



## Teacher's and Students' Perceptions of Project-Based Learning in Promoting Students' Communication Skills in Vocational High School

Muhammad Farhan; Sukarno

Department of English Language Education, Faculty of Language, Arts, and Culture, Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia

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### **Abstract**

The objectives of this study were 1) to describe teachers' perceptions of Project-Based Learning in fostering students' communication skills in Vocational High Schools and 2) to describe students' perceptions of Project-Based Learning in enhancing their communication skills in these settings. The study employed a mixed-method approach to gather quantitative and qualitative data through questionnaires and interviews. Specifically, a sequential explanatory design was used, where a quantitative survey was conducted first, followed by an exploration of qualitative data through in-depth interviews. The participants included six teachers and 86 eleventh-grade students from three vocational schools in Aceh, Indonesia, selected through purposive sampling. The results indicated that teachers and students had positive attitudes toward Project-Based Learning (PBL) and believed it could effectively enhance students' communication skills in the classroom. Teachers identified several critical benefits of PBL, including increased student engagement, opportunities for collaborative work, and the development of critical thinking and communication skills. However, they also noted challenges, such as time constraints, inadequate facilities, and the need for teachers to be more proactive and critical in their roles. From the student's perspective, the advantages of PBL included its real-world relevance, the promotion of active learning and engagement, improved collaboration skills, enhanced critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, and improved presentation skills. However, students also highlighted some drawbacks, such as time constraints, limited resources, difficulties in group work, and challenges in time management. Despite some challenges, the study concluded that Project-Based Learning effectively enhanced students' communication skills in vocational high schools.

**Keywords:** *Teachers' and Students' Perception; Project-Based-Learning (PjBL); Communication Skills; Vocational High School*

### **Introduction**

Implementing Project-Based Learning in vocational high schools is a valuable approach to enhancing English students' communication skills. According to Kemendikbud, 2018 and Partnership 21, 2018, the Four Cs of 21st-century skills consist of communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. Widarto (2012) argues that Vocational High School (VHS) students are required to have eight

graduate competencies, namely (1) Communication skills, (2) Critical and creative thinking, (3) Information/digital literacy, (4) Inquiry/reasoning skills, (5) Interpersonal skills, (6) Multicultural/multilingual literacy, (7) Problem-solving, dan (8) Technological/vocational skills. Developing these skills during VHS education can significantly contribute to students' success in the workforce in various fields, including business, technology, science, and academics.

Some experts suggest an effective method known as project-based Learning to enhance student communication skills. Project-based Learning is an effective teaching strategy to increase significantly students' communication skills (Kovalyova, Soboleva, & Kerimkulov, 2016) and (Hadim & Esche, 2002). Project-based Learning (PjBL) Project-based learning allows students to actively engage in the learning process, fostering exploration and a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Kumalaretna and Mulyono (2017) argues that project-based Learning has a significant role in enhancing students' communication skills. Project-based Learning helps students improve their English language skills (Teaching, 2022). According to Ihwan (2020), Project- Based Learning (PjBL) offers an opportunity for students to engage in authentic, real-world tasks, which can facilitate and promote active Learning, collaboration, and the development of essential skills among students. For example, in vocational high schools, where the emphasis is often on preparing students for specific career paths, effective communication skills are essential for success in the workforce. Thus, exploring the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the implementation of PjBL to enhance communication skills is crucial.

Previous studies have highlighted the benefits of PjBL in various educational settings and stated that project-based Learning can help students improve their communication. Torres and Rodriguez (2017); (Firdaus & Septiady, 2023) argue that project-based Learning can encourage students to improve their oral production or speaking skills by developing lexical competence. Another relevant research conducted by (Lubis, Lubis, & Ashadi, 2018) show that project-based Learning and experiential learning models have a significant influence on students' interpersonal communication as well as their creativity. Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has several positive impacts on students' content knowledge and the development of skills such as collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving. It increases students' motivation and engagement (Saenab et al., 2017). Project-based Learning is an effective teaching method because it can provide opportunities for students to speak English, especially in drama (Sirisrimangkorn, 2018). Bakar, Noordin, and Razali (2019) conduct project-based Learning on high school students and university students, and they found that there was a significant improvement in students' oral communicative competence during the use of this method. Therefore, Project-based Learning has proven to help students to improve not only communication skills (Firdaus & Septiady, 2023); (Haerani & Jatiraga, 2019) but also collaboration (Bell, 2010), creativity (Larasati, 2015) and critical thinking skills (Praba, Artini, & Ramendra, 2018).

