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Investigating Students' and Teachers' Perceptions about the effect of Project-Based Learning on the speaking skill department of English at the university of Ghardaia as a Case Study

Dissertation submitted in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Didactics

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Dedication

First foremost, I would like to thank Allah for granting me the strength, courage, and perseverance to accomplish this work.

This thesis is dedicated to:

- *To my beloved parents, thank you for your endless love, sacrifices, support, and encouragement. You have always been my source of strength and inspiration, helping me overcome difficulties and move forward toward achieving my goals. This work is a small expression of my gratitude and affection for you both.*
- *To my dear brothers, Taher and Abderrahman, and my lovely sister Amina, thank you for your encouragement, kindness, and constant support.*
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- *Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Ezzoubeyr Mehassouel for his insightful advice, and constant encouragement throughout this research work. His support played an important role in completing this dissertation.*

Souhila

Dedication

In the name of God, most merciful, most compassionate, I must first thank God for enabling us to finish this work.

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Abstract

Many EFL students face difficulties in speaking such as lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, and pronunciation problems. Therefore, Project-Based Learning has emerged as alternative approach to overcome these issues by encouraging communication and interaction. This research aims to investigate students' and teachers' perceptions about the effect of project-Based learning (PBL) on the speaking skill in EFL contexts. It adopts a mixed-methods approach. Data were collected through a questionnaire administered to 63 university students from different academic years and semi-structured interviews conducted with three Oral Expression (OE) teachers at the University of Ghardaia. The findings show that both students and teachers hold positive perceptions toward PBL. Moreover, the study reveals that PBL is an effective approach for improving speaking skills.

Keywords Project-Based Learning, Students' perception, Teachers' perception, EFL.

List of Acronyms

PBL: Project-Based Learning

EFL: English as a foreign language

OE: Oral Expression

List of Tables

Table 1 . Students' Gender	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 2 . Students' level	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 3 . Students' speaking level	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 4 . Students' participation in PBL activities	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 5 . Students' attitudes towards PBL	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 6 . Students' Difficulties	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 7 . The years of teaching.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Table of contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgments	iv
Abstract.....	v
List of Tables	vii
General Introduction	1
1. Background of the study	1
2. Research objectives.....	1
3. Statement of the problem	1
4. Research questions.....	1
5. Research hypotheses	2
6. Rationale	2
7. Research methodology.....	2
8. Structure of the dissertation	3

Chapter One: Literature Review

Introduction.....	5
1.1 Section One: Speaking skills	5
1.1.1 Definition of Speaking skills.....	5
1.1.2 Importance of speaking skills	6
1.1.3 Components of speaking skills.....	7
1.1.4 Teaching speaking in EFL classroom	9
1.1.5 Common challenges in learning speaking	10
1.2 Section two: Project-Based learning	13
Introduction.....	13
1.2.1 An overview of Project-based learning.....	13
1.2.2 Historical background of PBL.....	15

1.2.3 Characteristics of Project-Based learning	16
1.2.4 Types of projects	17
1.2.5 Stages of projects	18
1.2.6 The role of PBL in enhancing speaking skills	19
Conclusion	20

Chapter Two: Methodology and Procedures

Introduction.....	22
2. Rsearch Methodology.....	22
2.1 Research design.....	22
2.2 Population and sample	22
2.3 Data collection tools	23
2.4 Data analysis methods	25
Conclusion	25

Chapter Three: Results and Discussions

Introduction.....	22
3. Data analysis.....	27
3.1 Students' questionnaire analysis	27
3.2 Teachers' Interviews Analysis	30
3.3 Discussion of the findings	33
Conclusion	39
General Conclusion.....	42
Appendices.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

1. Background of the study

Project-Based Learning (PBL) has become an essential approach in modern language teaching due to its emphasis on student-centred instruction and active participation. Unlike, traditional methods that rely on teacher instruction and memorization, PBL encourages students to engage in meaningful tasks that promote collaboration, communication and critical thinking. This shift has made PBL an effective approach in enhancing students' language skills, particularly speaking skills.

In English as foreign language (EFL) contexts, speaking is considered one of the most challenging skill for students as it requires fluency, accuracy, and continuous practice. These challenges are due to several difficulties such as lack of vocabulary and confidence. As a result, PBL is used as an effective approach in enhancing this important skill by providing opportunities for expression, communication and active use of language .

2. Research objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' and students' perception about the effect of project-based learning (PBL) on the speaking skill at Ghardaia university. It also attempts to identify the benefits and challenges of using PBL.

3. Statement of the problem

Speaking is still one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners, particularly at the university level. Many learners often face different challenges in speaking, including these difficulties fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and confidence. Project-Based Learning has been introduced as an alternative to traditional approaches in addressing these learners' issues. However, it is important to explore how both teachers and students perceive its role in enhancing speaking skills.

4. Research questions

Project-Based Learning (PBL) has been recognized as an effective approach to engage learners actively in the language learning process. Studies suggest that PBL not only promotes collaboration but also enhances learners' motivation and classroom participation, which are significant for developing speaking skills. The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How do students perceive the role of PBL in enhancing their speaking skill ?

2. To what extent does PBL enhance the EFL students' speaking skill at Ghardaia university ?
3. How effective do teachers perceive PBL to be in improving students' speaking skill ?
4. What challenges do teachers and students face when implementing PBL ?

5. Research hypotheses

Based on the research questions, it is expected that PBL will have a positive effect on students' speaking skill, motivation, and classroom engagement. The following hypotheses have been formulated to guide the study:

1. Students have positive attitudes towards PBL
2. Teachers consider PBL as an effective approach in enhancing speaking skill
3. PBL contributes to improving fluency, confidence, and interaction
4. Some challenges such as lack of vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, time limitations, and classroom management may affect the implementation of PBL

6. Rationale

In this era of globalization, English has become an essential international language which plays a prominent role in the world where most people use English as a means of communication. As globalization expands across different fields including the academic one. The focus is mainly on mastering English through the speaking skill, as it is a key skill for communication .

In this context, many EFL students have been struggling with fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, confidence and several other challenges. Project-Based learning (PBL) is an instructional approach focusing on acquiring the language by undertaking long- term projects involving presentations, interviews, simulations and discussions, with its distinct types.

Project-Based learning has emerged as an effective method for enhancing their speaking skill and addressing their challenges, as the process of learning shifted from the teacher-centered to the learner-centred, from passive learning to active learning, promoting cooperation and authentic communication. This study aims to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions about the effect of PBL on the speaking skills in order to provide a clear understanding of the role of PBL.

7. Research methodology

A descriptive mixed-methods study investigated teachers' and students ' perceptions of project-Based learning in enhancing speaking skills. It adopts a mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data. The participants included 63 students from

different levels at the University of Ghardaïa. Students were selected using convenience sampling. In addition three teachers of Oral Expression participated in the study. Data were collected through a questionnaire that was distributed online for students and semi-structured interview conducted with teachers, using a set of prepared questions. With their consent, the interviews were audio-taped. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages for the questionnaire. While, the interviews data were transcribed and analyzed through thematic analysis.

8. Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation consists of three main chapters, each one addressing a distinct aspect of the study:

•Chapter One: Literature review

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of speaking skill and Project-Based learning (PBL). It discusses the importance of speaking skills, their components and the main challenges faced by students in oral communication. In addition, the main concepts, characteristics, stages, types of PBL, while highlighting its role in enhancing speaking skills.

•Chapter Two: Methodology and Procedures

This chapter outlines the methodology adopted in the study, explaining the mixed-methods approach used for data collection. It also presents the sample, data collection tools, including the students' questionnaire and teachers' interviews, as well as the procedures followed in conducting the study.

•Chapter Three: Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the collected data from students' questionnaire and teachers' interview, examining students' and teachers' perceptions of the effect of Project-Based learning (PBL) on the speaking skills and discussed the main findings of the study.

CHAPTER ONE:

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of speaking skill and Project-Based learning (PBL) in EFL contexts. It is divided into two main parts that aim to provide a clear understanding of the key concepts related to the study. The first section focuses on Speaking as a fundamental language skill. It covers the definition of speaking skill and highlights its importance as a crucial tool for communication. Also it includes the main components of speaking for instance Fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and pronunciation. In addition, in this section we talk about how speaking is taught in EFL classrooms, referring to common teaching practices used to develop learners' oral abilities. Moreover it mentions the common challenges that face students when they speak a foreign language.

The second part deals first with introduces the concept of Project-Based learning as an instructional approach, its main characteristics, and also its significance in modern education. It explores the historical background of PBL, with reference to key theorists such as John Dewey and Kilpatrick. Finally, the chapter examines different types of project work and the main stages involved in implementing PBL in the classroom.

