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UNVEILING STUDENTS' CHALLENGES AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS PROJECT-BASED LEARNING IN ENGLISH-SPEAKING TERTIARY CLASSROOM

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Abstract
University students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) often struggle with speaking anxiety, limited practice opportunities, and performance pressure. This paper explores the challenges and attitudes of EFL university students towards Project-Based Learning (PBL) implemented in a speaking class at the tertiary level in the Indonesian context. The study included 35 university students from a public university in Indonesia. The researchers employed a mixed-methods approach to examine students' attitudes and challenges. Data were gathered through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The analysis of the questionnaire revealed predominantly positive attitudes towards PBL. The interviews uncovered challenges, such as lack of confidence, pronunciation difficulties, time constraints, heavy workload, and performance anxiety. Despite these challenges, the students had positive attitudes, emphasising PBL's potential for enhancing speaking skills. The study recommends targeted interventions to address lingering challenges and refine PBL implementation.

Keywords: attitude, challenge, project-based learning, speaking skills, tertiary level

Introduction
Speaking proficiency lies at the heart of successful language learning, yet traditional teaching methods often fail to provide learners with sufficient opportunities for genuine practice. This is particularly crucial in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where speaking serves as the primary tool for communication (Richards, 2006). Numerous studies have emphasised the significance of fostering oral proficiency to achieve communicative competence (Humaira, 2023), impacting academic success and future career prospects (Kim, 2008; Slabodar, 2023). The students need speaking skills since they are essential in the real world, especially in the speech community, once they leave the classroom

(Assapari & Hidayati, 2023). Besides, proficient speaking abilities are crucial in both professional and personal domains, as they reinforce the ability to communicate in public, boost confidence, and enable clear and fluent communication (Amalia et al., 2022; Kayi, 2012) to achieve ambitions, desires, and goals (Wulandari et al., 2022).

However, learning to speak fluently in a foreign language can be challenging for language learners due to several factors, such as the fear of making mistakes, limited opportunities for authentic practice outside of the classroom, and the pressure associated with using a second language. These obstacles require innovative approaches in EFL language teaching to bridge the gap between the need for effective oral communication and the difficulties in its development. Several research studies conducted by Purba and Setiawan (2021), Saputra (2015), Torres and Rodriguez (2017), and Yanagi and Baker (2015) have highlighted the importance of such approaches.

Project-Based Learning offers a dynamic approach that integrates language skills into real-world contexts, fostering a learner-centred environment (Kokotsaki et al., 2016; Simpson, 2011). Particularly suitable for teaching speaking skills, PBL replicates genuine interaction as learners communicate in the target language while working on their projects and presenting a final public product (Amalia & Apriani, 2016; Poonpon, 2017; Wahyudin, 2017). It has emerged as a promising pedagogical framework within the English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction to foster genuine language acquisition and application. Kavlu (2017) highlights the potential of PBL to enhance EFL learners' acquisition of skills within a simulated real-world context, thereby enhancing engagement and fostering a dynamic learning environment. Ultimately, the synergy between PBL and EFL learning allows students to bridge the gap between language knowledge and real-world application, equipping them for future challenges and opportunities (Foss et al., 2007; Lam, 2011).

In contrast to traditional teacher-centred methods, PBL offers a dynamic paradigm emphasising student autonomy, inquiry, and real-world application of knowledge. It positions students as active participants, empowering them to identify problems, propose solutions, and collaboratively construct knowledge (Gomez-Pablos et al., 2017). The student-centred nature of PBL yields numerous benefits, primarily fostering more profound learning. Students immerse themselves in inquiry, grappling with complex problems and exploring multifaceted solutions, leading to a nuanced understanding of concepts, and developing critical thinking skills (Ke, 2010).

