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EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PBL IN ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of Project-Based Learning (PBL) on enhancing speaking skills among Paket C students at PKBM Husnan Limboto, a non-formal educational institution in Indonesia. Using the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation), the study developed and evaluated PBL materials aimed at improving fluency, coherence, and pronunciation. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative assessments with qualitative feedback from students and teachers. The results showed significant improvements in students' speaking proficiency, with fluency increasing from a mean score of 3.2 to 4.5 (a 40.6% improvement), coherence rising from 3.0 to 4.3 (43.3% increase), and pronunciation improving from 2.8 to 4.1 (46.4% increase). Student motivation and engagement also saw considerable gains, with motivation scores increasing from 3.1 to 4.6 (48.4%) and engagement from 3.0 to 4.7 (56.7%). These improvements underscore the effectiveness of PBL in fostering speaking skills in a non-formal education setting. However, the study also highlights challenges such as insufficient technological resources and the need for professional development for teachers to fully implement PBL. Recommendations include addressing infrastructure issues, providing more training for educators, and developing cost-effective PBL models for resource-limited environments. Future research should explore the long-term impact of PBL on students' academic and professional success.

Keywords: *PKBM; Project-Based Learning; speaking skills; curriculum development.*

INTRODUCTION

Improving speaking skills among adult learners, particularly in non-formal education settings, remains a critical challenge in many educational systems (Alejandra & Ramírez, 2023; Khan & Ziden, 2022; Broseghini et al., 2024). In Indonesia, the Paket C program, which serves as an alternative to formal high school education for students who are unable to attend traditional schools, plays an essential role in providing marginalized communities with opportunities to acquire basic education and improve their skills (Junanto et al., 2024; Rita & Handrianto, 2021; Olimovich, 2024; Rita & Safitri, 2020; Shofwan et al., 2021; Nasreen, 2024). Many of these students face unique socio-economic challenges that hinder their ability to fully engage with conventional educational methodologies. As a result, enhancing language skills, especially speaking proficiency, is vital for their personal development, employment prospects, and overall quality of life.

Traditional teaching methods in non- formal education environments, however, often rely heavily on passive learning, which can fail to address the practical needs and learning styles of these adult learners (Mu & Yu, 2023; Sivarajah et al., 2019; Maruf, 2023; Maruf & Anjely, 2020; Boeve-De Pauw et al., 2024). This gap has led to a growing interest in alternative, more engaging pedagogical approaches that can better support adult learners' language development. Project-Based Learning (PBL) has emerged as one such approach, which emphasizes active, hands-on learning through collaborative projects (Omelianenko & Artyukhova, 2024; Silma et al., 2023; Dhage et al., 2024 Ginusti, 2023). PBL allows students to engage in real-world tasks, fostering both language skills and critical thinking. By involving learners in practical projects, PBL encourages them to apply their knowledge in meaningful contexts, which is particularly beneficial for students who struggle with traditional classroom environments (Smith et

al., 2022; Al- Abdullatif & Gameil, 2021; Lee & Robles, 2019; Almulla, 2020; Marina et al., 2022; Siminto et al., 2024; Gumartifa et al., 2023; Susilawati & Supriyatno, 2020).

This study focuses on the implementation of PBL in the Paket C program at PKBM Husnan Limboto, a non-formal educational institution in Gorontalo, Indonesia. The primary objective is to assess the effectiveness of PBL in enhancing the speaking skills of students enrolled in this program. Speaking proficiency is a key indicator of communicative competence, yet it remains an area where many Paket C students face challenges. The focus of this research is to examine whether PBL can provide an innovative solution to improving students' speaking abilities, particularly in the areas of fluency, coherence, and pronunciation. The investigation explores how various materials influence student engagement and learning, emphasizing the ways in which PBL can improve communication skills among marginalized learners through practical projects and interactive challenges integrated within a well-organized curriculum. By employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the study demonstrates howproject-based strategies can foster learning, participation, and speaking competence. The results offer valuable insights for educators and policymakers who seek to develop innovative strategies for adult education. Effective communication and academic success depend on strong speaking abilities, as these skills enable students to engage in meaningful conversations, express their ideas convincingly, and navigate real-world interactions with confidence.