1.1 Section One: Speaking skill

1.1.1 Definition of Speaking skill

Speaking skill is considered one of the most important and challenging skills in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). "Speaking is one of the four language skills which is defined as the expression of ideas, opinions, or messages through oral language." (Cahyono & Indah, 2012, p.8). Cahyono and indah stated that speaking skills is the ability to express opinions or thoughts and feelings to a person or group verbally, whether face or by distance. Alternatively speech is a natural means of communication between members of the public to express their thoughts and their ideas.

English is divided into four skills which are as follows: listening, speaking, reading, writing ; therefore, speaking is the second skill and has a crucial role in communication. Speaking is a part of daily life that everyone should develop and master in order to be a good communicator.

According to Chaney (1999, p.13) as cited in Kayi (2006, p.17) "speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts" Speaking is understood as a dynamic and interactive process through which individuals exchange meaning by using both verbal language and non-verbal signals in

different communicative situations. In other words, speaking is not limited to producing words or sentences correctly; rather, it involves expressing ideas, opinions, and feelings in a way that can be clearly understood by others. This process combines linguistic elements, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, with non-linguistic features like gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice. Since communication always occurs within a specific context, speakers need to adapt their language according to the situation and the audience they are addressing.

In short, speaking skill can be defined as a productive, interactive, and functional process through which individuals create, receive, and process meaningful signals in order to convey information, attitudes, and ideas in real-time contexts. It is a tool to communicate orally with accuracy, fluency, and coherence to achieve effective interaction between the speaker and the listener.

1.1.2 Importance of speaking skill

According to Bygate (1987) as cited in Inurrtia and vegacely, 2006, p.15) “speaking is a skill which deserves attention as much as the literary skills in both native and foreign language”. Bygate highlights the core of oral communication, and he also emphasizes the necessity of not neglecting it in favor of literacy skills. In EFL contexts, learners need opportunities to practice speaking in order to develop fluency, accuracy, and enhance communicative competence. In this modern world, communication skills play a vital role, and individuals must master these skills to achieve success in their various fields including academic studies and future professional careers. Therefore speaking is considered one of the most important language skills among all the four language skills for effective communication in this global world.

Moreover, the speaking skill plays a central role in promoting interactive Learning in EFL classroom, as they encourage participation, collaboration, and meaningful communication among learners. Brown & Yule (1983, p.24) say, “Speaking is the skill that the students will be judged upon most in real life situations”. Despite its vital importance, the instruction of speaking skills has frequently been undervalued, and many of the EFL teachers continue to rely on traditional methods such as memorization of dialogues or repetition of drills, rather than providing learners with authentic communicative practice.

Harmer (2007) and Pourhosein Gilakjani (2016) describe human communication as a difficult and a complex process. People require communication when they wish to convey or transmit information. Speakers utilize communication when they want to inform someone

about something. Speakers use language to achieve their individual purposes. For effective communication, speakers need simultaneously be both listeners and speakers.

The importance of speaking is demonstrated by the integration of the other language skills. Speaking helps learners improve their vocabulary, grammar, and writing skills. Students can use language to convey feelings, share tales, make requests, discuss, and demonstrate its different purposes. Speaking is vitally important outside the classroom. Language speakers have greater career prospects across many organizations and corporations.

Speaking plays a crucial role in language learning because it helps learners practice and use the language in a real way. Through repetition and interaction, students can internalize the language more effectively. According to James Asher (2003), learners often imitate the teacher's speech, which helps them improve their pronunciation. Asher believes that through a combining imitation and repetition, learners can improve their pronunciation and enhance their speaking skills in a natural way.

To sum up, speaking is more than just a skill; it is the most practical tool for communication in the real world. For EFL learners, mastering this skill is the key to both language acquisition and future success in a global society."

1.1.3 Components of speaking skill

Since speaking is the action of sharing language through the mouth by using different parts of our body, including the vocal cords, vocal tract, and tongue, students should practice speaking in English as much as possible. However, speaking is a complex process that involves several components, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency, which are essential for effective communication.

1.1.3.1 Grammar

In the Longman Dictionary Contemporary English (2000, p193) grammar is the system that organizes a language. The rules by which words change their forms and are combined into sentences. As Jeremy Harmer (2004) states, "Grammar is the description of the ways in which words can change their forms and can be combined into sentences in that language" (p. 12). In oral communication, grammar enables learners to create coherent and logically structured statements. A student may have a rich vocabulary, but lack of understanding grammar, their speech can become incoherent or unclear.

According to Ur . Penny (1996) "Grammar may be roughly defined as the way a language manipulates and combines words in order to form longer units of meaning." (p. 75). Ur argues

that grammar involves the combination of speech elements to construct phrases and sentences, enabling the communication of meaningful utterances and messages to others.

Based on the previous scholars' views, grammar is not merely a set of isolated rules but a fundamental element of language use. It enables learners to organize their ideas accurately and produce meaningful utterances. Therefore, grammar plays a vital role in developing communicative competence.

1.1.3.2 Vocabulary

Vocabulary represents the set of words and the lexical foundation of speaking competence, it is one of most important elements for teaching and learning a foreign language . It enables learners to express their ideas, and explain their thoughts. As Thornbury (2002) asserts, “Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (p. 13).

In EFL contexts, due to the lack of vocabulary learners face difficulties to continue a conversation. They may hesitate, repeat the same words, or use their mother tongue because they fail to select appropriate words in English .In this case learners are required to develop a wide vocabulary to speak well and communicate effectively.

1.1.3.3 Pronunciation

Hornby et al. (1980) definition of pronunciation as “a way in which a language is spoken” (p.670) refers to the production of speech sounds, it include vowels, consonants, stress, rhythm, and intonation. In EFL contexts, pronunciation represents a fundamental component of speaking skill, as it directly affects intelligibility and determines the extent to which learners' oral production can be clearly understood by listeners. The study conducted by Derwing and Munro (2005) highlights that the main goal of pronunciation teaching should be intelligibility, not achieving a native-like accent. Even with suitable grammatical and lexical selections, insufficient phonological management can result in communication failure. Thus, pronunciation serves as an essential link between linguistic ability and effective communication.

1.1.3.4 Fluency

Fluency refers to the capability of learners to communicate in a clear manner to avoid misunderstandings in communication as audiences might become disinterested. It is also understood as the ability to speak smoothly and naturally with minimal pauses. As Hedge (2005, p. 4) said fluency means “speaking easily, smoothly naturally and reasonably quickly without lots of pauses and stops”. In EFL classrooms, teachers usually develop fluency

through activities like discussions, role-plays and group work, These activities encourage learners to focus more on meaning ,and use the English language without difficulties or any obstacles, also makes learners feel more relaxed and more confidence when speaking front of people .

1.1.3.5 Accuracy

Accuracy refers to speaking correctly and using appropriate grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. In fact, Yuan and Ellis (2003, p. 2) define accuracy in speaking as “the extent to which the language produced conforms to target language norms,” which means using grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation in the correct way.

In order to acquire the language in an EFL classroom, learners most of the time focus on the aim of being fluent speakers and neglect to be accurate. As a result, learners may speak smoothly but still make noticeable errors in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation in their speech. For this reason, learners are expected to pay attention to accuracy and enhance it alongside fluency.

1.1.4 Teaching speaking in EFL classroom

Speaking is "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts". (Chaney & Burk 1998, p. 13). Therefore, the teaching and learning of speaking skill are a necessary component of any language education classroom. Although speaking was neglected in favor of reading and writing, current educational demands highlight its crucial role. In our modern communicative environment, students are expected to demonstrate not only grammar proficiency but also the ability to express their thoughts clearly and engage effectively in real-world contexts. As a result, enhancing students' speaking skills has emerged as a key goal in language education.

Teaching speaking in EFL classrooms is a systematic and interactive process that aims to develop learners' communicative competence as stated by Rivers (1987, p. 4) " interaction is the heart of communication; it is what communication is all about". It involves creating meaningful opportunities for learners to use language through interaction. Kayi (2006) provides several suggestions for teachers when teaching speaking, she emphasizes that teacher should encourage students to practice speaking by using appropriate activities such as role-plays, group debates, information-gap tasks, and simulations, also by supporting them in producing correct pronunciation, stress, and intonation patterns. In addition, learners should be guided to select suitable vocabulary and grammatical structures and to organize their ideas clearly in order to express their thoughts effectively.