Furthermore, PBL provides fertile ground for cultivating creativity and problem-solving abilities. Real-world challenges prompt students to transcend conventional boundaries, experiment with diverse approaches, and conceive innovative solutions. This cultivates a sense of ownership over the learning process and nurtures essential 21st-century skills (Tran & Tran, 2020). Additionally, PBL is a powerful catalyst for fostering collaboration and communication proficiencies. Collaborative work on projects necessitates effective communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution, enabling students to navigate diverse perspectives, articulate ideas constructively, and collectively strive towards a shared objective (Choi et al., 2019).

Numerous studies have shown that Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an effective way to develop speaking skills. Kusumawati (2021) and Rohmawati (2018) have demonstrated that PBL encourages students to participate in collaborative discussions, promotes critical thinking, and enhances knowledge acquisition. Rohmawati (2018) has also outlined essential steps for effective PBL implementation, such as planning, feedback, and progress monitoring. Zare-Behtash and Sarlak (2017) conducted a study on Iranian EFL learners, which revealed that PBL significantly improves speaking ability, including vocabulary, grammar, fluency, pronunciation, and organisation. Similarly, Huyen (2022) conducted a study on Thai university students, which showed that PBL positively impacted fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Matas et al. (2022) also found that PBL can improve teamwork, digital skills, problem-solving capacity, and critical thinking.

Acknowledging the importance of PBL, especially in developing speaking skills, educators are challenged to become proficient in its implementation. This aligns seamlessly with the policy by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (2022) and the Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture (2021), both advocating for the integration of PBL in language classrooms. In the implementation, students' attitudes heavily influence the effectiveness of PBL. It cannot be denied that positive dispositions strongly correlate with speaking proficiency, while negative orientations can impede the learning process. Therefore, fostering a positive classroom atmosphere that embraces PBL becomes crucial for maximising its potential.

Although prior research has established the positive impact of Project-Based Learning (PBL) on student speaking skills, a comprehensive understanding of its implementation still needs to be discovered. This is due to the fact that project-based learning encompasses various complex components, such as student collaboration, inquiry-based learning, and real-world application, which interact in complex ways and may differ based on the specific context and instructional methodology. This study addresses this gap by investigating two crucial dimensions, namely student attitudes and challenges, specifically in the context of university-level speaking classes. The inquiry goes beyond proving that PBL works as it also looks at how students feel about and react to it, especially since negative attitudes have been found in previous research. The study's objectives are directly linked to two key research questions as follows:

1. What are EFL students' attitudes toward using Project-Based Learning (PBL) in their speaking classes?
2. What specific challenges do students face when participating in PBL?

By gaining insights into students' attitudes and challenges, educators can refine their PBL strategies and leverage their full potential for enhancing speaking skills in university settings. They can create a more inclusive, student-centred, and effective learning environment that maximises the benefits of PBL for all learners. This comprehensive approach holds the promise of advancing the successful integration of PBL into university-level speaking instruction, which lays the groundwork for further exploration of PBL in higher education contexts.

Theoretical framework

Learner attitudes have garnered considerable research interest in recent years, driven by the desire to understand their impact on learning outcomes. Studies have shown that learner beliefs about language learning underpinned language learning strategies and could influence learning outcomes (Shirzad et al., 2022). Wang (2022) argued that attitude had a significant impact on learning outcomes. Positive attitudes towards learning, such as interest, motivation, and belief, significantly improved learning outcomes. Similarly, Yusuf et al. (2023) showed that learning attitudes significantly impacted student learning success. Hence, the better the students' learning attitude, the more successful their learning process will be (Minami & Ohura, 2015).

A central tenet in this field is the concept of attitude, which Gardner and Lambert (1972) characterise as "an individual's evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object based on the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent" (p. 36). As Eagly and Chaiken (1998) proposed, the tripartite attitude model offers a nuanced perspective on understanding how our beliefs and feelings about objects, issues, or events are formed and expressed. Unlike simpler models that treat attitudes as singular entities, the tripartite approach recognises the multifaceted nature of attitudes, encompassing three distinct yet interdependent components, namely affect, cognition, and behaviour.

