



PROJECT BASED LEARNING THROUGH PERFORMANCE ORIENTED TASK: ENHANCING EFL LEARNERS' ORAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

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Abstract: *This study investigated the effect of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) through showtime project work on enhancing EFL learners' speaking skills. Showtime project work represents a performance-based implementation of PjBL principles where students engage in authentic, collaborative tasks culminating in live presentations that integrate speaking skills with creative expression. A quantitative approach with a true experimental design was employed, utilizing pre-post tests and questionnaires as data collection instruments. Seventy students from a senior high school in Banda Aceh participated as subjects, with 35 students each in experimental and control classes. Data were analyzed using inferential statistical analysis. The average posttest score revealed a significance level (Sig 2-tailed) of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicating statistically significant improvement in speaking performance. The questionnaire findings demonstrated that over 80% of respondents expressed favorable perceptions regarding the implementation of PjBL through showtime project work. The results indicated that students taught using PjBL through showtime project work showed significant improvement in their speaking abilities compared to those receiving traditional instruction. This performance-oriented PjBL approach not only enhances language proficiency but also develops critical thinking, facilitates creative expression, and strengthens collaborative competencies essential for effective oral communication in authentic context.*

Keywords : *Merdeka Curriculum, PjBL, Drama, CLT*

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) represent a critical challenge for high school students, particularly in non-English speaking contexts where opportunities for authentic practice remain limited. This challenge is compounded by the increasing demands of digital literacy and 21st-century learning environments, where students must develop both communicative competence and digital collaboration abilities to succeed academically and professionally (van Laar et al., 2020), (Hamani et al., 2021). As Indonesia advances toward Industry 4.0 and digital transformation, the integration of English communication skills with digital competencies becomes essential for students' future academic and career success.

However, empirical observations and interviews conducted by the researchers reveal significant challenges interfering with English speaking development among high school students in Banda Aceh. These challenges

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(Susiani, Elyza, & Khumaira, 2025)

include limited vocabulary mastery, frequent grammatical errors, lack of confidence, and significant first language interference. In addition, students rarely use English for daily interactions or communication with others. This situation is further complicated by teachers' tendency to explain complex phrases or concepts in students' native language to ensure comprehension. Although this approach aims to facilitate immediate understanding, students recognize that extensive use of their mother tongue in EFL classrooms is not effective in improving their foreign language proficiency. This practice often has negative consequences, as students tend to rely on word-for-word translation when speaking, rather than developing the crucial skill of thinking directly in English (Hawa et al., 2021).

To address these challenges, the implementation of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum presents new opportunities to improve EFL students' speaking skills through innovative pedagogical approaches that emphasize student-centered learning and the development of critical thinking. The curriculum's focus on independent learning aligns with current educational theories that advocate for active, experiential learning methods. Educators documented substantial improvements in various aspects of student learning following the Merdeka Curriculum implementation. Students showed marked progress in three primary areas: active participation in learning activities, development of critical thinking skills, and expression of creativity (Priawasana & Subiyantoro, 2024). Furthermore, Project-based Learning (PjBL) has been recognized as a particularly promising pedagogical approach for addressing EFL speaking challenges. This approach encourages authentic communication through meaningful tasks that engage students' critical thinking and creativity while providing structured opportunities for English language practice (Cahyana et al., 2022). Specifically, the integration of drama-based projects through the *Showtime Project Work* offers a dynamic platform for the simultaneous development of multiple language skills, including speaking, listening, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking, while also building students' confidence in using English effectively (Effridanda et al., 2023). Therefore, this research explores the implementation of Project-Based Learning through Showtime Project Work (drama) as an innovative approach to enhancing EFL speaking skills among high school students in Banda Aceh, examining its effectiveness within the context of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum and its potential to address the specific challenges identified in this educational context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Project Based Learning (PjBL) through Showtime Project Work

PjBL helps students to enhance their English speaking skills while also fostering character development, interpersonal skills, responsibility, teamwork, and effective communication (Amarullah & Rachmawaty, 2020). The integration of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and drama-based pedagogy can enhance student engagement in English learning by promoting communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity (Hastuti, 2022). Thus, project-based learning through drama offers a dynamic and exciting educational approach that improves students' language skills, fosters creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration, and invites students to be fully

involved in the learning process.