Since EFL learners usually have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, the classroom becomes the main environment for practicing the language in teaching speaking, Brown (1994) mentions set of principles that should be followed by the teacher. First, the teacher should employ techniques that address a wide range of learners' need, moving from a focus on accuracy to a greater emphasis interaction, meaning, and fluency. Second, the use of motivating techniques that encourage learners 'engagement, third, promote the use of authentic language in meaningful contexts. Fourth, teacher should provide appropriate feedback and correction. Fifth, the teacher should take advantage of the natural relationship between speaking and listening. Sixth, encourage learners to initiate communication, and support them in building effective speaking strategies.

To conclude, effective speaking instruction involves applying theory through engaging activities that encourage student interaction. For instance, teachers can use role-plays, group discussions, and language games to help students practice English in real-life situations. To make these activities work, it is important to follow core elements: creating a comfortable classroom where students feel confident to speak, and balancing between accuracy and fluency. In this way, the classroom becomes a supportive environment for developing real communication skills.

1.1.5 Common challenges in learning speaking

Speaking is considered one of the most challenging skill for EFL learners, as it requires effort and continuous practice. According to Tom et al. (2013), speaking skills could be the most challenging skill for learners to master; it is likely to cause difficulty when learners do not have sufficient background knowledge of the English language (p. 666). Therefore, the development of speaking skills is often affected by cognitive, psychological, and social factors.

1.1.5.1 Lack of Knowledge and Vocabulary

Learners in EFL classrooms often face difficulties in speaking due to both a lack of ideas and also struggle to find suitable vocabulary to express their thoughts, which leads to hesitation, repetition, or incomplete sentences. In this regard, Rivers (1968, p. 192) explains that this problem may occur when the topic is not appropriate for learners or when they lack sufficient background knowledge. In addition, limited vocabulary hinders learners' ability to convey their ideas effectively. As Baker and Westrup (2003, p. 14) highlight, learners may struggle to respond in a foreign language because they do not know what to say, which words to use, or how to form correct sentences.

1.1.5.2 Psychological barriers

Lack of confidence, shyness and anxiety represent significant psychological barriers that hinder the development of speaking skills in EFL classrooms. According to Littlewood (1999), “it is easy for a foreign language classroom create inhibition and anxiety” (p93) this means in general cases learners try to participate in the classroom activities, but they feel nervous and uncomfortable. When learners find themselves in such a situation, they tend to feel anxious, and often lose confidence, in addition they become afraid of making mistakes and may avoid speaking in the classroom. As a result, they may feel shy and develop inhibition, so over time, this psychological barrier negatively affects the development of their oral communication ability.

1.1.5.3 Overthinking grammar

Overthinking grammar is a common problem among EFL learners. Numerous students focus too much on grammatical correctness and try to produce perfect sentences before expressing their ideas. According to Krashen’s Monitor Hypothesis, overly concentrating on grammar while speaking can affect fluency and make communication less natural. This overthinking makes learners hesitate and pause frequently, which interrupts the flow of their speech. Instead of focusing on meaning, learners become worried about making mistakes, which increases their anxiety and reduces their confidence. As Penny Ur (1996, p. 121) states, “Learners are often inhibited about trying to say things in a foreign language in the classroom: worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face.” As a result, their speech becomes slow and less fluent.

1.1.5.4 Lack of motivation and Interest

In EFL classroom, conversation practice aims to develop the learners’ speaking skill in order to facilitate expressing their feelings and thoughts freely and easily. The good choice of the discussion subject is the main important stimulation to speak and to participate. If the topic is not interesting or suitable, learners may feel unmotivated to speak. According to Baker and Westrup (2003) “It is difficult for many pupils to respond when the teacher asks them to say something in a foreign language because they might have few ideas about what to say” (p.75). On other hand, motivation is a crucial factor of successful learning, as stated by Harmer (2012, p.98) ‘Motivation is some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something. Therefore, when learners are not motivated or interested, they are less likely to participate in speaking activities. As a result, their speaking development may be limited, and they may not improve their ability to communicate effectively.

1.1.5.5 Pronunciation Problems

Another significant difficulty for EFL learners is mispronunciation, which often acts as a major barrier for educators when developing their speaking skills. Many students struggle with the complex sounds, stress patterns, and intonation of English, which are frequently different from their native language. In this context, Hyman (1975, p. 1) emphasizes that “a language learner must master the production and perception of the sounds of a given language.” This means that learners need not only to pronounce sounds correctly, but also to recognize and distinguish them when listening. In addition, English pronunciation can be confusing because the relationship between spelling and pronunciation is not always consistent. As Harmer (2008, p. 250) states, “English pronunciation causes many problems due to lack of sound spelling correlation in it.” As a result, learners may feel hesitant about how to pronounce words correctly, which can reduce their confidence and make them avoid speaking in the classroom.

1.2 Section two: Project-Based Learning

Introduction

In recent years, Project-Based Learning has been considered an effective instructional approach in which learners are at the center of learning instead of the teachers. It focuses on active learning through meaningful tasks that involve learners in real-world situations. In this approach, learners are guided to collaborate, explore, and build knowledge by engaging in long-term projects. PBL supports problem-solving, communication skills and critical thinking, which makes it a valuable element in EFL context.

Therefore, PBL has become widely used in various educational fields to promote learners engagement and contributes to improving their skills, knowledge and overall outcomes.

PBL aims to change the way learners acquire language. Although nowadays, the world shows PBL as new and innovative approach in teaching and learning settings while, PBL has existed in different forms since the early twentieth century. it is rooted in the work of the progressive theorists such as John Dewey, Vygotsky, and Piaget (Pieratt, 2011), Dewey (1938) emphasized that the learners' education will become more meaningful when the learning process is relevant and related to real-world experience, which indicates that PBL is far from new method in educational world.

1.2.1 An overview of Project-Based Learning

In literature, the term is often ambiguous and has distinct meanings across various academic fields (Hanney & Baden, 2013, as cited in Harroug & Hellalet, 2021). Many researchers have been interested in it, and its definitions vary depending on the context. The terms project-based learning method, project-based learning approach, project-based learning instruction, and project-based learning model are also frequently used to refer to PBL .

Project-Based learning (PBL) is defined as a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge (Buck Institute for Education, 2015).

Projects are defined as complex tasks based on challenging questions or problems that allow students to work relatively independently for extended periods of time. They involve design, problem-solving, decision-making, or investigative activities, and result in realistic products or presentations (Jones, Rasmussen, & Moffitt, 1997; Thomas, Mergendoller, & Michaelson, 1999).

According to Talebi (2015), Dewey, who is known as the father of PBL, supported the idea that students should participate actively in their education. In addition, he believed that students would be more successful if they worked together and communicate with others in order to gain experience. Since the late nineteenth century, these ideas have developed into the PBL approach of the twenty-first century.

PBL is a student-centered and problem-oriented teaching method in which project carried out by students in groups facilitate the learning of new knowledge and skills (Condcliffe et al., 2017; Thomas 2000). It is therefore described as a collaborative, inquiry-based approach in which students integrate, apply, and construct their knowledge while cooperating to address complex and authentic problems (Guo et al., 2020).

Blumenfeld et al. (1991) defined PBL as "a comprehensive approach to classroom learning and teaching that is designed to engage students in an investigation of authentic problems" (p. 369). Therefore, PBL emphasizes the shift of learners from passive learning to active knowledge construction, where learners' needs and interests are supported. In other words, PBL promotes learning by doing rather than by receiving.

According to Moss & Van Duzer (1998) as cited in Wanchid & Wattanasin (2015), the PBL is an instructional approach that contextualizes learning by presenting learners with problems to solve or products to develop. The core goal of PBL is to connect classroom knowledge with real-world language that students encounter (Fried-Booth, 1997).

Tamim and Grant (2013) offered an alternative definition, stating that PBL is "an instructional model based on the constructivist theory of knowledge" (p. 73). Constructivism—"a theory that considers learning as an active process in which learners construct and internalize new concepts, ideas, and knowledge based on their present and prior knowledge and experiences" (Cohen et al. 2004, p. 167). Furthermore, PBL was described by Bell (2010) as "a teacher-facilitated, student-driven approach to learning." where students asking questions that arise from their innate curiosity.

PBL is considered a modern approach used in the teaching and learning process to foster the development of 21st-century skills such as include self-management, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and global awareness. According to Markham et al. (2003), it is a "systematic teaching method that engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks" (p. 4). It also can help students bridge the gap between what they learn in the classroom and real-world experiences (Juwon, 2005).

Bender (2012) summarized PBL as "working cooperatively to solve a problem" (p. 7). Collaboration is therefore a key element of PBL. Its main goal is to support lifelong learning by engaging students in real-world tasks and meaningful activities.