First, the affective component of the tripartite model focuses on the emotional aspect of attitudes. This encompasses our feelings, sentiments, and evaluations towards an object or issue. These emotions can range from positive (excitement) to negative (fear) and significantly influence our attitude. Second, the cognitive component addresses the beliefs, thoughts, and knowledge associated with an attitude. This includes our understanding of the object or issue, its attributes, and its potential consequences. These cognitive elements shape our interpretation of the object and influence our emotional reactions. Third, the behavioural component represents our potential actions or responses towards an object or issue. This includes our intention to engage with or avoid the object, advocate for or against it, or express our attitude verbally or nonverbally. The behavioural component often reflects the culmination of our affective and cognitive evaluations.

The tripartite attitude model can be applied to problem-based learning (PBL) as it helps understand how students form attitudes towards this approach. Emotions, thoughts, and potential actions are all important factors that affect how students perceive and respond to PBL. For example, students with positive emotions towards PBL are more likely to engage with the learning process, while those with negative emotions may be less motivated to participate. Similarly, students who have a deep understanding of the benefits of PBL are more likely to embrace it and take full advantage of the learning opportunities it provides. By using the tripartite model of attitude to understand student attitudes towards PBL, educators can better design and implement this approach to maximise its effectiveness and impact on student learning.

The effectiveness of problem-based learning (PBL) in the classroom hinges heavily on students' attitudes towards its implementation in the classroom. Students' attitudes about PBL's difficulty can set a project up for failure before it begins. Therefore, understanding the prevailing attitudes toward this teaching methodology is crucial for optimising its implementation and project success.

Several studies (Rehman et al., 2023; Sirisrimangkorn, 2021; Yang & Puakpong, 2016; Yilmaz & Firat, 2023) have investigated students' attitudes towards PBL. In the EFL context, students also showed positive attitudes (Atikah et al., 2022; Budiarto et al., 2022). Farouck (2016) explored PBL's effect on students' foreign language acquisition and communication willingness. Hypothesising that PBL's collaborative nature fosters communication, Farouck (2016) revealed students' positive attitudes, with many reporting increased confidence, reduced anxieties, and enhanced intrapersonal skills, all contributing to a greater willingness to communicate. Furthermore, students attributed their language learning primarily to in-class activities, peer collaboration, and online resources, indicating PBL's effectiveness in developing receptive and productive skills. Students also gained technological competencies in software, photo editing, and online information gathering, highlighting PBL's potential to go beyond language learning.

Tran and Tran (2020) employed a mixed-methods design to investigate Vietnamese high school students' attitudes towards PBL. Their findings revealed predominantly positive attitudes encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions. The students acknowledged PBL's potential for enhancing self-regulated learning, particularly in speaking skills and 21st-century skill application. Additionally, peer feedback emerged as a significant aspect of their PBL experience. These findings suggest that attitudinal factors, such as positive engagement, cooperation, and self-confidence, contributed to successful PBL implementation. The study further underscored the potential of PBL as a pedagogical approach for modern classrooms, underscoring its ability to engage students in real-world problem-solving, promote self-regulated learning, and cultivate 21st-century skills. However, the authors highlighted the limited integration of PBL in Vietnamese high school EFL education, implying a need for further exploration and implementation strategies.

While PBL holds promise for enhancing EFL learners' spoken proficiency, it also presents unique challenges. One key hurdle lies in the shift from traditional teacher-centeredness to student-driven learning. This transition demands a tolerant and flexible teacher who can navigate the dynamic nature of PBL classrooms and adapt to unpredictable language production patterns emerging from project-specific needs and topics **(**Grossman et al., 2019**)**. This unpredictability can be daunting for teachers accustomed to controlling classroom discourse and necessitates a willingness to embrace student-initiated language use (Richards, 2006).