However, there can be challenges to the implementation of PjBL. For example, teachers found difficulties during implementation, such as the fact that PjBL takes a long time. In contrast, others wanted to avoid interrupting the learning process and challenges in aligning project activities with curriculum requirements or assessing students' learning outcomes (Sartika et al., 2022). Aldabbuss (2018) states that many schools needed essential infrastructure and could not employ PjBL due to various challenges, including a lack of time, noise, and financial support. Furthermore, the challenge is ensuring effective communication between teachers and students. Barriers to efficient communication can include physical discomfort, disinterest due to lack of stimulating teaching materials, excessive verbalism, and anxiety, which need to be identified and addressed to maximize the learning benefits of PjBL (Duță, 2015). Additionally, students struggle with the open-ended nature of PjBL tasks or face barriers in collaborating with peers from diverse backgrounds. The successful implementation of PjBL in vocational high schools would depend on the ability of educators to design and facilitate projects that promote communication and teamwork while also considering the students' varied learning styles to enhance the learning experience (Pratiwi et al., 2020).

This research was particularly different from the previous studies above. Compared with the experimental research, this used a survey method from three Vocational High Schools in Aceh. Moreover, this study is important in teachers' effective implementation of project-based learning (PjBL) in the classroom. Considering the benefits of using a project-based learning model in motivating, stimulating, and facilitating the teaching and learning of foreign languages. Researching teachers' and students' perceptions can inform professional development initiatives, providing support and resources to help them navigate the challenges associated with PjBL implementation. Therefore, this study investigated students' perceptions of Project-Based Learning in encouraging communication skills for Vocational High Schools through of the possible challenges and pedagogical shifts in the present era.

## Research Method

### Research Design

The research used a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to gather comprehensive, valid, reliable, and objective data. The sequential explanatory design involved a quantitative survey, followed by qualitative data exploration through interviews, observations, and literature reviews. The study aimed to understand teachers' and students' perceptions of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in improving students' English communication skills in vocational schools in Banda Aceh.

### Population and Sample

The study used random sampling to select a representative subset of the larger population, including six teachers and 86 eleventh-grade students from three vocational schools in Aceh, Indonesia, who had implemented project-based learning in an English classroom. This method ensured equal chance selection, reducing bias and enhancing generalizability of findings. Slovin's formula was used to determine the minimum sample size required.

### Slovins' Formula

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where:

n = Sample size

N = Total population size

e = Margin of error (expressed as a decimal)

Table 1. The Total of Participants

| No.          | Vocational High Schools  | Total of Students   | Total of English Teachers |
|--------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1.           | Vocational High School 1 | 38 Students         | 2 English Teachers        |
| 2.           | Vocational High School 2 | 36 Students         | 2 English Teachers        |
| 3.           | Vocational High School 3 | 38 Students         | 2 English Teachers        |
| <b>Total</b> |                          | <b>112 Students</b> | <b>6 English Teachers</b> |

In this study, the researcher used the Slovin formula, which had a significance of 5%, and a population of 112 students from three vocational high schools to determine the sample. Therefore, the minimum sample in this research was 86 students, as shown in **Table 3**.

Table 2. Population and Sample

| No. | Participants                          | Population         | Sample             |
|-----|---------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1.  | English Teachers                      | 6 English Teachers | 6 English Teachers |
| 2.  | Three Vocational High School Students | 112 Students       | 86 Students        |

### Data Collection Techniques

The researcher used a survey design to gather data on teachers' and students' perceptions of Project-Based Learning (PbBL) in Vocational High Schools. The questionnaire was designed with open-ended questions to explore their perceptions and included close-ended questions to collect information about expectations, obstacles, and advantages of PbBL in ESP and autonomous learning. The Likert scales were used to measure the responses.

