Article QR

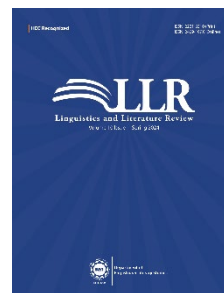| Title:	**Empowering EAP Learners: PBL as a Speaking and Listening Catalyst**
Author (s):	Munawer Sultana[1], Mehwish Arif[2]
Affiliation (s):	[1]Hamdard University, Karachi, Pakistan. [2]NED University of Engineering and Technology, Karachi, Pakistan.
DOI:	https://doi.org/10.32350/llr.101.08
History:	Received: September 26, 2023, Revised: January 22, 2024, Accepted: February 18, 2024, Published: March 31, 2024
Citation:	Sultana, M., & Arif, M. (2024). Empowering EAP Learners: PBL as a Speaking and Listening Catalyst. *Linguistics and Literature Review*, *10*(1), 140–163. https://doi.org/10.32350/llr.101.08
Copyright:	© The Authors
Licensing:	This article is open access and is distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License
Conflict of Interest:	Author(s) declared no conflict of interest

Empowering EAP Learners: PBL as a Speaking and Listening Catalyst

Munawer Sultana[1*], and Mehwish Arif[2]

[1]Hamdard University Karachi, Pakistan
[2]English Linguistics & Allied Studies Department, NED University of Engineering & Technology Karachi, Pakistan

Abstract

English serves as a second language in Pakistan and is taught academically across all educational levels. Despite years of formal teaching-learning, English Language courses have become largely ineffective owing to language pedagogy that remains teacher-centric and lecture-based. This research paper shares a study planned in this backdrop and attempts at introducing a project-based learning method against conventional instructions to teach listening and speaking skills to college students enrolled in compulsory English courses. The study was completed with 200 first-year college students divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group was taught the prescribed English curriculum using the project-based learning method that provided opportunities for practicing listening and speaking skills. The control group was taught using the existing conventional English pedagogy. The pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental research designs were employed for this longitudinal study. Quant-qual analyses of the data revealed the project-based learning method to be a better instructional technique for developing listening and speaking skills.

Keywords: conventional EAP pedagogy, EAP teaching-learning, English as a Second Language, ESL, Project Based Learning Method, speaking and listening skills

Introduction

With the onset of globalization and the resulting need for greater communication within and across communities through advanced communication technologies, English Language has emerged as 'a globalized phenomenon' (Galloway & Rose, 2015) that has been recognized as playing a significant role in the socio-economic domains of

---

everyday life. As a result, English Language has emerged as the foremost lingua franca of the recent time with a dramatic rise in the number of English speakers, both native and non-native, across the globe. English language, today, is learnt under various contexts as first, second, and foreign language. This scenario is further expanding with learners who are learning English for academic and occupational purposes under various terms, such as EAP, EOP, ESP and so on (Abdullah et al., 2022).

With reference to the use of English language, Pakistan falls in a second language context according to Kachruvian Concentric Circles Framework (1985) where English is the official language used for a wide-range of functions such as administration, politics, media, and education and in the post-colonial era Pakistani society is using the language more within and outside of its borders. Owing to its global rise and internal functions, English is taught as a compulsory language across all educational levels from elementary to tertiary, making English language teaching a vast enterprise. Pakistani college students are aware of the significance of learning English as international language and are interested in mastering it as a tool for academic achievement and ultimately for career development.

According to the researchers, English language teaching across Pakistan does not reveal a very impressive picture. Contextual studies have established the problems that render the entire English language teaching activity futile. Outmoded pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment practices are highlighted as the major issues alongside the dearth of competent teachers, diversity of learners, inadequate infrastructure and resources, and missing institutional support (Arif et al., 2019). Of these, pedagogy is a core issue as effective instruction reduces the severity of the impacts caused by other sources of problems. Analyses of English classes reveal that classes are usually driven by "teacher talk" and depend heavily on "textbooks" or "notes" based on the misconception that English is a content-based subject hence, there is a fixed world of knowledge that students must know (Arif et al., 2019).