Based on the previous literature definitions, Project-Based learning (PBL) can be defined as a teaching method in which students are placed at the center of the learning process, where they actively engage in real-world situations. Students become more responsible for their learning as they solve problems, collaborate and construct knowledge in a meaningful way.

1.2.2 Historical background of PBL

From a historical perspective, project-based learning has its origins in The progressive Education Movement, which promoted more student-centered and experiential methods in education. This movement supports "deeper learning" through active investigation of real-world problems and challenges (Pellegrino and Hilton, 2012). According to Simpson (2011), project-based learning is not a new approach to education.

PBL has its roots in early educational theory, especially in the work of Kilpatrick, who according to Retter (2018), considered that employing literacy in meaningful contexts offered a way to develop prior knowledge and achieve personal development. In order to give students a wide range of thoughts and ideas, he recommended that projects be interdisciplinary in mathematics, science, and social studies (Kubiatko & Vaculová, 2011). He maintained that group projects that students developed, planned, carried out, and assessed would help students get an awareness of their lives while preparing them to work in a democracy. He intended for topics to arise from students' interests. Furthermore, Kilpatrick, a student of John Dewey, was one of the first scholars to associate project work with education in 1918.

A Vygotskian perspective is also reflected in project-based learning. According to Lev Vygotsky's theory, learning occurs through social interaction that pushes individuals to engage in cognitive tasks that are slightly above their current level of ability. The theory suggests that when learners engage in meaningful interactions with more experienced peers or teachers, they can develop understanding through problem- solving, receive guidance, track progress, and evaluate outcomes. In addition, these intentional interactions with peers, teachers, and society can help students with lower levels in overcoming learning challenges (Vygotsky, 1978).

1.2.3 Characteristics of Project-Based learning

According to Stoller (2002), Most language educators have discussed project work. Although these educators have approached it from different perspectives, project work shares a set of common characteristics, across its various forms, including :

- Rather than focusing on particular linguistic objectives, project work emphasizes learning. Students' interests and real-world topics might take center stage in projects.
- Although the teacher plays a significant role in providing support and guidance throughout the process, project work remains student-centered.
- Instead of being competitive, project work is collaborative. Students might work individually, in small groups, or as a class, to complete a project, exchanging resources, ideas, and experience along the way.
- Project work reflects real-life tasks by promoting the authentic integration of skills and the processing of information from multiple sources.
- Project work results in a final product that can be shared with others, such as an oral presentation, a poster session, a bulletin board display, a report, or a stage performance, giving the project a real purpose. However, the process of achieving the goal is just as valuable as the finished product. Therefore, project work has both a process and product orientation and provides students with opportunities to focus on fluency and accuracy at different stages.
- Project work has the potential to be motivating, challenging, empowering, and stimulating. In addition to enhancing students' language proficiency, content knowledge, and cognitive capacities, it typically leads to the development of students' confidence, self-esteem and autonomy.

On the other hand, Simpson (2011) as cited in Pham (2018) characterized PBL as intricate investigations conducted over time and as a student-centered learning approach in which students organize, complete, and present their work. In addition, PBL focuses on difficult questions, issues, or topics that attract students' interest and become the center of the learning process.

Moreover, PBL provides students with the opportunity to exchange materials, ideas, and knowledge during the learning process, as well as receive frequent feedback from peers and facilitators. It also involves hands-on activities and the use of authentic resources and technologies in a collaborative rather than competitive learning environment. Furthermore, PBL encourages the application of different skills such as social and managerial skills and

leads students to produce meaningful products that can be presented publicly to experts, teachers, and peers. Finally both the project and the learning process are evaluated.

1.2.4 Types of projects

In the EFL classroom, there are different types of PBL that are applied to enhance language skills. According to Stoller (2002), projects are categorized based on how much the character of the assignments is decided by the teacher and the students. Three categories of projects are proposed by Henry (1994) as cited in Stoller (2002) :

1.2.4.1 Structured projects The teacher sets, plans and organizes the topic, resources, methods, and presentation.

1.2.4.2 Unstructured projects The majority of the work is carried out by the students themselves.

1.2.4.3 Semi-structured projects In this kind, the students and the teacher share the organization of the projects.

On the other hand, Stoller (2002) notes that projects can also be grouped according to their content, such as student interests, simulated real-world problems, or real-world concerns. Project can further be classified according to data collection methods (Stoller, 2002):

A. Research Projects data is collected through library research. Similarly, text Projects use literary works, reports, news media, audio, and video materials instead of individuals to collect data.

B. Correspondence Projects in order to collect information, students are required to communicate with various people from institutions, organizations, or companies.

C. Survey Projects students are required to administer a survey and analyze the collected data.

D. Encounter Projects these projects involve direct interaction with guest speakers outside the classroom.

Finally, projects can also be classified according to the way information is reported, Stoller (2002):

E. Production projects include activities such as movies, posters, written reports, handbooks, brochures, and bulletin-board displays.

F. Performance Projects these projects include activities such as presentations, debates, and plays.

G. Organizational Projects involve planning or forming a club, discussion group, or conversation-partner program.

1.2.5 Stages of projects

Rebecca L. Stoller (2002) presented project work through a structure of ten (10) instructional steps that can be organized into several main stages:

1.2.5.1 Planning stage

The project's theme is agreed on by the instructor and students in order to create a sense of shared dedication and viewpoint, the instructor allows students to shape the project. Even in structured projects, students can be encouraged to refine the project theme through previous readings, videos, debates, and classroom activities. Then, the final outcome is determined by both the instructor and the students by considering the nature of the project, its goals, and the best way to complete it such as written report, poster, debates, oral presentation, handbook, newspaper, or videos. After that, The project is organized by both the instructor and the students by deciding the required data, the methods used to collect information, the role of each student, and the project schedule.

1.2.5.2 Preparation stage

At this stage, Students are prepared by the instructor for the language requirements of information gathering through activities related to question-formation, conversational strategies, listening and note-taking. In addition, the instructor assists students in compiling, analyzing, and interpreting information in order to determine the most appropriate materials for the project.

1.2.5.3 Implementation stage

Students collect and organize data through different sources such as letters, libraries, course readings, videos and other materials relevant to the project. Moreover, students evaluate the collected data by selecting the most relevant information and rejecting unnecessary materials.

1.2.5.4 Presentation stage

At this stage, The instructor prepares students for the language demands of the final activity, including oral presentation techniques, pronunciation, idea organization, and conversational strategies. Afterwards, Students present their final products in front of an audience.

1.2.5.5 Evaluation stage

At the final stage, students evaluate the project by reflecting on the language and the content they have learned, the steps they followed, and the quality of the final product .

Moreover, The PBL model proposed by (Nizwardi et al.,2017) contains of three main stages, which are divided into seven steps that assists to the application of project based learning. It is considered as one of examples of the PBL model stages :

The first stage, skill competences debriefing, includes formulating the expected learning outcomes, understanding the content, and providing skills training . At this stage , students learn about the project's goals and the information they need to know, which gets them ready to learn in a way that works. The second stage, project work, includes designing the project theme, preparing the project proposal, and executing the project tasks . At this stage, students work together to look into real-world problems, make choices, and build their projects, which helps them improve their communication and interaction skills. The last stage is evaluation, which includes the presentation of the project. During this stage, students show their work and think about what they learned. This helps them get better at speaking, feel more confident, and talk about their thoughts , ideas and information clearly.

1.2.6 The role of PBL in enhancing speaking skill

Mastering spoken English continues to be a major issue in the educational field . Due to the limited exposure to real-world speaking opportunities and communicative tasks in traditional classroom settings, many students struggle with fluency, accuracy, and confidence over time (Gutiérrez & Larson, 2020; Hsu & Wang, 2020; McDonough & Neumann, 2019 as cited in Azzahra et al., 2025), which hinders their communication skills. Communication is a significant skill for students' academic and professional success.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) has emerged as an effective method To address these challenges in enhancing learners' English skills. It is a learner-focused approach where teachers act as facilitators and motivators , monitors and guides students to collaborate, explore, and build knowledge through meaningful activities and long-term projects (Sinisrimangkorn, 2021; Wuntu et al., 2022). It provides authentic learning contexts, bridging classroom learning with real-life communication and improving the students' speaking skill by giving them opportunities for meaningful interactions and communication.

Some benefits of PBL include the cooperation among students, the capacity of problem solving and communication skills as well as the creativity and critical thinking .PBL helps students to use language in a way which makes them more confident and fluent. Research has shown that implementing PBL significantly enhances students' speaking performance and engagement.