Interviews were conducted with three English teachers and six students from three Vocational High Schools in Aceh as random sampling. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth responses from participants. The data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative analysis was conducted using Google Forms, which consisted of 10 closed-ended questions. The responses were scored on a Likert scale and the results were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods with SPSS Version 16.0. The Descriptive Analysis Percentage method was used to analyze the results.

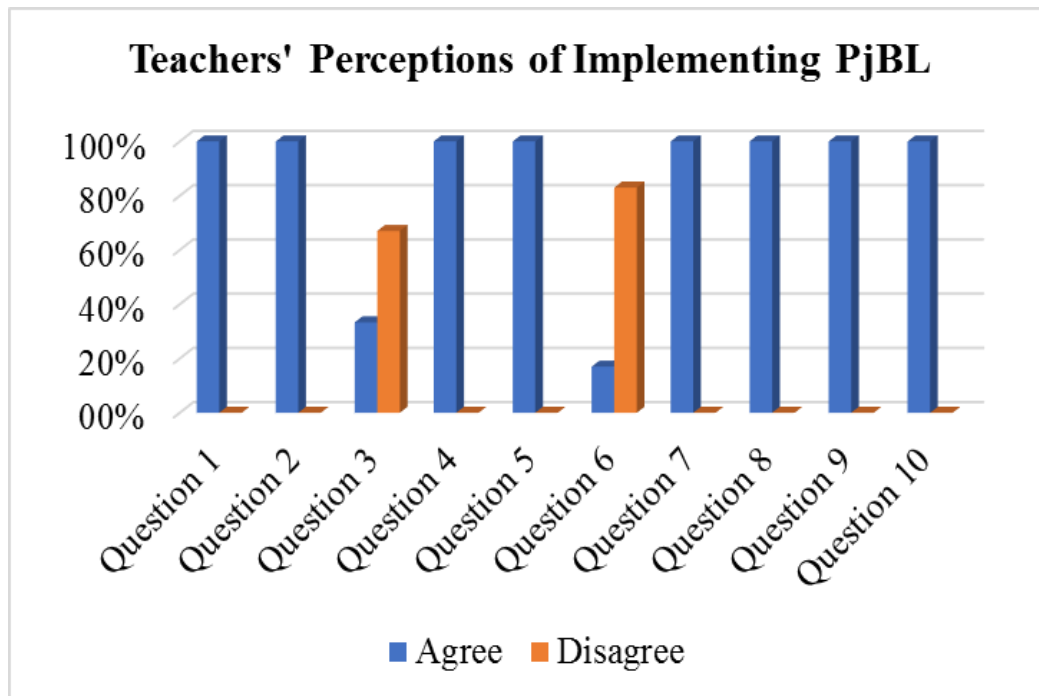
Qualitative analysis was conducted using Miles et al. (2019) and Nurjanah & Umaenah (2019). The research procedure involved developing a survey design, determining the population and sample, compiling instruments, selecting data variables, and analyzing and interpreting data. The findings were then interpreted in the context of the research objectives and relevant theoretical frameworks, drawing conclusions and implications based on the results.

## Result

### Teachers' Perceptions

The study aimed to understand teachers' and students' perceptions of implementing Project-Based-Learning (PjBL) in English classes. Six teachers from three vocational high schools in Aceh The study aimed to understand teachers' and students' perceptions of implementing Project-Based-Learning (PjBL) in English classes. Six teachers from three vocational high schools in Aceh participated in the study, which included ten questionnaires. The results showed that teachers believe PjBL significantly enhances students' communication skills in English classes. The strengths of PjBL include increased student activity, creativity, boosted self-confidence, and a heightened sense of responsibility. However, a notable drawback is the significant time required for students to complete their projects. Despite this, project-based learning is especially beneficial for vocational schools, as it helps students develop essential skills and fosters cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities.