Moreover, PBL has been documented as a time-consuming and arduous exertion (Kavlu, 2017). Some learners needed to adapt to the instructor's role as a facilitator rather than the sole provider of knowledge. They found it challenging to navigate the autonomy of choice within the learning process (Kim, 2016). Kavlu (2017) emphasised that inadequate training on PBL implementations could lead instructors to neglect pre-planning project procedures. Collaborative group work was identified as another challenge for both learners and instructors. Some learners encountered difficulties in collaborating and negotiating with team members, perceiving an inequitable distribution of tasks within groups (Zhang, 2015), thereby heightening stress levels. Instructors, too, needed help to comprehend group dynamics, potentially resulting in overlooked disputes and varying levels of contribution. These disparities may lead to inaccurate and misguided assessments

of individual contributions to the project (Grossman et al., 2019). Further hindrances to effective PBL implementation included the use of the first language, instead of the target language for group interaction, and the restriction of the second language (L2) solely for constructing the final product (Hafner & Miller, 2015).

Method

Participants

The participants were thirty-five new students, consisting of twenty-five females and ten males, aged between eighteen and twenty. They were the second-semester students of the English Department at a Public University in Bengkulu, Indonesia, who enrolled in a speaking course. The course instruction was provided by a certified and experienced English education lecturer. The sampling method was random, as all classes were exposed to project-based learning, leading the researchers to select one class for analysis.

Data collection instruments

Since this study employed a mixed-method approach, encompassing quantitative and qualitative elements, two data collection instruments were employed, namely a validated questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Prior to administration, both instruments were reviewed by an expert in the field of English language studies to ensure reliable and valid data.

The questionnaire comprised 20 questions categorised into two sections, namely Section A and Section B. Section A gathered demographic information (gender, age, English learning experience, and project implementation time). Section B, utilising a Likert scale (from 5 = Strongly Agree to 1 = Strongly Disagree), assessed student attitudes towards Project-Based Learning (PBL). Based on Eagly and Chaiken's (1998) Tripartite model of attitude, the questionnaire includes indicators of affective, cognitive, and behavioural aspects of students' attitudes towards implementing project-based learning in speaking classes. Its internal consistency, measured by Cronbach's Alpha, was high at 0.805, indicating questionnaire reliability.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen to allow pre-formulated questions covering critical aspects of PBL strategies while permitting flexibility for probing responses. Prior to the interviews, the participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and confidentiality measures. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, affirming their participation, and understanding of their rights. Before the primary data collection phase commenced, the researchers conducted a pilot interview with a small subset of participants. The purpose of the pilot interview was to test the clarity, relevance, and effectiveness of the interview questions in eliciting the intended information. Feedback from the pilot interview was used to refine and finalise the interview protocol.

Data collection procedure

Data collection took place during the 2022-2023 academic year. The data collection process involved several sequential steps. First, the researchers sought permission from the head of the English study program. Second, a consent letter was provided to students and the lecturer, who willingly participated in this study.

Third, the questionnaires were distributed to the thirty-five students. The participants received clarification prompts as needed, with completion times exceeding 15 minutes per student.

The interview involved two focus groups from the PBL class. Each group consisted of five students. After being explained about the purpose of the interview, each group took part in a discussion for about 25- 30 minutes. Audio recordings were made to assist in the subsequent analysis of the content. Additionally, four students from the focus groups were invited for individual interviews conducted in English, which were recorded for further analysis.

Data analysis procedure

This mixed-methods design yielded both quantitative and qualitative data. SPSS 21.0 was utilised to analyse quantitative questionnaire data through descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency) and to interpret the meaning of mean scores associated with student attitudes towards PBL.