As a result, many learners have been accustomed to depend on teachers' feeding. Without teachers' timely and adequate help, students have felt disoriented, lost confidence, and failed to pinpoint their goals in learning. The situation has become even worse with the expansion of school enrolments, increasingly large class sizes, and inadequate teaching staff who have found it harder to take every student's needs into consideration.

Many people attributed students' passiveness to EAP teachers' failure to adopt effective teaching approaches. Global changes in the availability of information indicate that there is no longer a fixed body of knowledge that can be transmitted to learners. It is no longer possible to teach all the students everything they need to know. Among these, language pedagogy needs the most attention.

There is a pressing need to revamping EAP classroom instruction by introducing new or better approaches, strategies, and techniques that are innovative, result-oriented, and transforms the EAP classes to student-centric where student is encouraged and feel motivated through interaction and active learning using pair and group work around classroom activities and projects (Arif et al., 2019; Li & Wang, 2018). One such possibility is available through the use of Project Based Learning Method (PBLM) that offers a solution to counter the afore-mentioned problems and makes English language learning an interesting and meaningful experience for the learners. PBLM is "a systematic teaching method that engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process structured around complex, authentic question, and carefully designed products and tasks" (Albritton & Stacks, 2016, p. 4). PBLM enables students to develop and improve their language fluency and accuracy and at the same time builds personal qualities and skills such as self-confidence, problem-solving, decision-making, and collaboration (Beckett & Slater, 2005; Fried-Booth, 2002).

The purpose of the research is to introduce Project Based Learning Method as an instructional strategy for teaching compulsory English course at a public college for enhancing EAP learners' speaking and listening skills. The prevalence of traditional language teaching methods in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses at public colleges often leaves educators searching for alternative approaches to effectively enhance students' speaking and listening skills. This research introduces Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a potential solution, aiming to explore its efficacy within the compulsory English course at a specific public college (Bytyqi, 2021). The study also paves the way for considering alternative pedagogies to replace the existing traditional language instructions. It seeks to initiate an empirical conversation about the possibility of replacing traditional language instruction. By providing concrete evidence on the learning outcomes achieved through PBLM, this study aims to pave the path for

future consideration of alternative pedagogies, potentially sparking a shift towards more learner-centered and communicative approaches in EAP classrooms. The study raises the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of PBLM in comparison with conventional EAP pedagogy on the speaking and listening skills of EAP learners?

2. What are the learners' perceptions about the implementation of PBLM pedagogy in their EAP class?

3. Can PBLM effectively replace conventional EAP pedagogy for compulsory English courses at public colleges?

Literature Review

Comprehension in a language is the first step in learning a new language which asserts importance of language input received through listening and practiced through speaking as language learners interact with others for different language and communication functions and in varied situations. Communicative approach to language teaching emphasizes on various functions of language in use and enables learners to process and produce language actively as it fosters learner-ability in using language during real communication and to enable them to function interactionally and transactionally (Hedge, 2000; Richards, 2005; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Communication is understood as a continuous process of expression, interpretation, and negotiation whereas, communication skills are the foremost skills that "every graduate should have" (Diamond, 1997; Felder et al., 2000) making speaking and listening as crucial language skills garnering prominent place in language programs globally.

Meaningful communication is the target of communicative approaches to language teaching CLT as they focus on communicative competence instead of grammatical competence. Communicative focus also remains central to the project-based learning. The communicative view of language that underpins the pedagogy for developing listening and speaking skills corresponds very well with the learner-centric, communicative, interactive and authentic learning principles of project-based learning method. Though listening and speaking are separate language skills however, they are intertwined and learnt and practiced together. In EAP contexts, students have limited opportunity to practice listening and speaking skills because of the absence of English-speaking environment beyond the class.

Some applied linguists argue that listening comprehension is at the core of second language acquisition and therefore demands greater prominence in language teaching. The development of all other skills is seen as linked to listening because it is the basic skill that learners develop first. (Jarvis et al., 2020). Dehghani and Jowkar (2012) described listening as the heart of both first and second language learning. Vega (2018) explained that listening is used far more than any other single language skill in normal daily life and is considered as the weakest skill for many language learners. According to Mcdonagh et al. (2012), 'listening is the primary means by which incoming ideas and information are taken in' (87). Although most of the students have spent a great deal of time learning to read and write, fewer than two percent of the students have had any formal listening training. Numerous studies indicated that efficient listening skills were more important than reading skills as a factor contributing to the academic success (Brown, 2000).