The focus on Paket C students underscores the significance of improving speaking skills, as it can substantially impact their personal and professional development (Hidayati et al., 2024; Nurtanto et al., 2020; Temirkhanova et al., 2024; Budiman et al., 2023; Maruf & Tanduk, 2021; Zuhri et al., 2021). Many students in this program face unique educational challenges that hinder effective communication (Liu et al., 2023; Johanna et al., 2024; Wilczewski & Alon, 2023; Roselyn B. Delos Reyes et al., 2023; Arifin et al., 2022; Maruf & Halyna, 2023; Waham et al., 2023). By enhancing their speaking abilities, these individuals can gain the confidence needed to articulate their thoughts clearly, which is essential for better employment opportunities and overall quality of life (Putrie et al., 2024; Kong, 2021; Radović et al., 2021; Tiu et al., 2023; Lavee & Itzchakov, 2023). This research illustrates how PBL, through collaborative projects, allows students to practice speaking in real-world contexts, making learning more engaging while equipping them with the communication skills necessary for success.

Over the years, various educational interventions have been implemented to improve language skills among students. Anggia et al., (2023) highlighted the success of an online extensive reading program in enhancing students' reading self-efficacy, aligning with the current study's aim to improve speaking skills through PBL. Several studies have explored the effects of PBL on students' speaking abilities, demonstrating its efficacy across diverse educational contexts. For instance, Wuntu et al., (2022) reported that PBL significantly enhances fluency, accuracy, and comprehension, particularly among motivated students. Siminto et al., (2024) found that PBL's emphasis on real-world scenarios and collaborative work fosters a dynamic learning environment that strengthens critical thinking and language application. Siahaan & Siahaan (2023) demonstrated that integrating PBL with digital media led to over 90% of students exceeding the minimum standard for English- speaking competence.

Despite the growing body of literature on the effectiveness of PBL in formal educational settings, there is a notable gap in research regarding its application in non-formal education, particularly in resource limited environments. This study seeks to fill this gap by evaluating the impact of PBL on improving speaking skills in the Paket C program and offering insights into the feasibility of applying this approach in similar non-formal education contexts. Through a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data, this research will provide valuable evidence of how PBL can enhance student engagement, motivation, and speaking proficiency, while also identifying challenges related to its implementation in under-resourced educational settings.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to assess the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in improving speaking skills among students enrolled in the Paket C program at PKBM Husnan Limboto. The research utilized the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation) as its framework for creating and

assessing the PBL materials. This model allowed for a systematic and iterative process, ensuring that the instructional materials were carefully designed, implemented, and evaluated. The quantitative component involved pre- and post-assessments of students' speaking skills, including fluency, coherence, and pronunciation, while the qualitative component consisted of interviews, classroom observations, and thematic analysis to gain insights into student engagement, motivation, and perceptions of the PBL approach.

The study was conducted at PKBM Husnan Limboto, a non-formal educational institution located in Gorontalo, Indonesia, which serves students who are unable to attend formal schools. The participants in this study included both students and teachers from the Paket C program. The students, aged between 18 and 35 years, were enrolled in the Paket C program, an equivalent to high school education, and had varying levels of proficiency in English, particularly in speaking skills. Teachers participating in the study were those directly involved in the implementation of PBL in the classroom, with diverse teaching backgrounds and experience. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who were actively involved in the educational process, ensuring that the sample represented a cross-section of students and educators within the context of non-formal education.

Data collection was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, which included both qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide a rich and comprehensive understanding of the research outcomes.

Quantitative data. Pre- and Post-Assessments: Students' speaking skills were assessed before and after the PBL intervention using a standardized rubric that evaluated fluency, coherence, and pronunciation. These assessments were scored by trained evaluators to ensure consistency.

Questionnaires were also administered to measure students' attitudes towards PBL and to quantify aspects such as engagement, motivation, and perceived improvement in speaking skills. Likert-scale items were used to capture these variables.