The qualitative data analysis of interview transcripts followed the iterative framework proposed by Miles et al. (2014). This framework involves three key stages, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During the data reduction, transcripts were subjected to coding, highlighting key concepts and themes, and condensing redundant information to ensure an efficient and focused presentation. This iterative process facilitated the emergence of salient themes and patterns, ultimately leading to the formulation of grounded conclusions regarding the challenges encountered during the implementation of project-based learning in university-level speaking classes. The following procedure was data display. In this stage, the researchers used a table to present detailed numerical data or comparisons and illustrate students' perceptions.

Findings and Discussion

The study findings are categorised based on the affective, cognitive, and behavioural components.

Students' attitude toward the implementation of project-based learning in speaking class

This section presents the results obtained from the Likert-style items questionnaire. The scales used are Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The survey findings can be seen in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of affective aspects

	Affective aspects	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*	*% Agree*
1.	PBL has increased my engagement in oral interaction activities.	4.25	0.75	79
2.	PBL promotes good teamwork skills.	4.52	0.90	85
3.	PBL activates my enthusiasm for participating in speaking activities.	4.31	0.77	82
4.	Project work promotes a positive learning environment.	4.40	0.78	84
5.	I felt more confident about doing presentations in English.	3.92	0.78	73
6.	PBL has increased my motivation to engage in English oral presentations.	4.10	0.73	76

	Affective aspects	***Mean***	***Std. Deviation***	***% Agree***
7.	PBL helps reduce my anxiety about doing oral presentations in English.	3.80	0.67	70
8.	PBL has sparked my interest in improving my English communication.	4.21	0.87	79

The data in Table 1 suggest that PBL positively impacted Indonesian EFL students' engagement (M=4.25, SD=0.75), teamwork (M=4.52, SD=0.90), motivation (M=4.10, SD=0.73), and interest in public speaking (M=4.31, SD= 0.77). The students seemed to strongly agree with the positive learning environment (M=4.40, SD= 0.77) and enthusiasm for speaking activities (M=4.31, SD= 0.77). On the other hand, the results of their confidence in presentations (M=3.92, SD=0.78) and anxiety reduction (M=3.80, SD= 0.67) show slightly lower scores, indicating potential areas for improvement in PBL design or support for public speaking skills.

Most of the students agreed that PBL had a positive impact on several aspects of their learning experience, including increasing engagement in oral interaction activities, promoting teamwork skills, activating enthusiasm for speaking activities, and creating a positive learning environment. While the overall feedback was positive, there were a few areas where the scores were slightly lower. Specifically, the students expressed lower confidence levels in their presentations and reported only moderate reductions in anxiety about their oral presentations in English. These findings suggest that there might be opportunities to improve the design or support systems for PBL in the context of developing public speaking skills.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of cognitive aspects

	The cognitive aspect of attitude	***Mean***	***Std. Deviation***	***% Agree***
1.	PBL helps to enhance my information-searching skills.	4.15	0.80	78
2.	PBL helps improve my problem-solving skills.	4.28	0.84	82
3.	PBL challenged me to develop my critical thinking skills.	4.02	0.70	75
4.	PBL has helped me to link current knowledge with prior experience.	4.08	0.76	77
5.	PBL helps to enhance my English-speaking skills	3.98	1.02	74

In terms of cognitive-related attitudes, PBL seemed to positively impact the respondents' information-searching (M=4.15, SD=0.80), problem-solving (M=4.28, SD=0.84), and knowledge-integration skills (M=4.08, SD=0.76). The findings revealed that critical thinking showed slightly lower agreement (M=4.02, SD= 0.70), hinting at the potential improvement in PBL design or pedagogical strategies to encourage deeper analysis and evaluation. The mean scores for how PBL helped to improve English-speaking proficiency (M=3.98, SD= 1.02) indicated the need for increasing the focus on spoken language practice in PBL projects.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of behavioral aspects