PBL fosters more dynamic, student-centered, and communicative learning settings (Lee & Kim, 2020; Lu & Lin, 2022 as cited in Azzahra et al., 2025). Because it encourages students to actively participate in the problem-solving process, which necessitates cooperation and communication, it is especially well-suited for helping learners overcome speech challenges. by situating language use in realistic and socially relevant situations, PBL has been demonstrated to improve vocabulary acquisition, boost confidence, and improve speaking fluency in EFL students (Alawiyah & Hermagustiana, 2022; Maulidya & Zuhriyah, 2021).

Conclusion

In EFL classrooms, Project-Based Learning (PBL) is considered an effective learner-centered approach that encourages communication, collaboration and active participation. It also plays a significant role in enhancing speaking skill by providing students with meaningful opportunities to practice the language and develop their oral performance.

CHAPTER TWO:

Methodology and Procedures

Introduction

This chapter presents the practical part of the study, which aims to investigate the impact of Project-Based Learning (PBL) on students' speaking skill in Oral Expression classes. It describes the overall research design, the participants involved, and the data collection instruments used to gather information from both students and teachers, and discusses the main findings obtained from the questionnaire and interview responses. The analysis follows a thematic approach to identify recurring patterns and key insights.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research design

In order to collect data on both students' and teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of project-based Learning (PBL) on the development of speaking skill, the research adopts a descriptive research design based on a mixed-methods approach. This design combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to provide an in-depth understanding into the research problem. On one hand, the quantitative data are collected through a students' questionnaire, which aims to examine learners' attitudes, and experiences, in speaking skills as a result of PBL implementation. On the other hand, a qualitative approach is implemented through teachers' interviews in order to explore their perspectives, classroom practices, and evaluations of the effectiveness of PBL in enhancing students' oral communication. The integration of these two approaches allows for data triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the final findings.

2.2 Population and sample

This study involves different student levels who responded to the questionnaire, they were selected among the total population of students representing various academic levels, from first-year Licence (L1) to second-year Master (M2), within the English Department of Ghardaia university, in addition to three teachers who participated in the interview. the selection of the sample was on the basis that teachers have experience in teaching Oral Expression, even they taught Oral in the previous years. This is because they know how to deal with speaking in the classroom and how to choose the appropriate activities to improve students' oral performance. The study relied on a convenience sampling technique, as the participants were selected according to their availability and accessibility.

2.2.1 Students' Profiles

This case study is concerned with 63 participants include students from different academic levels, ranging from first-year Licence (L1) to second-year Master (M2). They were selected to complete the questionnaire in order to gather a wide range of perspectives. All participants have studied English as a foreign language for several years, which enables them to provide relevant insights into their speaking abilities and learning experiences.

2.2.2 Teachers' Profiles

In order to collect data on teachers' perception of using PBL, and its effect on speaking skills, three English teachers from the English Department of Ghardaia University were selected to participate in a semi-structured interview. The selection of the sample was based on their teaching experience in teaching Oral Expression, even they taught oral in the previous years. This is because they know how to deal with speaking in the classroom and how choose the appropriate activities to improve students' oral performance.

2.3 Data collection tools

To achieve the objectives of this study of our research, and ensure a comprehensive analysis of the impact of Project-Based Learning (PBL) on speaking skills, two primary research instruments were employed: a questionnaire for students and a semi-structured interview for teachers. The use of these two tools allows for the triangulation of data, ensuring that the findings are obtained from both the students' self-reported experiences and the teachers' pedagogical observations.

2.3.1 Students' Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a research tool that used for gathering information from respondents through a series of questions. It is defined as a structured set of questions designed to collecting data about something. According to Kothari (2004, p. 100), "a questionnaire consists of a number of questions printed or typed in a definite order on a form or set of forms". The questionnaire used consists of eight items which are arranged in logical way, and it is designed to obtain data concerning the students' opinions. The questionnaire divided into three sections, the questions are different: close-ended questions (yes- no), Likert-scale questions and open- ended questions; all these types are included in our questionnaire.

2.3.1.1 Section one: Personal Information

This section includes two questions related to students' background information, namely gender and level of study. It aims to categorize participants according to their demographic and academic profiles.

2.3.1.2 Section two: Speaking Level and Experience

This section consists of two questions. The first question asks students to evaluate their speaking level in English (ranging from very weak to very good), while the second question investigates whether they have previously participated in Project-Based Learning activities. This section aims to students evaluate their own English speaking level and indicate whether they have any previous experience with PBL.

2.3.1.3 Section Three: Perceptions of PBL and Speaking Skill

This is the core of the questionnaire. It includes three main items

- **Five-point Likert scale:** Consisting of six statements on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. It is designed to examine students' attitudes toward Project-Based Learning and its effectiveness in improving their speaking skill, motivation, confidence, and classroom interaction.
- **A Multiple-Response question:** is a multiple-choice question designed to identify the main difficulties they face when working on projects, such as lack of vocabulary or fear of making mistakes.
- **An Open-Ended question:** This final item invites students to express their opinions on how Project-Based Learning helps improve their speaking skills.

This section is designed to capture rich qualitative information about students' opinions.

2.3.2 Teachers' Interview

The interview is a fundamental qualitative research instrument designed to obtain in-depth information about participants' experiences and perspectives. The interview is the verbal conversation between two people with the objective of collecting relevant information for the purpose of research. As Kothari stated (2004, p. 97), "the interview method of collecting data involves presentation of oral-verbal stimuli and reply in terms of oral-verbal responses". In this study, a semi-structured interview was conducted with three oral English teachers of Ghardaia University. The interview was carried out face-to-face in order to facilitate direct interaction and allow participants to express their ideas freely. With the participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded using a mobile phone to ensure accuracy and to avoid loss of information. The recorded data were then carefully transcribed into written form, and then coded into thematic elements for analysis

The interview consists of five main parts. The first part focuses on teachers' professional background and their experience with Project-Based Learning (PBL). The second part explores their perceptions of the impact of PBL on students' speaking

development. The third part addresses classroom practices and assessment methods used during project work. The fourth part investigates the challenges faced by teachers and students when implementing PBL. Finally, the last part seeks teachers' overall evaluation and recommendations regarding the integration of PBL in Oral Expression modules.

2.4 Data analysis methods

The data in this study were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. By using and calculating frequencies and percentages, the students' questionnaire was analyzed, the results were presented in the tables below. On the other hand, the teachers' interviews were audio-recorded, analyzed qualitatively through thematic analysis by grouping the answers into main themes. Moreover, both set of data were discussed to provide a better understanding of the effect of Project-Based learning (PBL) in enhancing speaking skills.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the methodological framework adopted in this study to investigate the impact of Project-Based Learning (PBL) on students' speaking skill in Oral Expression classes. It described the research design, the participants, and the data collection instruments used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. In addition, it explained the procedures followed in analyzing the collected data. The use of questionnaires and interviews provided a comprehensive understanding of both students' and teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of PBL in enhancing speaking skill.

CHAPTER THREE:

Results and Discussion

Introduction

This section presents the analysis of the data collected through the students' questionnaire and teachers' interviews in order to investigate their perceptions towards the effect of Project-Based learning (PBL) on speaking skill.

3. Data analysis

3.1 Students' questionnaire analysis

3.1.1 Gender

Gender	Frequency	percentage
Male	14	22.2%
Female	49	77.8%

Table 1. Students' Gender

In order to examine the gender distribution of the participants, Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents are female students, representing (77.8%), while male students represent only (22.2%) of the sample, indicating a higher participation rate among females in the study.

3.1.2 Level of Study

Level	Frequency	Percentage
First year licence	8	12.7%
Second year Licence	10	15.9%
Third year Licence	15	23.8%
Master	30	47.6%

Table 2. Students' level

For the purpose of identifying the academic level of the students, Table 2 reveals that the highest number of participants are Master students (47.6%), followed by third year students (23.8%), second-year students (15.9%), while first-year students account for only (12.7%).

3.1.3 Speaking level

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Weak	5	7.9%
Average	26	41.3%
Good	21	33.3%
Very Good	11	17.5%

Table 3. Students' speaking level

Furthermore, concerning the students' speaking level. This item is designed to determine their speaking proficiency. The data indicates that most students have an average speaking level (41.3%), or a good level (33.3%). Fewer students consider their speaking level as very good (17.5%), while only (7.9%) report having a weak level, emphasizing the moderate level of speaking proficiency among most students.

3.1.4 Participation in PBL activities

response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	41	65.1%
No	22	34.9%

Table 4. Students' participation in PBL activities

To gain insight into students' participation in PBL activities, as shown in the table above, (65.1%) of students have participated in PBL activities, while (34.9%) have not, indicating that PBL is familiar to students and commonly used in EFL classrooms.