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has been successfully integrated into educational systems worldwide, demonstrating its effectiveness in enhancing both students' theoretical knowledge and practical skills through project (Zagorodnyuk, 2021). This pedagogical convergence is particularly relevant for EFL contexts where traditional instruction often fails to provide sufficient opportunities for meaningful oral communication practice. The theoretical foundation for integrating drama within the PjBL framework supports experiential learning through authentic communication scenarios in which students are required to negotiate meaning, collaborate, and solve problems in real time (Coronado et al., 2021), (De Vivo, 2022). Empirical research supporting the integration of drama within Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in EFL contexts highlights its significant benefits for the development of speaking skills. Furthermore, a study by (Jariah et al., 2024) provide evidence that the implementation of PjBL leads to measurable improvements in various components of speaking proficiency. These include increased accuracy in pronunciation, a broader range of vocabulary, enhanced fluency, and improved comprehension. These gains are closely linked to the characteristics of drama-based activities, which emphasize vocal delivery, character portrayal, and interactive engagement with an audience.

Therefore, the mechanism by which drama enhances the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in EFL speaking development can be understood through the concept of embodied communication. In contrast to conventional speaking activities that typically isolate individual linguistic components, drama-based tasks situated within project-based frameworks require learners to coordinate various communicative modes simultaneously. These include vocal expression, physical gestures, body movement, and emotional nuance, all of which must be aligned with the narrative structure and the consistency of the character being portrayed (Wuryantari Winasih et al., 2019). This integrated mode of communication closely reflects real-world language use, where meaning is constructed not only through words but also through the synchronization of verbal and non-verbal elements. As such, drama promotes a more authentic and comprehensive approach to spoken English, encouraging learners to develop fluency in a context that mirrors natural interaction.

Thus, it can be concluded that integrating project-based learning with drama in English language teaching provides a holistic and in-depth learning experience to improve students' communication skills, foster creativity, promote active participation, and develop effective communication in English. Based on the background described above, this research investigated the effect of using PjBL through showtime project work to enhance EFL students' speaking ability. Then, this study also discussed the students' responses toward implementing project-based learning through showtime project work.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs quantitative methods, specifically an experimental design. A true-experimental design is utilized, incorporating tests and questionnaires as data collection instruments. Experimental research aims to identify causal relationships between two factors by deliberately controlling for and excluding other potentially confounding variables (Arikunto, 2014). Next, each group were measured twice, once before the

treatment (pretest) and once after the treatment (post-test) to assess student achievement before and after the intervention.

The experimental group received instruction using the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model through the Showtime Project, while the control group engaged in conventional learning methods, which included the use of Student Worksheets (LKS). The samples for this research were the students of classes XI/A and XI/B at SMA Negeri 8 Banda Aceh during the 2023/2024 academic year.

There are 35 students in class XI/A and 35 students in class XI/B, resulting in a total sample size of 70 students for this research. The sampling method employed was random sampling, where the author selected two classes from a total of eight classes at random. Both classes took a pre-test to confirm that they possessed comparable skill levels, thereby ensuring that the sample accurately represents the population. Data collection techniques are crucial in research as they outline how data is obtained. These techniques consist of strategic steps designed to gather relevant information. In this study, both test and non-test methods were utilized for data collection (Sugiono, 2022). Hence, the data collection techniques used in this research are test and non-test.

In this research, two primary data collection instruments were employed: oral speaking tests and questionnaires. Tests were administered twice, once before the treatment (pretest) and once after the treatment (posttest) to assess students' abilities before and following the intervention. The oral speaking test consisted of a folklore-themed picture narration task designed to evaluate students' speaking proficiency across multiple dimensions. Students were presented with a series of sequential images depicting traditional Indonesian folklore and required to construct a coherent narrative incorporating story elements, character descriptions, setting details, and plot development. The assessment protocol specified a 3-5 minute narration period.

Furthermore, the oral test was evaluated using a comprehensive rubric addressing five key speaking competencies: (1) pronunciation accuracy and clarity, (2) vocabulary range and appropriateness, (3) grammatical accuracy and complexity, (4) fluency and coherence, and (5) communicative effectiveness. Each competency was rated on a 1-4 scale, with specific descriptors provided for each proficiency level. The maximum possible score was 20 points. Content validity was established through expert judgment involving three EFL specialists who reviewed the test items, scoring rubrics, and questionnaire content for appropriateness, clarity, and alignment with research objectives. The experts assessed the instruments' face validity, content representativeness, and cultural appropriateness for the Indonesian EFL context.