Listening and speaking both are the most crucial skills for communication. Hence, speaking and listening skills are the two major areas of concern in this research which tends to summarize what is essential to be known about the speaking and listening process as it relates to foreign language learning and how they can be improved (Karimi et al., 2018). Based on the importance of speaking and listening skills in language learning, the research has introduced a new methodology that is the Project-based Learning Method (PBLM) to improve the speaking and listening skills of the students.

Educator such as Dewey (1938) has reported on the benefits of experiential, hands-on, and student-directed learning for over a century. He emphasized on accelerated learning by means of peer-to-peer communication and teacher and students' interaction as vital for language learning and vocabulary development. PBL is viewed as a constructivist teaching model based on the assumption that learning is a product of cognitive and social interaction (Barrows, 1992; Howard, 2002; Jonassen, 2003). Constructivism holds that knowledge cannot be taught but must be constructed by the learner. The secret of effective learning lies in the nature of social interaction between two or more people with different levels of skill and knowledge (Fragoulis, 2009).

The term "project" used in EFL context was first proposed by Fried-Booth (1986). He indicated that tasks arise naturally from the project itself,

developing cumulatively in response to a basic objective, namely the project. Haines ([1989](#)) defined project work as involving multi-skill activities which focus on a theme of interest rather than specific language tasks. Stoller ([2002](#)) viewed it as a natural extension of fully integrated language and content learning, making it a practical option in a variety of instructional settings including the general English, English for academic purposes, English for specific purposes, and English for occupational/vocational/ professional purposes. According to Hedge ([2002](#)), projects are extended tasks which usually integrated language skills by means of a number of activities. These activities come together to achieve an agreed goal and may include the planning, gathering of information from varied sources, group discussion of the information, problem solving, oral and written reporting, and display (Brush & Saye, [2008](#); Lam et al., [2009](#)). For that reason, Project-Based Learning is a modern communicative and interactive method.

The inertia of traditional language teaching methods in public college for English as a Second Language ESL courses often leaves educators struggling to effectively equip students with vital speaking and listening skills. Recognizing this disconnect, this research explores Project-Based Learning (PBLM) as a potential alternative, delving into its efficacy within the compulsory English course at a specific public college (Ilham, [2022](#)). PBLM differs from traditional approaches by engaging students in real-world open-ended projects that demand collaboration, inquiry, and creative problem-solving. Through carefully designed projects, students delve into authentic tasks, while utilizing and refining their English communication skills as they navigate research, analysis, and presentation. Importantly, PBLM empowers students to actively construct their learning, foster critical thinking, and embrace collaborative communication. Such skills are often underemphasized in conventional approaches (Sun & Zhu, [2023](#)).

Several studies have found PBLM to be a better pedagogy in engaging all the students and in enhancing their content knowledge along with academic gains as opposed to other contemporary methods (Sultana & Zaki, [2015](#)). PBLM developed students' communicative competence, mainly discourse competence and strategic competence. Whereas, Fragoulis ([2009](#)) reported their grammatical competence and socio-cultural competence showed less improvement in spite of improving their social and collaborative skills. Shang ([2007](#)) reported a content-based project

consisted of 63 business administration majors with a view to help them improve their business performance as well as enhance their English language. He claimed that a major feature of the project was the extensive use of materials directly borrowed from the culture being studied and the language being used. He also reported the superior performance of the students in the Test for English Majors Band 4 (TEM4).

This study's theoretical framework is built upon two pillars. First is the Beckett and Slater's (2005) robust project-based learning (PBL) model which provided a comprehensive structure for integrating projects into language learning. Second is a synergistic combination of metacognitive listening models by Vandergrift (1997), Anderson (2002), and Mendelsohn (1995), focusing on developing learners' awareness and control over listening strategies. These frameworks are directly aligned with the research objectives of examining the impact of PBL on EAP learners' listening skills.