Qualitative data. In-depth interviews were conducted with both students and teachers to gather insights into their experiences and perceptions of the PBL approach. The interviews aimed to explore themes such as student motivation, engagement, and the challenges of implementing PBL in a non-formal education setting.

Classroom observations were carried out to capture real-time data on student participation, interaction, and engagement during PBL activities. These observations allowed for a more nuanced understanding of how PBL influenced the learning process.

Data analysis involved both statistical and thematic methods to ensure a thorough evaluation of the PBL intervention. The data from pre- and post-assessments were analyzed using descriptive statistics to calculate mean scores and percentage improvements in students' speaking skills. Paired sample t-tests were also conducted to determine whether the changes in speaking proficiency were statistically significant.

The questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize students' attitudes toward PBL and to measure changes in motivation and engagement.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview and observational data. This involved identifying recurring themes related to student engagement, motivation, and perceived improvements in speaking skills. Thematic analysis allowed for a deep exploration of how PBL influenced students' learning experiences and how teachers perceived its effectiveness.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the study, several measures were taken:

Inter-rater Reliability: To ensure consistency in scoring the speaking assessments, multiple trained evaluators independently rated the pre- and post- assessment recordings. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen’s Kappa coefficient to confirm that there was a high level of agreement among evaluators.

Survey Reliability: The questionnaires were pre-tested with a small group of students prior to the main data collection to check for clarity, consistency, and reliability. Cronbach’s alpha was calculated for the Likert-scale items to assess internal consistency.

Content Validity: The pre- and post-assessments were designed based on well-established criteria for evaluating speaking proficiency, ensuring content validity. These assessments were reviewed by experts in language teaching to ensure that they accurately measured the intended speaking skills (fluency, coherence, and pronunciation).

Construct Validity: The questionnaires and interview protocols were developed based on the theoretical constructs of student motivation,

engagement, and language acquisition. These tools were reviewed by experts to confirm that they measured the intended constructs.

Triangulation: Data triangulation was employed by combining quantitative and qualitative methods, which allowed for cross-verification of findings from different data sources. This enhanced the validity of the results and provided a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of PBL.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results highlight the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in enhancing the speaking skills of students enrolled in the Paket C program at PKBM Husnan Limboto.

Quantitative results

Improvement in speaking skills

The implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) resulted in significant enhancements in students' speaking skills. Pre- and post-assessment results showed remarkable progress across various dimensions of speaking, including fluency, coherence, and pronunciation. As shown in Table 1, the mean fluency score increased from 3.2 to 4.5, reflecting a 40.6% improvement. Coherence scores rose from 3.0 to 4.3, a 43.3% increase, while pronunciation demonstrated the most significant growth, with scores rising from 2.8 to 4.1, representing a 46.4% improvement.

These results underscore the effectiveness of PBL in fostering multiple dimensions of students' speaking abilities. The focus on practical, hands-on projects enabled students to engage more deeply with the language, facilitating advancements that traditional teaching methods could not achieve.

This improvement suggests that PBL provided students with an effective platform to enhance their fluency, pronunciation, and overall communicative competence.

Table 1. *Pre- and post-implementation speaking skills assessment*

Assessment Criteria	Pre- Implementation Mean Score	Post- Implementation Mean Score	Percentage Improvement
Fluency	3.2	4.5	40.6%
Coherence	3.0	4.3	43.3%
Pronunciation	2.8	4.1	46.4%

Student motivation and engagement

The results summarized in Table 2 highlight significant enhancements in student motivation and engagement following the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL). These results underscore the transformative potential of PBL as an instructional strategy that not only improves speaking skills but also fosters a more active and enthusiastic learning environment.

Observations revealed that students were more engaged during PBL activities compared to traditional lecture-based approaches. The nature of PBL, which involves collaborative and practical learning experiences, fostered a higher level of student motivation. Interviews with participants highlighted that working on real-world projects made learning English more relevant and enjoyable, which encouraged active participation and reduced their speaking anxiety.