3.1.5 Students' attitudes towards PBL

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Working on projects encourages me to communicate more with my classmates in English	3	4	10	37	9
I feel more motivated to speak English when working on project	4	6	5	36	12
Groups projects help me practice speaking English more frequently	6	2	6	39	10
PBL activities don't improve my speaking skill	13	34	6	9	1
PBL helps me improve my confidence and fluency in speaking	6	8	5	36	8
PBL encourages collaboration and discussion in English	7	1	6	37	12

Table 5. Students' attitudes towards PBL

This part aims to explore students' attitudes towards PBL, the students were asked to respond to six statements using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The first statement examines whether working on projects encourages them to communicate more with their classmates in English. The majority of respondents agreed (37) or strongly agreed (9). While, a small number disagreed (3), strongly disagreed (4) or remained neutral (10). This reflects that PBL promotes interaction, communication and increases speaking practice by providing more opportunities.

Regarding the second statement, whether they feel more motivated to speak English when working on project, most students agreed (36) or strongly agreed (12). This reflects the positive impact of PBL from the motivational side. Similarly, The third statement, whether group projects help them practice speaking English more frequently, the results reveal that a large number of students agreed (39) or strongly agreed (10), highlighting the importance of collaboration in enhancing speaking skills.

It is important to note that the fourth statement "PBL activities don't improve my speaking skill" is in negative form. The majority of students disagreed (34) or strongly disagreed (13), indicating that PBL has a positive effect on students' speaking ability. Concerning the fifth statements that PBL helps them to improve their confidence and fluency in speaking, most respondents agreed (36) or strongly agreed (8), showing that PBL contributes to building students' self-confidence and fluency. Finally, The last statement "PBL encourages collaboration and discussion in English" reveals that a high number of students agreed (37) or strongly agreed (12) which clarifies that PBL has a significant role in promoting collaboration and discussion, which are essential for developing speaking performance.

All these results demonstrate that PBL is an effective instructional approach in enhancing speaking skills by encouraging communication and interaction, increasing motivation, and promoting collaboration among students.

3.1.6 Difficulties faced by students

Difficulty	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of vocabulary	39	61.9%
Fear of making mistakes	30	47.6%
Lack of confidence	13	20.6%
Limited time	15	23.8%
Difficulty working on groups	17	27%

Table 6. Students' Difficulties

To identify the difficulties students may face when working on speaking projects, students were asked to select multiple responses in this item. The most reported challenge is

lack of vocabulary, reported by (61.9%), followed by fear of making mistakes (47.6%), difficulty working in groups (27%), limited time (23.8%) and lack of confidence (20.6%). these findings show that students still face different challenges during project work, which affect their speaking skill, especially when they don't have enough vocabulary or feel afraid of making mistakes.

3.1.7 Students' perceptions about the impact of PBL on their speaking skill

In order to gather students' opinions on how PBL helps them improve their speaking skill, an open ended question was included. The responses were analyzed thematically in order to identify the most recurring ideas and perceptions among students. Many students stated that PBL helps them practice speaking through discussion, use English in real-life situations, express their thoughts and ideas, gain confidence, improve fluency, promote collaboration and learn new vocabulary.

One of the most recurring themes was increasing speaking practice through discussion and group work . For instance, a student mentioned that“Project-based learning improves speaking skills by making students talk more and work in groups.” Moreover, another student stated that : “this type of learning makes students practice speaking continuously and in real-life situation; this is the best way to improve this skill.”

Another important theme identified in students' responses was improving confidence and self-expression. A student stated: “It helps me gain confidence and express my ideas more clearly.” These responses confirm that PBL provides meaningful opportunities for communication and enhances speaking ability by offering opportunities for practice. The above findings also show the effectiveness of PBL in different aspects, not only speaking skills.

3.2 Teachers' Interviews Analysis

Q1: How many years have you been teaching Oral Expression at university?

Number of teachers	Years of teaching
01	03
02	02
03	04

Table 7. The years of teaching

This table presents the teachers' years of experience in teaching Oral Expression at the university level. The data show that the participating teachers have between two and four years of teaching experience in the Oral module. One teacher has three years of experience; another has two years, while the third teacher has four years of experience. This indicates a variation in the participants' teaching experience.

Q2: Have you implemented Project-Based Learning in your Oral Expression classes?

All participating teachers confirmed that they have implemented Project-Based Learning (PBL) in their Oral Expression classes. Their responses show that PBL is commonly used as part of their teaching practices in Oral Expression modules. The teachers indicated their use of this approach in classroom activities related to speaking skills.

Q3: How do you integrate Project-Based Learning into your Oral Expression sessions?

The teachers reported that Project-Based Learning (PBL) is integrated into Oral Expression sessions by transforming traditional lessons into project-based activities. They all agreed on the use of collaborative and interactive tasks to engage students. The teachers indicate that students work in groups on tasks such as presentations, role-plays, debates, or even short videos. This process usually includes different stages, such as brainstorming ideas, planning, practicing, and finally presenting their work orally. Teachers also mentioned that they guide students during the process by providing support, and giving feedback when needed. In addition, they use interactive activities like games and video to increase students' willingness to communicate, and optimize their level of fluency and accuracy.

Q4: In your opinion, how does PBL influence students' speaking performance?

The teachers reported that Project-Based Learning (PBL) has a positive impact on students' speaking performance. They all agreed that PBL helps improve students' fluency, confidence, and ability to express their ideas. This is mainly because students use English in meaningful and real-life contexts rather than focusing only on memorized dialogues, as one teacher pointed out that PBL leads to "a shift from linguistic competence to communicative competence." In addition, PBL encourages students to communicate naturally while working in groups, where they explain ideas, discuss, and interact with each other. Teachers also highlighted that this approach reduces students' anxiety, which helps students feel more relaxed and confident when speaking. Some teachers observe that students become more

willing to participate in classroom activities and show greater engagement during speaking tasks.

Q5: What types of speaking tasks do students perform during projects?

Teachers highlighted a variety of tasks that cater to different communicative functions. They all agreed that these tasks include activities. For instance, oral presentations, group discussions, role-plays, and debates. In addition, some teachers mentioned tasks like interviews and acting out dialogues, which help students practice language in different situations.

Q6: How do you assess students' speaking in project work?

Teachers assess students' speaking in project work through a combination of criteria that focus on both language use and communication. They evaluate aspects such as fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, accuracy, and the clarity of ideas. As one teacher said "I assess students based on criteria such as fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, grammar accuracy, and their ability to communicate ideas clearly". An educators also considers other elements like participation, teamwork, and interaction during group work.

Q7: What challenges do you face when implementing PBL in Oral Expression classes?

The teachers' responses revealed several challenges face the majority of teachers when implementing Project-Based Learning (PBL) in Oral Expression classes. One of the main difficulties is time management, as projects require sufficient time for planning, practice, and presentation. Another main factor mentioned by teacher is the large sizes of the class. It makes it difficult to manage activities effectively and give equal attention to all students. In addition, differences in students' language proficiency levels create imbalance among the groups, where skillful students may dominate while less confident learners participate less. Moreover, managing group work can be an obstacle, especially in classes with diverse cultural backgrounds, which may affect communication and understanding among students.

Q8: Do students face difficulties during project presentations?

All the teachers believe that students face several difficulties during project presentations. They mentioned the psychological factors. For instance, the most common factors are anxiety and lack of confidence, especially when speaking in front of their classmates. Also teachers noted that some students struggle to organize their ideas clearly,

particularly under time pressure. Others may rely on memorization or reading instead of speaking naturally, which affects their fluency. The majority of educators think that there are difficulties related to pronunciation and the method of using language.

Q9: How do you deal with students who rely on their peers?

According to the teachers' answers, they adopt different strategies to deal with students who rely on their peers during group work. First, they focus on individual roles, where every student is responsible for a specific part of the project. This ensures that everyone has to speak and contribute. Second teachers closely monitor group work and may ask individual questions to check students' understanding and participation, also to ensure that no student remains a passive observer. Some teachers also adjust their evaluation by taking into account each student's individual contribution, this means that teachers evaluate not only the final group product but also each personal effort, in order to achieve fairness and encourage active participation.