	Behavioural aspects	***Mean***	***Std. Deviation***	*% Disagree*	*% Agreeing*
6.	I enjoy solving PBL tasks in English.	3.76	1.10	23	69
7.	I like to do oral presentations in class.	3.41	1.22	32	58
8.	I feel embarrassed to speak English in front of my classmates.	2.85	1.15	56	35
9.	I spent much time practising my oral	3.82	0.97	22	70

	Behavioural aspects	***Mean***	***Std. Deviation***	*% Disagree*	*% Agreeing*
	presentation.				
10.	I spend more time conducting research for my PBL tasks.	4.20	1.07	14	80

As in Table 3, students had mixed feelings about EFL speaking tasks. While many students enjoyed solving PBL tasks (M=3.76, SD=1.10), doing oral presentations (M=3.41, SD = 1.22), and practising oral presentations (M= 3.82, SD= 0.97), a significant portion of students still experienced embarrassment (M= 2.85, SD= 1.15). This indicated that it was essential to incorporate anxiety-reducing strategies and create a supportive learning environment in PBL projects. On the other hand, high mean scores (M= 4.20, SD = 0.80) for the statement "spending more time conducting research for PBL tasks" indicated that PBL tasks encouraged effective information gathering and exploration.

Qualitative analysis

The qualitative component of this research provided insights into the challenges encountered by students during the implementation of project-based learning in speaking class. The qualitative data in Table 4 shed light on these challenges.

Table 4 illustrates that students grappled with diverse challenges in executing their speaking projects. These challenges included issues of self-confidence, pronunciation difficulties, time constraints, heavy workload, and performance anxiety. In conclusion, students encountered multifaceted challenges during the implementation of project-based learning in speaking classes, emphasising the need for targeted interventions and support to enhance the effectiveness of this pedagogical approach.

Table 4. Extracts of interview data on challenges

Challenges	**Interview Data Examples**
Lack of confidence	*I have a problem, sir; in doing this project, I am still not confident in presenting my project* (G. 1)
	Mmm, I am having a bit of trouble presenting my project. I need more practice to feel confident." (gS .2)
Pronunciation	*Pronunciation is my problem because I always do the wrong pronunciation* (G1)
	My English pronunciation is not so good yet. It is hard for me to say them right, so I worry people won't understand me in my presentation." G. 2)
Time constraints	*I think time is a problem for me because time is insufficient for me. It is because I always postpone my work* (G. 1)
	Time is a big problem for me! I don't have enough time to finish the project properly. (G. 2)
	We do PBL in my English classes. A project takes at least a week to complete. It would take up so much time to complete our tasks. (G. 2)

Challenges	Interview Data Examples
Heavy workload	*I seem to be getting less practice because of much homework from other subjects.* (G. 1)
	"*So many assignments from other classes! It takes up all my time, so I don't get to practice English as much as I want.* " (G. 2)
Anxiety	*I am still anxious about performing my project, sir because I do not usually speak in front of many people.* (G. 1)
	*"I get really scared when I have to speak in front of many people, even in my own language! I need to practice more to feel less nervous." (*G. 1)
	I don't talk much in public; I feel embarrassed. (G. 2)
	One of the biggest challenges I faced in practice was speaking English. Communicating in English made me tired and stressed. (G. 2)

Discussion

Research on PBL in EFL classrooms shows a complex picture of student experiences with challenges and positive attitudes. In terms of students' attitudes toward Project-Based Learning, the questionnaire results reveal a predominantly positive attitude toward implementing project-based learning in speaking class. This positive inclination is evidenced by most students expressing strong agreement or agreement across the three facets of affective, cognitive-behavioural, and external factors.

The questionnaire has revealed that a significant number of students experience anxiety when they face difficulties in comprehending speaking assignments. This anxiety is likely due to a variety of reasons. Students may fear failure and worry about presenting incorrect information due to a lack of understanding. Difficulty in grasping the assignment can erode confidence and lead to hesitation or frustration during the presentation. Moreover, comprehension difficulties become compounded by language barriers for those grappling with a foreign language. This finding is in line with Syafryadin et al. (2017), who suggested that anxiety could hinder one's speaking skills. Despite the diverse outcomes that reflect individual disparities, the general attitude remains optimistic.