However, to enrich the understanding of PBL's effectiveness within the specific context of a government college for women in Karachi, the study also considered incorporating additional theoretical perspectives. For instance, Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism (1978) that emphasizes on collaborative learning and knowledge construction might have shed light on how students' interactions within PBL projects contributed to listening development. Additionally, Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1983) could have offered insights into how PBL catered to diverse learning styles, potentially impacting language acquisition. Furthermore, considering the unique cultural and educational landscape of Pakistani women's colleges, theories like Khan's (2002) analysis of gender and education in Pakistan or Nadeem's (2010) exploration of cultural learning styles could have provided valuable context. Understanding how social, cultural, and gendered factors intersected with PBL implementation and impacted listening development within this setting was crucial for a nuanced analysis.

Research Methodology

The quasi-experimental research design known as pre-test and post-test with control and experimental groups received by splitting an intact group (Ary et al., 2014) was adopted to conduct the research over twelve weeks duration during the academic year at a government college for women in Karachi. The study was conducted over 200 female intermediate commerce

students enrolled in the compulsory English course as part of their intermediate curriculum. Of the 200 students in a first-year class, two groups were created using simple random sampling technique (Nunan, 2006). The groups were arbitrarily named as control and experimental groups and then students were assigned to the two groups through randomization as a procedure to eliminate the threat of researcher bias. The randomization also provided a uniform sample which was also confirmed through participant's demographic profile collected at the start of the study that helped in establishing the sample uniformity in terms of age, previous education, and socio-economic background. The students' previous educational experiences had trained them as passive learners who were dependent on their teacher to impart knowledge through lecture-based instructions. Both the groups received instructions in the same course areas, informed consent from the college management and students was obtained. The collected data through quantitative means was analyzed using SPSS version22. The paired sample t-test was used to determine the significant difference in the performance of participants due to instructional methods and Levene's test of Homogeneity was carried out to check the equality of variance of both the groups. Along with these tests, the means of the post-tests of the two groups, control and experimental, were compared using the independent sample t-test.

Based on the available infrastructure and the academic time as well as the standardize examination that the students take at the end of the academic session, the projects were planned for the experimental group. The projects were based on all the areas of the compulsory English curriculum, which are prose, poetry, and drama. Table 1 outlines the PBL instruction carried out with the experimental group providing weekly plan, curriculum aspect, the language skills targeted, and the types of projects being used. The project work involved students' interaction with the curriculum, their teacher, and peers along with the use of resources at different stages of the project available within the class or on the college campus. The research adopted Beckett and Slater's (2005) project frame work for the study as it was found to be the most useful in promoting language learning, content knowledge, and skills simultaneously.

Table 1

Plan of Projects for the Selected Curriculum of XI English from the Text Books (Projects)

Genre	Curriculum Content	Projects	Duration	Language Aims
Poetry	• Lucy Gray • The Toys • Incident of the French Camp • Abu Ben Adhem	Listening recorded poems in the voice of native speaker & complete the 5 tasks Recitation of the Poem Role Play	3 weeks	Listening & Speaking
Prose	• Birkenhead Drill • Pakistan Zindabad • The Wolves of Cernogratz • The Hostile Witness	Received listening material that followed two listening activities. Story completion Simulation	4 weeks	Listening & Speaking
Play	• The Count's Revenge	Group discussion Presentation & Drama Performance	4 weeks	Listening & Speaking

The framework of the lesson plan, specifically for speaking and listening activities, was grounded in the metacognitive listening models of Vandergrift ([1997](#)), Anderson ([2002](#)), and the strategy-based approach of Mendelsohn ([1995](#)). Every week three classes of 45 minutes were conducted for each group and the experimental study was carried out for a period of three months (12 weeks). In the first two classes, participants of the experimental group were given a lecture on PBLM including definitions, steps of projects development, significance of the role of teacher, observer and the students and assessment of PBLM. Teacher showed the participants some projects in order to attract and motivate them.

After project announcement, the investigator ensured the swift taking of experimental group through different stages of the project. Right from the initial discussion to the information collection and sharing then to the completion of initial projects for peer and teacher feedback and finally to the finalization of the projects and their presentation, the project results were deduced. From a total of 200 students, the experimental and control groups were formed equally. 46 participants dropped out at different stages of this 12-week long study which is generally a feature of experimental

studies. However, the mortality rate was quite low and the total number of participants that were included finally for the data analysis was 154. Of these, 51.3 percent participants (n=79) were in experimental group, while control group comprised of the remaining 48.7 percent (n= 75). The mortality rate of the control group was higher than the experimental group which strengthened the assertion that PBLM helps in motivating students towards classroom learning.