An instrument is considered valid if it effectively measures and gathers data from the target subject. Conversely, an instrument is deemed reliable if it consistently produces the same results when applied to the same subject (Sugiono, 2022). Content validity was established through expert judgment involving three EFL specialists who reviewed the test items, scoring rubrics, and questionnaire content for appropriateness, clarity, and alignment with research objectives. The experts assessed the instruments' face validity, content representativeness, and cultural appropriateness for the Indonesian EFL context. After the validity and reliability tests have been carried out, the instrument is ready to be distributed to respondents.

Non-test assessments are tools used to evaluate individuals through systematic observation. In this research, non-test data collection was conducted using questionnaires to investigate students' perceptions regarding the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) through Showtime Project Work. The questionnaire comprised ten items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Items were organized into two validated constructs: (1) implementation procedures perception (5 items) examining students' views on the effectiveness, clarity, and engagement of the PjBL process, and (2) speaking competency impact perception (5 items) assessing students' perceived improvements in oral communication skills, confidence, and motivation.

Data collection occurred in three phases: pre-test, treatment implementation, and post-test. Pre-tests were conducted to assess and compare the participants' initial speaking abilities before any instructional intervention took place. The experimental group received PjBL treatment through Showtime Project Work, involving collaborative drama project development, script writing, rehearsals, and performance presentations. The control group engaged in conventional instruction using structured worksheets and traditional speaking exercises during the same period. Post-tests were administered in week eight using identical procedures and instruments as the pre-test phase. The perception questionnaire was distributed to the experimental group immediately following post-test completion to capture students' perceptions of the PjBL experience.

In this study, the data analysis technique employed involves inferential statistical analysis, which includes both pretests and posttests. Pretest data were collected before the treatment, while posttest data were gathered after the treatment to assess whether there was an improvement in students' abilities following the implementation of the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model through the Showtime Project in the experimental group, compared to conventional learning methods that utilized Student Worksheets (LKS) in the control group.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Research findings demonstrate that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) significantly enhances students' language competencies by offering them opportunities to engage with the language in authentic contexts. This conclusion is supported by the analysis of average test scores, normality tests, homogeneity tests, and the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test. To address the first research question of this study, both pretests and posttests were administered to the experimental and control classes. The results from the pretest and posttest scores in both classes are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of Research Results

Class	N	Pre-test			Post-test			N-gain		
		(\bar{x})	Score Min	Score Max	(\bar{x})	Score Min	Score Max	(\bar{x})	Score Min	Score Max
Experimen	35	3,1	2,0	4,5	6,5	4,5	8,5	0,5	0,3	0,7
Control	35	3,2	2,0	4,5	5,4	3,5	7,0	0,3	0,1	0,3

Based on Table 1 above, the average pre-test scores for the control and experimental classes were as follows: the control class had an average score of 3.2, while the experimental class scored an average of 3.1. This indicates that the students' achievements in both classes were nearly identical before the experiment. However, the post-

test scores revealed a significant improvement in the experimental class following the intervention. The control class achieved a post-test score of 5.4, whereas the experimental class scored 6.5. This suggests that students taught using Project-Based Learning (PjBL) through the Showtime Project demonstrated higher progress.

The normality test aimed to determine whether the pretest data followed a normal distribution. This test was conducted using the one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistical test, based on the pretest scores obtained from students in both classes. The statistical results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Statistical summary of the normality test for both experimental and control class

Class	Mark	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Sig Value.
Experimental Class	Pretest	0,166	0,015
	Posts	0,177	0,007
	N-Gain	0,210	0,000
Control Class	Pretest	0,205	0,000
	Posts	0,232	0,000
	N-Gain	0,248	0,000

Data is considered normally distributed if the significance (Sig) value is greater than the alpha level ($\alpha = 0.05$). According to the results of the normality test presented in Table 2 above, the data for both the experimental and control classes do not follow a normal distribution, as indicated by the Sig values being less than 0.05. Since the data is not normally distributed, a non-parametric test, specifically the Mann-Whitney test, was employed to assess the average differences between the two classes.