Table 2. *Student motivation and engagement levels*

Criteria	Traditional Method	PBL Method	Percentage Increase
Motivation	3.1	4.6	48.4%
Engagement	3.0	4.7	56.7%

The table presents two key metrics: student motivation and engagement, measured on a Likert scale. The scores indicate that before the introduction of PBL, students exhibited moderate levels of motivation (3.1) and engagement (3.0). After the implementation of PBL, these scores rose significantly to 4.6 for motivation and 4.7 for engagement, representing substantial percentage increases of 48.4% and 56.7%, respectively.

Teacher feedback

Teacher feedback indicated that PBL offered a more structured and interactive framework for teaching speaking skills. Educators found that PBL promoted better interactions between students and teachers, enabling more personalized

and effective feedback. The structured approach also allowed for more efficient classroom management and fostered a collaborative learning environment. As shown in Table 3, 85% of teachers appreciated the structured framework, while 90% responded positively to the interactive sessions. However, the adaptability of PBL posed challenges, with only 60% of teachers finding it easy to adjust to this new instructional method.

These results highlight the need for targeted professional development and support to help teachers adapt to innovative teaching strategies and fully leverage their benefits.

.Table 3. *Teacher feedback on PBL implementation*

Feedback Criteria	Positive Responses	Neutral Responses	Negative Responses
Structured Framework	85%	10%	5%
Interactive Sessions	90%	7%	3%
Adaptability	60%	20%	20%

Qualitative results

Students motivation and engagement

Qualitative data were collected through interviews and thematic analysis, revealing insights into students' experiences and perceptions of PBL. The analysis identified key themes that illustrated how PBL impacted student motivation and engagement.

Key themes from thematic analysis

Increased self-confidence

Project-Based Learning (PBL) was found to significantly enhance students' self-confidence, particularly in areas such as public speaking, teamwork, and active participation. Unlike traditional instructional methods, which often rely heavily on passive absorption of information, PBL immerses students in hands- on, interactive tasks that require them to engage actively with the learning material and their peers. This dynamic approach provides students with frequent opportunities to step out of their comfort zones and face challenges in a supportive, collaborative environment.

Students reported that presenting their projects to classmates, engaging in group discussions, and defending their ideas built their confidence incrementally. For many, the transition from being passive listeners to active participants was both empowering and transformative.

> Interview Excerpt 1: "After participating in the PBL activities, I feel much more confident speaking in front of my classmates. It's different from just reading from a textbook." (Student #1).

> Interview Excerpt 2: "PBL helped me to overcome my fear of presenting in front of others. I learned to express myself better and feel more confident in my abilities." (Student #4).

Enjoyment of learning

Students reported a revitalized enthusiasm for their studies through the hands-on and collaborative approach of Project-Based Learning (PBL). Unlike traditional methods, which often rely on rote memorization and passive instruction, PBL offers a dynamic and engaging learning environment where students actively participate in the creation and application of knowledge. This shift from conventional classroom practices to experiential learning was highlighted as a key factor in fostering a genuine enjoyment of the educational process.

One of the primary reasons for this increased enjoyment was the creative freedom embedded in PBL. Students appreciated the opportunity to work on projects that allowed them to think outside the box and apply their knowledge in imaginative ways. By incorporating art, storytelling, or digital tools into their work, students felt more connected to the material and motivated to contribute meaningfully.

> Interview Excerpt 3: "Working on projects makes learning fun! I enjoy creating and sharing ideas with my group." (Student #3).

Collaboration also played a significant role in enhancing students' enjoyment. The team-oriented nature of PBL encouraged students to interact with their peers, exchange ideas, and solve problems together. Many participants highlighted that these collaborative activities made learning more engaging and enjoyable, as they were able to learn from each other and build stronger social connections.

> Interview Excerpt 4: "I love working with my

> classmates on PBL tasks. We laugh, brainstorm, and learn from each other. It's so much better than sitting through a lecture alone." (Student #2)

The interactive and dynamic environment created by PBL was another factor that contributed to students' enjoyment. Instead of passively listening to lectures, students were actively involved in activities such as research, hands-on experimentation, and presentations. These interactive elements transformed the classroom into a space of discovery and excitement.