The students have shown positive responses towards project-based learning with regard to cognitive-behavioural aspects. They believe that it significantly contributes to knowledge enhancement and improved speaking abilities. This is mainly because PBL engages students on both cognitive and behavioural levels. PBL tasks often involve research, problem-solving, and applying knowledge to real-world situations, which leads to active information processing and deeper understanding than passive learning methods. Moreover, the collaborative and hands-on nature of PBL fosters engagement and increases motivation. Students feel a sense of ownership over their learning as they actively participate in the project process. Completing a project successfully can boost students' confidence and self-efficacy, leading to a more positive learning attitude. These positive experiences lead to students' belief that problem-based learning (PBL) significantly enhances their knowledge. PBL emphasises communication and collaboration, which directly translates to improved speaking abilities. Students must explain their ideas, present

their findings, and work together effectively, all of which strengthen their communication skills. As a result, the positive cognitive and behavioural experiences associated with PBL lead students to perceive it as a valuable tool for both acquiring knowledge and developing strong speaking abilities. These situations likely increased students' confidence, fluency, and proficiency in expressing themselves verbally. This aligns with existing research that emphasises the positive impact of PBL on speaking proficiency (Huyen, 2022; Matas et al., 2022; Zare-Behtash & Sarlak, 2017).

Project-based learning (PBL) tasks have real-world relevance and provide students with a tangible link between classroom learning and practical application. PBL is interactive and collaborative, which fosters engagement, active participation, and a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Instead of passively receiving information, students work together to solve problems, explain concepts, and apply their knowledge in a meaningful context. This sense of ownership and autonomy over learning within the PBL framework increases motivation. However, some students may exhibit negative responses, which could be linked to challenges in stimulating higher-order thinking skills and consistent speaking practice. Without proper guidance to ask probing questions and encourage deeper exploration, students might stay at a surface level of understanding.

Even though project-based learning (PBL) has been shown to elicit positive attitudes from students, there are still some obstacles to overcome. One predominant challenge is the linguistic barrier, where the students grapple with expressing themselves effectively in a second language. This challenge is magnified by the complex nature of PBL tasks, often leading to feelings of frustration and decreased self-efficacy. Moreover, time constraints can be exacerbated by underestimating the time needed for research and presentation in the target language, difficulty finding resources, or additional communication required within groups that struggle with the language.

Thus, language support mechanisms, including workshops and peer mentoring, are vital strategies to mitigate these challenges and enhance linguistic proficiency. These challenges can impact their performance in presenting their speaking projects, highlighting the need for tailored strategies to address individual difficulties. By acknowledging these challenges, educators can customise their PBL projects to improve student motivation, provide targeted language support, and foster a more supportive learning environment that encourages confidence and improves project outcomes.

Collaboration and group dynamics in PBL can introduce an extra layer of challenges due to the inherent diversity among student groups. This diversity includes various learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and individual strengths and weaknesses regarding contribution. For example, a kinaesthetic learner who learns best by doing may find it challenging to stay engaged during a lengthy lecture explaining the project. Similarly, someone from a collectivist culture may prioritise group consensus over individualistic ideas. Moreover, unequal participation can also arise, with some students dominating discussions while others remain silent.

To address these challenges proactively, teachers can use team-building activities that promote student understanding and communication. Assigning roles based on students' strengths can ensure that everyone contributes meaningfully. Promoting active listening skills and clear communication expectations within

groups can further bridge the gap between these diversities and transform them into assets. By acknowledging and addressing these dynamics, teachers can cultivate a collaborative learning environment that leverages the power of diverse perspectives to enrich the PBL experience for all students.