Picture 1. Teachers Perceptions of Implementing PjBL



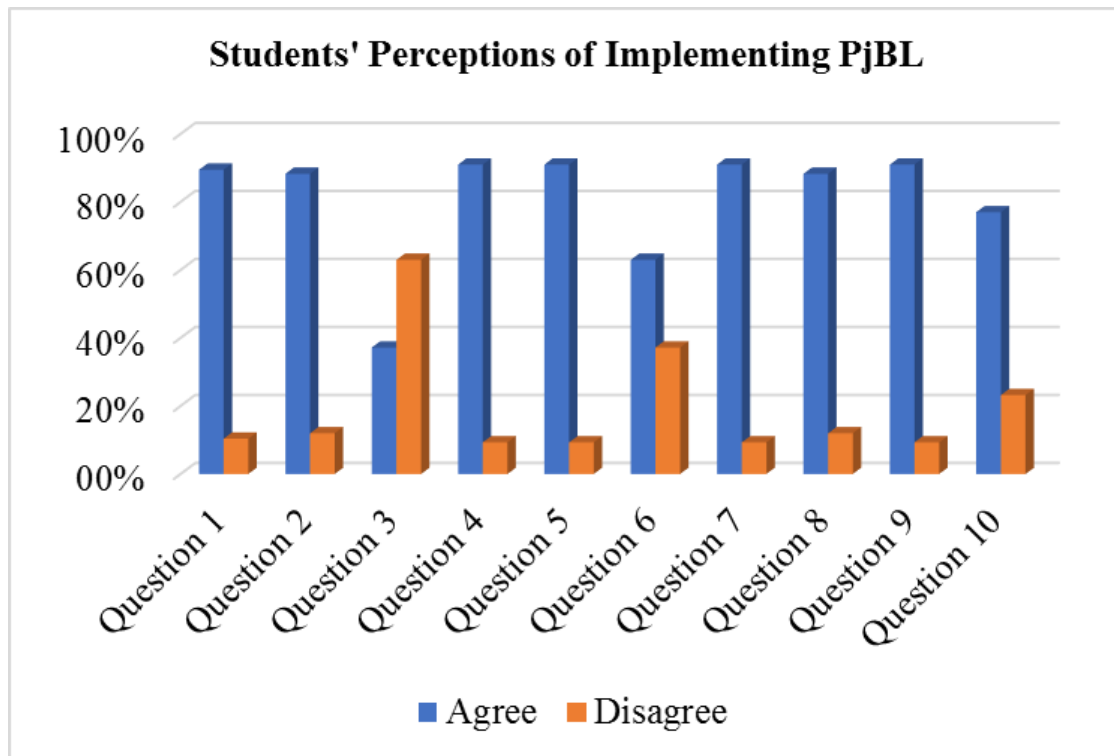
The bar chart titled "Teachers' Perceptions of Implementing PjBL" visually represents teachers' levels of agreement or disagreement with ten statements about PjBL. For six out of ten statements, 100% of teachers expressed a positive view, highlighting the general belief among teachers that PjBL is highly effective, particularly in improving students' communication skills. However, there is a significant difference of opinion on questions 3 (30%) and 6 (83%), suggesting that teachers do not agree that PjBL does not strongly impact the development of students' communication skills in the classroom.

### Students Perceptions

The study aimed to understand teachers' and students' perceptions of implementing Project-Based-Learning (PjBL) teaching strategies in English classes. Six teachers from three vocational high schools in Aceh participated in the study, which included ten questionnaires. The results showed that teachers positively responded to implementing PjBL to enhance students' communication skills in English classes. The strengths of PjBL include increased student activity, creativity, self-confidence, and a sense of responsibility. However, the significant time required for students to complete their projects is a notable drawback.

Despite this, project-based learning is particularly beneficial for vocational schools, as it helps students develop essential skills and fosters cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities. The results suggest that teachers view PjBL as a valuable approach for fostering communication skills in the classroom. A bar chart was created to visually represent teachers' levels of agreement or disagreement with ten statements about PjBL, allowing for easy identification of areas of strong consensus and points of contention among the teachers.

Picture 2. Students' Perceptions of Implementing PjBL



The study reveals that a majority of teachers believe that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is highly effective in improving students' communication skills. However, there is a significant difference in opinion on questions 3 (30%) and 6 (83%), suggesting that PjBL can significantly enhance students' communication abilities. The student questionnaire results show that 86 students from three vocational schools in Aceh reported enjoying project-based assignments in their English classes.

