantley-Dias, 2017). Building upon this foundation, educators identified peer collaboration as a vital mechanism for facilitating authentic problem-solving and communicative practice (Dai & Wu, 2021; Pertiwi & Nurhayati, 2024; Shaddad & Jember, 2024; Yao et al., 2025).

In terms of experience, the identified barriers—student speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation—resonate with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis. When anxiety is high, spoken language production is inhibited. The empathetic individual support provided by Participant IS and the structured incentive mechanisms used by Participant HR served as scaffolding techniques to lower affective barriers (Beckett & Slater, 2005; Shin, 2018). Furthermore, the endorsement of *Procedure Text* projects as highly effective demonstrates the value of integrating visual-procedural demonstrations with spoken explanations, reinforcing Stoller's (2006) and Gao's (2023) findings that structured communicative tasks facilitate oral fluency. These instructional approaches underscore the necessity of creating learner-centered environments that mitigate the pressure associated with producing a second language (Asadbek et al., 2025; Milon et al., 2023; Syafryadin et al., 2024; Tauchid et al., 2025; Zúñiga et al., 2023).

Regarding beliefs, the teachers' evaluations underscore that PjBL's success is context-contingent. Participant IS's observation that PjBL effectiveness depends on topic suitability highlights the instructional constraints noted by Lengkoan et al. (2024) and Ummah and Priyana (2025). Furthermore, the uneven benefits observed across proficiency levels support Vygotsky's (1978) *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD). Without differentiated task scaffolding, low-proficiency students may feel overwhelmed by complex oral projects (Guo et al., 2020). Therefore, equitable PjBL execution requires tiered scaffolding, structured peer collaboration, and adaptable task designs. Beyond these logistical adaptations, longitudinal research suggests that cultivating metacognitive strategies through persistent inquiry-based cycles significantly bolsters student autonomy and long-term linguistic proficiency (Cohen et al., 2023; Domínguez et al., 2024; Robillos, 2023).

## CONCLUSION

The qualitative findings confirm that secondary school educators perceive *project-based learning* as an effective instructional methodology for fostering English communicative competence. Implementing authentic tasks significantly enhances students' verbal fluency, oral expression, and peer collaboration while mitigating communicative apprehension. Structured procedural tasks allow learners to link oral explanations directly with tangible demonstrations, successfully shifting classroom dynamics away from teacher-dominated drills toward active



production. Nevertheless, teachers encounter notable pedagogical challenges, including rigid timetable constraints, mixed-proficiency levels among students, and demanding instructional planning. Overcoming learner reticence requires deliberate affective support and adaptive task differentiation to ensure that communicative opportunities remain accessible to all students regardless of baseline ability. Overall, project-driven pedagogy provides meaningful contextual immersion that successfully transforms passive language learners into confident speakers within modern secondary educational environments.

The pedagogical implications indicate that curriculum developers must design structured *scaffolding* frameworks and provide targeted teacher training on differentiated task allocation for mixed-ability classes. Educators are encouraged to incorporate communicative genres to sustain interactive engagement and optimize learner autonomy. Future research should implement *mixed methods* designs featuring longitudinal classroom observations and objective assessments of oral proficiency across diverse schools. Further investigations ought to explore varied digital project genres, such as podcasts or student vlogs, to evaluate their long-term impact on communicative development. Conducting comparative analyses across different educational tiers will offer deeper empirical insights into systemic factors influencing autonomous speech production. Such expanded research will effectively inform scalable, sustainable language teaching practices.

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