> Interview Excerpt 5**:** "I get excited when we have PBL sessions because we actually do things instead of just listening to the teacher. It's like we're exploring and learning together." (Student #6).

Students also valued the sense of purpose and relevance that PBL projects brought to their learning. The real-world context of many tasks helped students see the practical applications of their knowledge, making the learning experience more meaningful. This relevance was often cited as a reason for their heightened engagement and enjoyment.

> Interview Excerpt 6**:** "The projects we do feel important, like they're connected to real life. It's exciting to work on something that actually matters." (Student #4).

Moreover, PBL provided a platform for students to express themselves and take ownership of their learning. By personalizing their projects and seeing their contributions acknowledged, students felt a deeper sense of pride and fulfillment in their work.

> Interview Excerpt 7: "I enjoyed creating my project because it was something unique to me. I got to use my ideas and make something I was proud of." (Student #5).

The collaborative and creative aspects of PBL also helped reduce the monotony often associated with traditional learning, making the process more enjoyable for students. They frequently described PBL sessions as a refreshing change that broke the routine of conventional classroom activities.

> Interview Excerpt 8: "PBL is such a nice change from regular lessons. It's not boring; it's exciting, and we get to try new things." (Student #1)

Sense of accomplishment

Completing projects and presenting their work gave students a profound sense of achievement, which in turn boosted their pride, self-worth, and overall confidence. Unlike traditional learning tasks that often feel abstract or disconnected, the tangible outcomes of Project-Based Learning (PBL) provided students with clear markers of progress and success. This visibility of their accomplishments served as a powerful motivator and a source of personal satisfaction. One major contributing factor to this sense of accomplishment was the ability to see the results of their efforts in a concrete form. PBL tasks often culminated in presentations, products, or performances that showcased students' creativity, critical thinking, and hard work. The act of sharing these outcomes with their peers, teachers, and sometimes even the wider community validated their efforts and reinforced their belief in their capabilities.

> Interview Excerpt 8: "Completing a project and presenting it felt like an achievement. I was proud of what I could do." (Student #5)

> Interview Excerpt 9: "When I saw my classmates and teacher appreciating the project I presented, it made me feel like all the effort was worth it. It's a feeling of pride that I've rarely felt before in school." (Student #1)

The collaborative nature of PBL further amplified this sense of accomplishment. Working as part of a team not only helped students overcome challenges collectively but also gave them a shared sense of pride in their achievements. Successfully navigating group dynamics and contributing to a joint outcome added to their feelings of capability and fulfillment.

> Interview Excerpt 10: "When our team presented the project, it felt amazing to see everything come together. Knowing I played a role in making it happen made me really proud." (Student #3)

> Interview Excerpt 11: "We worked hard as a group, and when we saw how good our presentation was, it was like, 'Wow, we did this!' It made all the effort feel worth it." (Student #6)

In addition to fostering pride in the outcome, PBL also instilled a sense of ownership and esponsibility in students. The process of planning, researching, and executing projects allowed them to take charge of their learning journey. This autonomy not only heightened their sense of control but also made their achievements feel more personal and meaningful.

> Interview Excerpt 11: "I've never felt this involved in my learning before. Completing the project felt like I achieved something I truly owned and understood." (Student #4)

For many students, the challenges they overcame during the project process further enhanced their sense of accomplishment. Whether it was learning new skills, solving complex problems, or stepping out of their comfort zones, the effort they put into overcoming these obstacles made their success all the more rewarding.

> Interview Excerpt 12: "There were moments when I didn't think I could finish the project, but I kept trying, and when I finally did, it felt incredible. It showed me I could handle more than I thought." (Student #7).

Teachers also noted that this sense of accomplishment had a positive ripple effect on students' overall attitude toward learning. Students who experienced the joy of completing a meaningful project often became more motivated and confident in taking on future challenges. The sense of pride they felt from their achievements created a positive feedback loop that encouraged them to strive for excellence in subsequent tasks.