Table 3. The Result of Students' Questionnaire

| Statistics     |         | Q1   | Q2   | Q3   | Q4   | Q5   | Q6   | Q7   | Q8   | Q9   | Q10  |
|----------------|---------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| N              | Valid   | 86   | 86   | 86   | 86   | 86   | 86   | 86   | 86   | 86   | 86   |
|                | Missing | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    |
| Mean           |         | 3.07 | 3.06 | 2.21 | 3.17 | 3.14 | 2.67 | 3.05 | 3.06 | 3.15 | 2.81 |
| Median         |         | 3.00 | 3.00 | 2.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 |
| Mode           |         | 3    | 3    | 2    | 3    | 3    | 3    | 3    | 3    | 3    | 3    |
| Std. Deviation |         | .647 | .657 | .705 | .617 | .635 | .743 | .572 | .620 | .642 | .660 |
| Variance       |         | .419 | .432 | .497 | .381 | .404 | .552 | .327 | .385 | .412 | .436 |
| Range          |         | 3    | 3    | 2    | 3    | 3    | 3    | 3    | 3    | 3    | 3    |
| Minimum        |         | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| Maximum        |         | 4    | 4    | 3    | 4    | 4    | 4    | 4    | 4    | 4    | 4    |

The collaborative indicator score, which had the highest average value in Q4, (3.17), suggests that PjBL significantly aids in building and encouraging communication skills among students. The lowest score was observed in Q3, (2.21), indicating that most students disagreed with the statement that PjBL does not help improve communication skills in the classroom. The research diagram titled "Students' Perceptions of Implementing PjBL" shows that 86 students from three vocational schools agreed that PjBL can improve communication skills, critical thinking skills, and collaboration in the classroom. Overall, the study highlights the positive perception of PjBL among students and its potential benefits in improving students' communication skills.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages of Project-Based Learning**

The implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in vocational high schools offers significant advantages for enhancing students' communication skills. Teachers and students have observed that PjBL promotes student engagement, encourages collaboration, and fosters critical thinking. By creating an interactive classroom environment, PjBL motivates students to actively participate, share ideas, and engage with real-world issues, leading to improved communication. The collaborative nature of PjBL allows students to develop interpersonal communication skills through teamwork and clear role distribution, which also prepares them for future professional environments. Moreover, PjBL cultivates critical thinking by encouraging students to discuss complex ideas, reflect on their learning processes, and communicate effectively. However, teachers must carefully design PjBL materials by considering students' needs, aligning with the curriculum, and ensuring relevance to future career situations. This alignment is particularly important in vocational education, where the development of language skills through English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is crucial for students' future success. Overall, PjBL is a valuable method for developing communication skills and preparing students for both academic and professional achievements.

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However, the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is highly beneficial for enhancing students' communication skills, it presents several challenges for teachers in vocational high schools. The main disadvantages identified by teachers include time limitations, inadequate facilities, and the need for teachers to be more active and critical. Time management is a significant issue, as PjBL requires extensive planning, execution, and assessment, which can be difficult to accommodate within the constraints of the typical school schedule. Teachers must balance PjBL with other curricular demands, and the limited flexibility of school schedules often prevents them from fully implementing this method. Inadequate facilities also hinder the effectiveness of PjBL. Many schools lack the necessary technological tools, such as computers and reliable internet, as well as physical materials, such as scientific kits or art supplies, which are essential for hands-on projects. Finally, the successful implementation of PjBL demands teachers to be proactive, innovative, and skilled in fostering critical thinking in students. However, some teachers find it challenging to develop these skills themselves or consistently apply them

in the classroom. The need for ongoing teacher training and involvement is crucial to overcoming this obstacle. Despite these challenges, PjBL remains a valuable method for improving communication skills, though its effectiveness depends on addressing these limitations.

### **Conclusion**

The study found that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in Banda Aceh schools significantly improved students' speaking skills. Teachers and students agreed that it enhanced their engagement, promoted collaborative work, fostered critical thinking, and improved presentation skills. However, challenges faced by teachers included time constraints, inadequate facilities, and the need for active participation. Students faced time constraints, resource limitations, group work challenges, and time management issues.

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