While collaboration is a cornerstone of PBL, balancing workloads and coordinating schedules within diverse groups can lead to interpersonal challenges. Implementing clear project guidelines, promoting effective communication practices, and encouraging reflective practices within groups can foster improved group dynamics and mitigate these challenges. Additionally, emphasising the value of diverse perspectives and fostering inclusivity within the PBL environment further contributes to a more collaborative and supportive learning experience for all students.

Overall, this study contributes to the existing literature by providing a thorough examination of students' attitudes toward PBL in the EFL classroom, identifying challenges, and offering insights into effective strategies for addressing them. By integrating previous research and offering practical recommendations, this study advances the understanding of PBL implementation and its impact on student learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Exploring students' challenges and attitudes towards PBL in English-speaking tertiary classrooms provides valuable insights for educators and policymakers. The results of this study show that most university students had a favourable view of using Project-Based Learning (PBL) in their speaking courses. However, some students faced difficulties, such as having insufficient language skills and feeling anxious. These challenges highlight the various experiences that students have in PBL. Indeed, the lack of language proficiency is a significant concern that resulted in the need for tailored interventions. Anxiety also affects learning, so it is essential to incorporate engaging and supportive teaching methods to improve the student experience.

Recognising the multifaceted nature of challenges, from linguistic barriers to group dynamics, helps implement targeted interventions. Language support mechanisms, effective communication strategies, and faculty training programs emerge as crucial elements in mitigating challenges and optimising the positive aspects of PBL. By integrating these elements into PBL implementation, educators can mitigate linguistic barriers, group dynamics, and student engagement challenges while maximising the positive aspects of PBL, such as real-world relevance, active participation, and more profound learning outcomes. This creates a supportive and inclusive learning environment that empowers students to succeed in their PBL experiences and beyond. Although challenges persist, students' overall positive attitudes towards PBL highlight the potential of this pedagogical approach to enhance the learning experience. The real-world relevance, interactive nature, and autonomy afforded to students within the PBL framework contribute significantly to their motivation and engagement.

In this regard, faculty training programs are essential to optimising students' experiences with PBL. Educators must be equipped with the tools to facilitate PBL effectively and enhance the learning environment. These programs should focus on pedagogical strategies to ensure educators have the necessary skills to effectively

design and facilitate PBL activities. Additionally, fostering a culture of inclusivity, effective communication, and support for diverse learning styles is vital for creating an environment where all students can thrive and actively participate in PBL experiences.

While this study sheds light on the challenges and attitudes towards Project-Based Learning (PBL) in English-speaking tertiary classrooms, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. Firstly, the study's scope was limited to a specific demographic of university students, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to other populations or educational contexts. Furthermore, the study primarily focused on students' perspectives, and future research could benefit from incorporating perspectives from educators, administrators, and other stakeholders to provide a more comprehensive understanding of PBL implementation challenges and strategies.

Moreover, future research in tertiary classrooms should consider longitudinal studies to track the long-term impacts of Project-Based Learning (PBL) on language proficiency and academic success. Additionally, comparative studies could explore variations in PBL implementation strategies to identify best practices, while qualitative methods could provide deeper insights into students' experiences and perceptions of PBL. Integrating technology to facilitate communication and collaboration, exploring culturally responsive pedagogy, and prioritising professional development for educators are essential avenues for improving PBL implementation and enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes in English-speaking tertiary classrooms.

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Appendix

Probing Questions on students' challenges:

1. Can you describe any difficulties you have encountered while participating in project-based learning activities in your speaking class?
2. How do you feel about the overall process of completing projects in your speaking class?
3. What factors do you think contribute to the challenges you face in project-based learning within your speaking class?
4. How do you feel about the overall process of completing projects in your speaking class?
5. Can you provide examples of specific aspects of project-based learning that you find challenging?
6. Can you describe any difficulties you have encountered with language comprehension or expression during PBL activities in English?
7. How do you believe your proficiency level in English influences your experience with project-based learning?