**Q10: Would you recommend integrating PBL more in Oral Expression modules?
Why?**

Regarding of all the interviewed teachers, they strongly recommend integrating Project-Based Learning (PBL) into Oral Expression modules. Teachers believe that PBL is much better than traditional methods for several reasons. They emphasized that PBL creates a student-centered learning environment where learners are more active and motivated to use English in meaningful and practical contexts. Moreover, teachers noticed that this method enhances students' speaking skills by increasing their confidence, engagement, and participation. It also encourages collaboration among students and makes the learning process more interactive compared to traditional methods. As participating teacher mentioned “ PBL makes Oral Expression more meaningful because students use language to complete real tasks, not just practice isolated speaking. It also increases engagement, collaboration, and confidence, which are often missing in traditional speaking lessons ”.

3.3 Discussion of the findings

The analysis of the collected questionnaire and interviews data provides valuable insights into students' and teachers' perceptions of the effect of Project-Based learning (PBL) in enhancing speaking skills. The discussion focuses on explaining the main findings and the possible reasons behind students' and teachers' responses.

3.3.1 Students' questionnaire

3.3.1.1 Gender distribution and academic level

A higher participation rate was observed among female and Master students, reflecting greater involvement in language learning activities and higher academic experience, which explains their stronger engagement in the study.

3.3.1.2 Speaking level

Most students reported having an average or good level, reflecting the limited practice of speaking in real-life situation despite studying English for several years and the limited opportunities for the oral interaction in traditional classrooms. As a result, their proficiency remains moderate rather than advanced.

3.3.1.3 Participation in PBL activities

The majority of students stated that they have already experienced PBL activities, suggesting the integration of interactive and student-centered approaches by teachers in the EFL classrooms, particularly in oral expression classes, which indicates that students are familiar with PBL activities and their practice. Integrating projects also reflects teachers' awareness of the importance of communication and active learning in developing speaking skills.

3.3.1.4 Students' attitude towards PBL

• PBL and communication

a large number of students agreed that PBL encourages communication with classmates in English, with working on projects requiring continuous discussion, idea sharing and cooperation among students, leading to increased opportunities for interaction and encouraging more active use of the language. Depending on collaborative tasks and groups also reduces passive learning and encourages students to communicate more naturally.

• PBL and motivation

Most students reported higher motivation in speaking English during projects, as involving in meaningful and interactive activities makes learning more enjoyable and engaging. In addition, providing students with more autonomy in expressing their ideas contributes to increasing their interest and willingness to participate actively.

• PBL and speaking practice

The findings revealed that group projects help students practice speaking more frequently, through regular collaborative activities such as discussions, presentations and various tasks

that create more opportunities for communication, increasing oral participation during project work and its preparation.

• **PBL and speaking improvement**

In the negative statement stating that PBL doesn't improve speaking skills, most students disagreed, indicating the effectiveness of PBL in enhancing speaking ability through regular participation in speaking and collaborative tasks.

• **PBL, confidence and fluency**

Students believed that PBL improves confidence and fluency, as working in groups provides a supportive environment where students receive encouragement from their classmates, reducing anxiety and encouraging continuous oral practice, allowing them to express themselves more confidently and communicate more fluently.

• **PBL, collaboration and discussion**

As the findings showed, PBL encourages collaboration and discussion in English, as project activities depend on teamwork, idea exchange and problem-solving. Accordingly, project work increases collaboration and discussion among students.

3.3.1.5 Difficulties faced by students

Lack of vocabulary represented one of the major challenges faced by students, the limitation of lexical resources and knowledge, with insufficient exposure to English outside of the classroom, contribute to restricting their ability to express ideas clearly during speaking, which limits their vocabulary range.

Fear of making mistakes is considered another common challenge, with worrying about pronunciation or grammatical errors, as well as negative evaluation from teachers or classmates when speaking English may increase anxiety and reduce students' willingness to participate in speaking activities.

Lack of confidence limited speaking practice, and hesitation that comes from fear of judgment while speaking English in front of others affects students' participation.

Limited time during project work, as preparing projects, discussing tasks and delivering presentations require considerable classroom time and effort.

Difficulties in group work were also identified, unequal participation and differences in proficiency levels affect students' work among group members.

3.3.1.6 Students' perception toward the impact of PBL on speaking

Students generally expressed positive perceptions towards PBL on speaking skills, stating that project work increased speaking practice, improved confidence and using English

in real-life situations. In addition, participating in meaningful and collaborative activities contributes to developing communication abilities and speaking performance overall.

3.3.2 Teachers' interview

3.3.2.1 Teachers' Professional Background and Experience

The demographic data reveals that the participating educators have varying levels of experience in teaching the Oral Expression module at the university, ranging from two to four years. This variation provides different perspectives regarding the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in Oral Expression classes.

Despite differences in experience, all teachers showed familiarity with PBL and awareness of this approach. It also reflects a positive attitude toward the integration of PBL as a teaching strategy to enhance students' speaking skills. This may indicate that PBL is considered as an effective pedagogical approach in higher education. The diversity in teaching experience also makes the findings more reliable, since both new and experienced teachers shared similar perceptions about the positive effect of PBL on improving speaking skills.

3.3.2.2 Awareness and Adoption of Project-Based Learning

The analysis demonstrates that all participating teachers have implemented Project-Based Learning in their Oral Expression classes. This reflects teachers' positive attitudes toward the use of student-centered approaches in language learning.

Teachers' support for PBL may be related by the limitations of traditional teaching methods, which usually focus more on memorization, drills and teacher-centered instruction, with limited opportunities for authentic communication. As a result, teachers believe that PBL a better method because it encourages students to participate actively in the learning process and allows using English in meaningful contexts. In addition, teachers' adoption of PBL suggests that they understand the importance of interaction and collaboration in developing speaking skills. Since speaking requires continuous practice, teachers believe that project-based activities give students more chances to speak, share ideas, and communicate naturally with others.

3.3.2.3 Strategies for Integrating PBL in Oral Expression Classes

Teachers reported using several strategies to integrate PBL into their Oral Expression sessions. The findings show that traditional lessons are transformed into interactive and collaborative activities where students become active participants rather than passive learners. According to the participants, students engage in tasks such as oral presentations, debates,

role-plays, and video projects. These activities are typically begins with several stages including; brainstorming, moves through collaborative practice, then a final oral presentation. Teachers explained that such stages are important because they help students gradually develop their speaking performance and organize their ideas before presenting them orally. The teachers also highlighted their role as facilitators who guide students and give feedback during the learning process. This reflects a learner-centered approach, where students take an active role in building their knowledge while teachers provide support when necessary. Also teachers use games and videos to increase students' motivation and encourage them to communicate more. This may be because interactive and enjoyable materials help reduce classroom anxiety and create a comfortable atmosphere for speaking practice.

3.3.2.4 The Impact of PBL on Students' Speaking Performance

All respondents agreed that Project-Based learning positively impact on students' speaking abilities, especially in fluency, accuracy and participation. This due to PBL encourage students to use English in meaningful and real communicative situations rather than depending on memorized conversations, we can say it encourages a shift from only linguistic accuracy to actual communicative competence. In other side this approach helps learners become more confident in expressing their ideas, because it provides them with a supportive environment during the preparation. The reason is that when students work in groups, they have the chance to practice and negotiate meaning with their peers before the final delivery, which significantly reduces their foreign language speaking anxiety. Consequently, this psychological comfort allows them to speak more naturally and spontaneously, proving that PBL not only improves linguistic skills but also builds the students' self-esteem and willingness to communicate.

3.3.2.5 Types of Speaking Tasks in PBL Activities

The interviewed revealed that they rely on various speaking tasks within project-Based learning, including oral presentations, debates, role-plays, interviews, discussions, and acting out dialogues. Teachers employ different tasks in order to promote learners communicative competence and expose them to practice English in different real-life communicative situations. For example, presentations help students organize and express ideas clearly, while debates encourage argumentation, critical thinking, and spontaneous responses. Similarly, role-plays and dialogues simulate real-life situations, allowing learners to practice language in meaningful and interactive contexts.

3.3.2.6 Assessment of Students' Speaking in Project Work

Teachers reported assessing students' speaking performance through multiple criteria including fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and grammar accuracy, clarity of ideas, participation, and interaction. This may indicate that teachers rely on formative assessment, since they evaluate students continuously throughout the learning process rather than focusing only on the final product. Since collaboration and active involvement are essential to project-Based learning, teachers also evaluate teamwork and engagement. Additionally, using both individual and group evaluation may help ensure fairness and motivate all students to take part in the project.

3.3.2.7 Challenges of Implementing PBL in Oral Expression Classes

Teachers identified several challenges that affect its implementation. One major difficulty is time management, as project-based activities require sufficient time for preparation, discussion, practice, and oral presentation, which may not always fit during class periods. Large class sizes also create management difficulties because teachers cannot monitor all groups equally. In such situations, some groups may receive more attention than others, which can affect the quality of guidance. Another challenge relates to deferments proficiency levels, which may create imbalance within groups since stronger students often dominate tasks while weaker learners become passive, this may create a sense of unequal participation and limit opportunities for all learners to practice speaking.