> Interview Excerpt 13: "Seeing how proud students are after completing their projects is one of the most rewarding parts of PBL. It's like they realize their potential and want to keep building on it." (Teacher #2).

Teacher feedback

Analysis of teacher interviews revealed critical insights into the effectiveness and challenges of implementing PBL.

Key themes from thematic analysis

Enhanced student autonomy

Teachers widely observed that Project- Based Learning (PBL) played a pivotal role in fostering student autonomy by encouraging learners to take ownership of their educational journey. Unlike traditional teaching methods, which often position students as passive recipients of information, PBL places them at the center of the learning process. This shift not only empowers students to explore topics independently but also helps them cultivate essential self-regulation skills necessary for lifelong learning.

One of the key mechanisms through which PBL fosters autonomy is its open-ended and student-centered structure. Teachers noted that PBL tasks required students to make decisions about how to approach problems, allocate their time, and organize their resources. This sense of control over their learning gave students the confidence to take initiative and actively engage with the material.

> Interview Excerpt 13: "PBL encourages students to take charge of their learning. They are more engaged and driven to explore topics. It's not about just following instructions but about making meaningful choices in their projects." (Teacher #2).

Teachers also observed that PBL prompted students to develop self-regulation skills, such as setting goals, managing their time effectively, and reflecting on their progress. These skills were particularly evident during the various stages of project development, where students had to plan, execute, and evaluate their work. Such experiences not only built their academic competencies but also prepared them for real-world challenges.

> Interview Excerpt 14: "I've seen students grow in their ability to manage time and stay focused. They set goals for their projects and work steadily towards achieving them, which is a critical life skill." (Teacher #1)

> Interview Excerpt 15: "The reflective process in PBL is invaluable. Students learn to assess what's working and what's not, which helps them adjust their strategies and improve their outcomes." (Teacher #5)

Another aspect of autonomy highlighted by teachers was the way PBL encouraged students to pursue topics that resonated with their interests and curiosities. The flexibility to explore areas of personal significance made learning more engaging and meaningful, motivating students to delve deeper into their projects.

> Interview Excerpt 16: "When students can choose aspects of a project that interest them,

> their enthusiasm is contagious. They take the initiative to learn more because it feels relevant to them." (Teacher #6).

> Interview Excerpt 17: "I had a student who was usually disengaged but became deeply invested in a PBL project because it involved something he was passionate about. It was amazing to see him lead his group and take charge." (Teacher #3).

Furthermore, teachers noted that the collaborative elements of PBL also contributed to autonomy. Although teamwork was central, students often divided responsibilities, giving each member the chance to lead specific aspects of the project. This division of labor not only reinforced individual accountability but also allowed students to develop leadership skills and a sense of ownership over their contributions.

> Interview Excerpt 18: "Within their groups, students learn to take responsibility for their parts of the project. It's incredible to see them step up and lead discussions or tasks they feel confident about." (Teacher #2)

Teachers emphasized that fostering autonomy through PBL wasn't without challenges, particularly for students unaccustomed to such independence. However, with guidance and scaffolding, many students adapted and thrived in the self-directed environment. Educators found that gradually reducing their level of support as students grew more confident helped ease this transition.

> Interview Excerpt 19: "Some students struggle initially with the freedom PBL offers, but with a bit of guidance, they begin to understand how to manage their learning. Watching them grow in confidence is incredibly rewarding." (Teacher #1).

> Interview Excerpt 20: "It's a delicate balance—offering enough support so they don't feel lost but stepping back enough to let them figure things out on their own." (Teacher #4).

Improved peer collaboration

Teachers identified collaboration as a standout benefit of Project-Based Learning (PBL), highlighting how the approach nurtured teamwork and mutual support among students. This collaborative dynamic not only strengthened social bonds but also significantly enhanced students' communication, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills. Unlike traditional learning methods that often encourage individual competition, PBL fosters a cooperative environment where students work collectively to achieve shared goals.