The average difference test for students' speaking abilities was conducted using SPSS. Two data groups are considered to have a significant difference in their averages if the significance (Sig) score is less than the alpha level ($\alpha = 0.05$). The results of the average difference test comparing the pretest and posttest scores for both classes are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Average Difference Test Result

Score	The value of Z-Test	Sig Value. (2-tailed)
Pretest	-0,527	0,598
Posttest	-3,785	0,000
N-Gain	-4,798	0,000

The results of the average difference test for the pretest data, conducted using the Mann-Whitney test, yielded a significance (Sig) value of 0.598. When compared to the alpha level (α), this Sig value is higher than α . This indicates that there is no significant difference in the average pretest scores between the experimental and control classes. In contrast, the average posttest score showed a significance level (Sig 2-tailed) of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was accepted, and the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that the students in the experimental class achieved higher scores than those in the control class.

Afterwards, this study employed a structured questionnaire instrument to investigate learners' perceptions regarding the pedagogical implementation of PjBL through Showtime Project Work to enhance oral communication competencies. The instrument, consisting of ten items, was systematically structured into two primary categories: (1) students' perceptions concerning the procedural aspects and methodological framework

of PjBL through Showtime Project Work, and (2) students' perceptions of the impact of PjBL through Showtime Project Work on their English speaking competency development. The table below presents the questionnaire results regarding students' of PjBL through Showtime Project Work. The 10 items were divided into three categories.

Table 4. Students' perception toward the implementation of PjBL through Showtime Project Work

Categories	Perceptions	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Students' perceptions regarding the procedural aspects and methodological framework of PjBL through Showtime Project Work.	91.2%	4%	4.8%	0%
2	Students' perceptions of the impact of PjBL through Showtime Project Work on their English-speaking competency development.	82,3 %	12.3%	5.4%	0%

Regarding the first analytical category (Items 1-5), which examined students' general perceptions of the procedural implementation of PjBL through Showtime Project Work, the data demonstrates a highly favorable response pattern. Specifically, 91.2% of respondents indicated strongly agree, while 4% expressed agree, and 4.8% indicated disagree. These quantitative findings suggest that the majority of participants perceived the implementation of PjBL through show time project work as an effective pedagogical approach for developing their English speaking competency.

After implementing PjBL through Showtime Project Work, students showed remarkable growth in their speaking abilities. The strong positive responses (91.2%) reflect how the project helped students develop their communication skills in meaningful ways. Students became more fluent in natural conversations, gained confidence in speaking in front of the class, improved their pronunciation, used more varied vocabulary in real conversations, and communicated more effectively in everyday situations. The interactive nature of drama activities created an engaging learning environment where students felt comfortable practicing and developing their English speaking skills. This combination of active participation and a supportive atmosphere helped students build their speaking abilities and confidence in using English. The Students' perception of the impact of PjBL through Showtime Project Work in Improving English speaking competency (Questions 6-10) demonstrated consistently positive results. It was revealed that 82.3% of students strongly agree, 12.3% agree, and only 5.4% disagree.

The finding reveals that students' positive perceptions encompass multiple dimensions that explain the quantitative improvements: enhanced fluency in natural conversations (correlating with improved coherence scores), increased confidence for public speaking (reflecting reduced anxiety and improved delivery), better pronunciation accuracy (corresponding to technical skill improvements), expanded vocabulary usage in authentic contexts (supporting communicative effectiveness), and more effective everyday communication (indicating transfer to real-world applications). In conclusion, implementing Project-Based Learning through the Showtime Project Work is a powerful tool for improving students' language skills. By engaging in real-world projects, students enhance their language proficiency and develop critical soft skills essential for their future academics.

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Discussion

The study on improving students' speaking abilities through project-based learning (PjBL) through the Showtime Project Work demonstrates significant advancements in students' language skills, as evidenced by both the experimental results and positive student feedback. Project-based learning is recognized for its capacity to engage students actively in their learning processes, fostering not only language skills but also critical thinking and collaboration. Additionally, project-based learning encourages students to engage in authentic language use, which is crucial for developing communicative competence. This aligns with the findings of Anugraha and Padmadewi, who assert that PjBL can stimulate students' motivation and improve their command of the language (Anugraha & Padmadewi, 2023).