Overall, these challenges suggest that although Project-Based learning is an effective approach for improving students' speaking skills, its successful implementation requires careful planning, proper time management, and strategies to address differences in class size and students' proficiency levels.

3.3.2.8 Students' Difficulties during Project Presentations

According to the teachers' feedback, students deal with various obstacles during project presentations, ranging from psychological barriers to linguistic limitations. For instance, many students feel very anxious and lose their confidence when speaking in front of the class. The reason for this is their fear of making mistakes or being judged by others, which makes it hard for them to speak fluently. Also, teachers noticed that some students dependence on memorizing their parts. This happens because they do not feel comfortable speaking spontaneously and are afraid of forgetting their ideas. Moreover, students face problems with pronunciation and organizing their thoughts. These difficulties occur because they do not have enough practice or exposure to English in their daily lives. In short, these

problems show that students need more support and a comfortable environment to improve their speaking skills.

3.3.2.9 Strategies for Encouraging Individual Participation

To ensure the success of Project-Based Learning, teachers implement specific pedagogical strategies to manage students who rely too much on their peers.

One of the most effective methods is assigning specific roles to each member within the group. The reason for this strategy is to create a sense of personal responsibility and eliminates social loafing, which forces every student to contribute. Teachers also monitor group work closely and ask individual questions during presentations to verify participation and understanding. Some teachers assess individual contributions separately from group performance in order to discourage passive participation

3.3.2.10 Teachers' Perceptions and Recommendations toward PBL

The synthesis concludes with a strong, unanimous recommendation from all interviewed educators to embed PBL more deeply and consistently into Oral Expression curricula. The teachers argue that PBL successfully bridges the gap between theoretical language learning and practical, real-world application. They consider it more effective than traditional teaching methods, which means that PBL fosters a student-centered learning environment where learners actively use English to achieve meaningful communicative tasks rather than memorizing conversation. All respondents agreed that Project-Based Learning positively impacts students' speaking abilities, especially in fluency, accuracy, and participation, this is due to promote the shifting from focusing only on linguistic accuracy to developing actual communicative competence. Teachers believe that integrating PBL is essential for encourages collaboration between students, helping them to build the self-confidence, and enhance critical thinking, and finally motivate learners using English to solve problems.

Conclusion

Through the analysis of both the students' questionnaire and teachers' interviews, the findings revealed that although there are several challenges that may limit the successful implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in Oral Expression classrooms, such as lack of vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, time limitations, and differences in students' proficiency levels, both teachers and students confirmed that PBL remains an effective and beneficial approach for enhancing speaking skills. The participants emphasized that PBL

promotes communication, collaboration, confidence, motivation, and fluency by providing learners with meaningful opportunities to use English in interactive and real-life situations. Therefore, despite the existing difficulties, the study demonstrates that PBL has a positive impact on students' speaking performance and contributes to creating a more engaging and student-centered learning environment.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

General Conclusion

The present study, conducted at the English Department of Ghardaia University within the Faculty of Letters and Languages, investigated the impact of Project-Based Learning (PBL) on developing students' speaking skill in Oral Expression classes within the EFL context. Speaking is considered one of the most important challenging skills for EFL learners, as many students struggle with difficulties related to fluency, confidence, participation, and communicative interaction. This research aimed to explore the effectiveness of PBL as an alternative teaching approach that encourages active learning and meaningful communication. The study attempted to answer several research questions concerning students' perceptions of the role of Project-Based Learning in enhancing their speaking skills, the extent to which PBL improves speaking performance, teachers' perceptions of its effectiveness in Oral Expression classes, and the challenges that both teachers and students face during its implementation. In order to guide the investigation, the study hypothesized that students hold positive attitudes toward Project-Based Learning and that teachers consider it an effective approach for enhancing speaking skills in Oral Expression classes. It was also hypothesized that PBL contributes to improving students' fluency, confidence, and interaction, although some challenges may affect its effective implementation in the EFL classrooms.

To investigate this issue, the study adopted a mixed-methods research design combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to obtain reliable data. The quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire administered to EFL students, while qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with Oral Expression teachers. The collected data were analyzed descriptively and thematically to identify the main repeated ideas and perceptions related to the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL). The findings of the study revealed that both students and teachers held positive attitudes toward the use of Project-Based Learning in Oral Expression classes. The results proved that PBL contributes significantly to improving students' speaking performance by increasing fluency, reducing anxiety, encouraging interaction, and developing learners' confidence in using English. The study also showed that project-based activities reduce speaking anxiety and provide authentic communicative situations that encourage students to use English meaningfully. Consequently, the results responded the research

question and confirmed the research hypotheses, which assumed that PBL has a positive impact on students' speaking performance and communicative competence.

Considering these conclusions, several recommendations are offered to improve the implementation of Project-Based Learning in Oral Expression classes. Teachers are encouraged to integrate PBL more frequently because it provides learners with meaningful opportunities to practice English through communication and collaboration. They should also design motivating project activities that encourage active participation and develop students' confidence in speaking. In addition, assigning clear individual roles during group work can help ensure equal participation among students. Educational institutions should support teachers by providing suitable classroom conditions, sufficient time, and professional training related to PBL implementation. Teachers are also advised to provide continuous feedback and create a supportive classroom atmosphere that reduces students' anxiety and encourages oral interaction. Finally, students should be motivated to participate actively in collaborative speaking tasks in order to improve both their communicative and interpersonal skills.

As for future paths to be explored, it would be beneficial for future researchers to conduct experimental studies, such as pre-tests and post-tests, in order to measure the actual development of students' speaking proficiency rather than relying on perceptions and opinion. Future researchers could also focus on developing and improving the implementation of Project-Based Learning in EFL classrooms in ways that allow students to achieve noticeable progress over a shorter period of time rather than only in the long term. They may explore new strategies and techniques that can make PBL more effective in enhancing students' speaking performance, engagement, and communicative competence within limited instructional time. Moreover, future studies could include larger samples from different Algerian universities in order to obtain broader perspectives and produce more comprehensive findings about the effectiveness of PBL in the Algerian EFL context.

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APPENDICES

Appendix (1) *Students' Questionnaire*

University of Ghardaia

Department of English

Students' questionnaire

Dear student,

This questionnaire is part of a research study that aims to investigate students' perceptions about the effect of project-Based Learning on improving speaking skill in English. Your responses will remain anonymous and will be used only for academic purposes. Please answer the following questions honestly.

1- Gender

☐ Male

☐ Female

2- Level of study

☐ First year Licence

☐ Second year Licence

☐ Third year Licence

☐ Master

3- How would you rate your speaking level in English?

☐ Very weak

☐ Weak

☐ Average

☐ Good

☐ Very good

4- Have you previously participated in project-based learning activities in your oral expression classes?

☐ Yes

☐ No

5- Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Scale:

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

Statement 1 2 3 4 5 6

1- Working on projects encourages me to communicate more with my classmates in English. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

2- I feel more motivated to speak English when working on projects. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

3- Group projects help me practice speaking English more frequently. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

4- Project-based learning activities do not improve my speaking skills. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

5- Project-based learning helps me improve my confidence and fluency in speaking. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

6- Project-based learning encourages collaboration and discussion in English. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

6- What difficulties do you face when working on projects? (You may choose more than one)

- ☐ Lack of vocabulary
- ☐ Fear of making mistakes
- ☐ Lack of confidence
- ☐ Limited time
- ☐ Difficulty working in groups
- ☐ Other: _____

7- In your opinion, how does project-based learning help improve your speaking skills?

.....

Appendix (2) *Teachers' interview*

University of Ghardaia

Department of English

Teachers' interview Questions

Part I:

Q1: How many years have you been teaching Oral Expression at university?

.....

Q2: Have you implemented Project-Based Learning in your Oral Expression classes?

.....

Part II: PBL and Speaking Development

Q3: How do you integrate Project-Based Learning into your Oral Expression sessions?

.....

Q4: In your opinion, how does PBL influence students' speaking performance?

.....

Part III: Classroom Practice and Assessment

Q5: What types of speaking tasks do students perform during projects?

.....

Q6 : How do you assess students' speaking in project work?

.....

Part IV: Challenges

Q7: What challenges do you face when implementing PBL in Oral Expression classes?

.....

Q8: Do students face difficulties during project presentations?

.....

Q9: How do you deal with students who rely on their peers?

.....

Part V:

Q10: Would you recommend integrating PBL more in Oral Expression modules?

Why?