One of the key features of PBL that fosters collaboration is its reliance on group work for planning, researching, and executing projects. Teachers noted that these group dynamics required students to engage in meaningful interactions, exchange ideas, and build on each other's strengths. This process cultivated a sense of shared responsibility and encouraged active participation from all group members.

> Interview Excerpt 21: "I noticed students working together more effectively. They support each other, which improves their speaking skills." (Teacher #3).

Another significant aspect of collaboration in PBL is the development of problem-solving skills. Teachers observed that students frequently had to navigate challenges as a team, whether it was resolving conflicts, dividing tasks equitably, or adapting their strategies to overcome obstacles. This process not only strengthened their teamwork abilities but also taught them how to manage disagreements constructively.

> Interview Excerpt 22: "I've seen groups struggle initially with disagreements, but by the end of the project, they learn to compromise and find solutions together. This is a skill they'll carry beyond the classroom." (Teacher #6)

Teachers also emphasized the role of collaboration in enhancing inclusivity and a sense of community within the classroom. PBL often brings together students with diverse skills, backgrounds, and personalities, fostering an appreciation for different perspectives. By working together on projects, students developed empathy, cultural awareness, and the ability to work harmoniously in diverse groups.

> Interview Excerpt 23: "PBL projects bring students together in ways that other activities don't. They learn to appreciate each other's strengths and understand different viewpoints." (Teacher #7)

Challenges and variability

The study identified several challenges in implementing PBL, particularly concerning the limited technological infrastructure. Thematic

analysis revealed key areas of concern:

Technological limitations

Technological limitations remain a significant barrier to the effective implementation of PBL, particularly in underfunded schools. Challenges such as limited access to devices, unreliable internet, and insufficient technical support impede students' ability to fully engage in technology- based tasks, often creating inequities in learning opportunities. Addressing these challenges through improved funding, infrastructure, and innovative solutions is essential to ensuring that PBL can be successfully adopted in diverse educational contexts.

> Interview Excerpt 24: "We lack the resources needed for some PBL activities, especially those that require technology." (Teacher #4).

> Interview Excerpt 25: "Sometimes, the internet is so slow or unavailable that we have to postpone or completely change our plans. It's frustrating for both teachers and students." (Teacher #3).

Financial constraints

Teachers highlighted significant financial challenges in implementing and sustaining Project-Based Learning (PBL) activities, emphasizing that limited funding often restricted the scale and quality of the projects. They noted that PBL frequently requires resources such as specialized materials, printing, craft supplies, or access to external tools like laboratories, field trips, or digital platforms. Without sufficient funding, many educators had to scale down their projects, substitute with lower-quality materials, or eliminate certain enriching components altogether. This lack of resources not only impacted the depth of student engagement but also created disparities, as schools in more affluent areas could afford higher-quality PBL experiences. Teachers further explained that even seemingly minor costs, such as photocopying or basic classroom supplies, became significant barriers in underfunded schools. These financial constraints often left educators feeling limited in their ability to fully realize the potential of PBL, which thrives on creativity and hands-on exploration.

> Interview Excerpt 25: "Creating and implementing PBL materials can be costly. We need more funding to support these initiatives." (Teacher #5).

Despite these challenges, the qualitative insights also indicated variability in student performance. While some students showed exceptional progress, others experienced minimal gains. Themes identified in interviews included:

Diverse learning styles

Project-Based Learning (PBL), as its open- ended nature allowed some students to thrive while leaving others struggling without structured guidance. High-performing students excelled in the independence and creativity PBL afforded, showcasing strong problem- solving skills and self-motivation. In contrast, students who relied on explicit instructions or had weaker foundational knowledge often felt overwhelmed and disengaged, unable to organize tasks or make meaningful progress. Teachers highlighted the need for differentiated support, such as clear rubrics, progress checkpoints, and individualized mentoring, to help struggling students while maintaining the autonomy that benefited others. Balancing freedom with targeted guidance was seen as essential to ensuring equitable outcomes and maximizing the benefits of PBL for all learners.

> Interview Excerpt: "Some students thrive in PBL, while others prefer more structured learning. We need to cater to different styles." (Teacher #3).