Likewise, the result of the questionnaire revealed that the students were interested in learning speaking through PjBL using showtime project work to enhance students' English speaking competency. The data reveals two key categories of success. First, the implementation procedures were positively received by participants, with 91.2% strongly agree with the effectiveness of the instructional approach. Second, the impact on students' learning outcomes was substantially positive, with 82.3% strongly agree and 12.3% agree that the intervention enhanced both their language skills and collaborative abilities. This intervention's success in fostering both individual language competency and group collaboration skills suggests that PjBL through Showtime Project Work can serve as an effective pedagogical tool for enhancing English speaking proficiency while simultaneously developing important soft skills.

The effectiveness of PjBL in language education is also supported by empirical evidence from various studies. For instance, (Usmaldi, 2019) highlight that project-based learning encourages students to produce tangible outcomes, thereby enhancing their creativity and engagement in the learning process (Usmaldi & Amini, 2022). Moreover, studies have demonstrated that PjBL can improve specific language skills, such as writing and speaking. Cahyani's literature review supports the notion that PjBL enhances creativity and language skills, particularly in narrative writing (Cahyani, 2021). In addition to language skills, PjBL promotes essential soft skills such as collaboration and communication. Saputra et al. emphasize that PjBL provides students with opportunities to engage in collaborative activities, thereby enhancing their communication skills and fostering a sense of teamwork (Saputra et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the integration of PjBL in language learning contexts has been shown to motivate students and increase their autonomy, as noted by (Grant, 2017), who emphasizes the benefits of authentic language use in project-based language teaching. (Chiang & Lee, 2016) found that PjBL enhances learning motivation and problem-solving abilities among vocational high school students, indicating its broad applicability across different educational contexts. Additionally, the structured nature of PjBL, as outlined by (Jalinus et al., 2017) involves several steps that guide students through the learning process, ensuring that they develop both language and project management skills. This is particularly relevant in the context of the Showtime Project Work, where students must work together to complete projects, thereby improving their interpersonal skills alongside their

language abilities. In other words, showtime project work focused on collaborative and creative tasks likely facilitated an environment where students felt empowered to express themselves, thereby enhancing their speaking skills.

The implications of these findings extend to pedagogical practices in language education. By demonstrating the effectiveness of PjBL in improving speaking abilities, this study encourages educators to adopt similar strategies in their classrooms. The integration of PjBL aligns with contemporary educational paradigms that prioritize student-centered learning and addresses the need for innovative approaches to language instruction that engage students actively in their learning processes. In conclusion, the findings from the Showtime Project Work provide valuable insights into the benefits of project-based learning in language education. They highlight the potential of PjBL to enhance not only speaking skills but also critical soft skills, thereby contributing to a more holistic educational experience. Future research could further explore the long-term impacts of PjBL on language acquisition and its applicability across diverse educational contexts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

The implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) through Showtime Project Work has shown considerable promise in enhancing students' speaking skills, specifically addressing the research gap regarding the limited implementation of authentic, performance-based approaches in English language speaking instruction. The findings directly answer the research questions: (1) Students in the experimental group demonstrated statistically significant improvements in speaking proficiency compared to the control group. The findings directly address the research questions by demonstrating that students in the experimental group achieved statistically significant improvements in their speaking proficiency compared to those in the control group. Specifically, the mean score in the experimental group increased substantially from 3.1 in the pre-test to 6.5 in the post-test. In contrast, the control group showed a relatively limited improvement, with mean scores rising from 3.2 to 5.4. These results suggest that the instructional intervention implemented in the experimental group was more effective in enhancing students' speaking abilities; (2) Qualitative data revealed that students exhibited enhanced confidence, engagement, and authentic language use through real-world project applications. The quantitative results confirm that PjBL through Showtime Project Work significantly outperformed traditional instruction methods, while qualitative findings substantiate that this approach fosters not only linguistic proficiency but also critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative skills essential for 21st-century communication.

Recommendation

Despite the promising results, the study has limitations that warrant consideration. Firstly, the sample size may not be representative of the broader student population, which could affect the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, while the study highlights improvements in speaking abilities, it does not extensively address other language skills, such as listening, reading, and writing, which are also critical components of language learning. Future research should aim to include a more diverse sample and employ a mixed-methods

approach to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impacts of PjBL on language acquisition. In conclusion, the study supports the notion that project-based learning, particularly through engaging projects like the Showtime Project Work, can significantly enhance students' speaking abilities. The positive feedback from students reinforces the value of this pedagogical approach in language education, aligning with previous research that underscores the effectiveness of PjBL in fostering language skills and learner engagement.

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