The results of this study underscore the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in enhancing the speaking skills of students enrolled in the Paket C program. The significant improvements observed in fluency, coherence, and pronunciation, coupled with heightened levels of motivation and engagement, highlight PBL's potential to transform the learning experience for these students.

When comparing these results with previous studies, it is evident that PBL's impact aligns with existing literature that emphasizes its effectiveness in promoting language skills. For instance, research by Wuntu et al., (2022) demonstrated that PBL significantly enhances speaking fluency and accuracy among students. Similarly, Siminto et al., (2024) found that the interactive nature of PBL fosters an engaging learning environment, which resonates with our findings that show increased student motivation and engagement. These comparisons not only

validate the current study's results but also highlight PBL as a promising approach for language learning across diverse educational contexts.

The results are further supported by relevant theories that advocate for experiential learning, such as Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which posits that knowledge is constructed through experience (Egan et al., 2023). The practical, hands-on projects inherent in PBL enable students to actively engage with the language, leading to more meaningful learning experiences and improvements in speaking skills. Additionally, Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction in learning, which is reflected in our findings regarding improved peer collaboration and student autonomy (Mishra, 2023). The positive feedback from both students and teachers regarding the collaborative nature of PBL reinforces the notion that learning is enhanced when students engage actively with their peers. Despite the promising results, the study does have limitations that should be acknowledged. The sample size was limited to a specific educational setting, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or populations. Furthermore, the study relied on self-reported measures for motivation and engagement, which can introduce bias. Additionally, challenges such as limited technological infrastructure and the financial constraints faced by the educational institution may have impacted the implementation of PBL activities, suggesting that these factors could vary in different settings.

For future research, it would be beneficial to explore the long-term impacts of PBL on students' speaking skills and overall academic performance. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how sustained engagement with PBL affects language acquisition over time. Furthermore, investigating the effectiveness of PBL in diverse educational environments, particularly those with varying levels of resource availability, could yield valuable information on how to adapt PBL strategies to maximize their effectiveness. Additionally, future studies could examine how individual differences in learning styles and preferences influence students' responses to PBL, providing a more nuanced understanding of how to tailor PBL approaches to meet the needs of all learners.

In summary, the results of this study contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting PBL as an effective instructional strategy for enhancing speaking skills among Paket C students. The alignment of these results with existing literature and theoretical frameworks, along with the identification of limitations and suggestions for future research, underscores the importance of continued exploration into the benefits and challenges of PBL in language education.

CONCLUSION

This study provides compelling evidence that Project-Based Learning (PBL) significantly enhances the speaking skills of students enrolled in the Paket C program. The findings reveal substantial improvements across various dimensions of speaking, including fluency, coherence, and pronunciation, with mean scores increasing markedly post- implementation. Furthermore, PBL was shown to foster a more dynamic and engaging learning environment, as reflected in the significant increases in student motivation and engagement levels.

The positive impact of PBL aligns with previous research that underscores its effectiveness in promoting language skills and engaging students in meaningful learning experiences. The alignment with established theories of experiential learning and social constructivism reinforces the potential of PBL to facilitate deeper understanding and application of language skills. Feedback from teachers indicated that PBL not only supports structured learning but also enhances student autonomy and peer collaboration, vital elements for language acquisition.

Despite the encouraging results, the study acknowledges certain limitations, including the limited sample size and potential biases inherent in self-reported measures. These factors may affect the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, challenges related to technological infrastructure and financial constraints highlight the need for targeted resources and support to optimize PBL implementation.

Future research should aim to explore the long-term effects of PBL on students' language skills and academic performance, as well as the adaptability of PBL strategies in various educational contexts. Investigating the influence of individual learning styles on the effectiveness of PBL could also provide valuable insights for tailoring instructional approaches to meet diverse learner needs.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the

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growing body of evidence supporting the use of Project-Based Learning as an effective instructional strategy for enhancing speaking skills among students in non-formal education settings. The findings advocate for the broader adoption of PBL in language education, as it has the potential to transform student engagement and learning outcomes.

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