Data Analysis

Listening Test

A semi-standard self-developed listening skills test was piloted and administered to assess the listening skills of students, while considering the context, quantity of listening activities, and language proficiency to determine the frequency of audio recordings for the test. There were 35 combinations (objective and subjective) questions in the pre-test and post-test. The research applied Rost's (2011) framework for assessing listening proficiency of second language speakers.

Table 2

Framework for Assessing Listening Skills

Features	Specified Areas	Theoretical Underpinnings
Physical Features	Pause units, hesitations, intonations, stress, accent, pace, and background sound	Psychoacoustic effects of language and perception of sound (Kuhl, 1992)
Linguistics Features	Vocabulary and expression, speech units, false starts, ellipsis, unstated topics, indexical expressions, and negotiation of meanings	Trace Model (McClelland & Elman, 1986), and Fuzzy Logic Model (Massaro, 1989)
Psychological Features	Negotiation mode: interacting with speaker to clarify and expand the meaning Constructive mode: incorporating visible contextual features to make out the meaning Transformative mode: influencing speaker's ideas	Pragmatics (Hymes, 1964), Vygotsky's (1978) Social Learning theory, and Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis

Speaking Test

In order to evaluate the speaking skills (verbal and nonverbal communication) of the students, the two tests of public speaking and group discussion were administered. Working with the Social Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and communicative competence (Hymes, 1964), language learners were involved with real-life situations for informing and interacting in second language. In order to assess the students' speaking skills, a 5-point Likert scale was used. This rating scale consisted of the band descriptors through which various aspects of the oral communication performance of a student were captured. At the end of the study, the students of the experimental group who were taught the same curriculum content through PBLM were asked to complete the Reflection Sheet. The researcher's observations from the 12 weeks of experimental intervention that were maintained in the form of daily observation log were also included to provide deeper insights into the completed study.

Results

The pre-test scores of both the control and experimental groups for listening and speaking skills were tested through the independent sample t-test. The statistics revealed insignificant difference between the two groups in term of the mean scores ($t=1.473$, $p=.143$) for listening proficiency. The scores of speaking tests also showed insignificant difference between the two groups ($t=.038$. $p=0.970$).

Table 3

Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Listening and Speaking Proficiency between the Experimental and Control Groups.

Skills	Groups	N	Mean	SD	SE	t Value	p Value
			Pre-test Scores				
Listening	1	79	10.34	4.160	.628	1.473	.143
	2	75	11.27	3.952	.625		
Speaking	1	79	45.33	12.249	1.873	-.038	.970
	2	75	45.40	10.917	1.686		
			Post-test Scores				
Listening	1	79	31.25	4.623	.628	-30.404	.000
	2	75	12.31	2.875	.616		
Speaking	1	79	122.37	9.149	1.376	53.547	.000
	2	75	48.69	7.834	1.370		

Note. 1= Experimental group, 2 = control group

However, the post-test scores of both control and experimental groups of listening and speaking proficiency were analyzed and compared using the independent sample t-test. The statistics provided in Table 3 revealed significant differences between the two groups in term of the mean scores of listening (t=-30.424, p=.000) and speaking proficiency (t=53.547. p=0.000). There are highly significant difference in listening and speaking skills between pre-tests and post-tests of both experimental and control group. The ratio of improvement in speaking skill is greater than that of the listening skill. PBLM seems to be comparatively more effective to enhance the speaking skills as opposed to the listening skills.

The pre and post-tests of control group were compared and analyzed using paired sample test after the completion of study. The statistics revealed insignificant differences between the pre and post-test of language skills (listening and speaking) in term of the mean scores (t=-3.403, p=.001) of listening skill as well as speaking skill (t=-2.159, p=0.034). This indicated that there is negligible improvement in listening and speaking skills of the control group. Table 4 summarizes the results. Unlike the control group scores, the experimental group results revealed a significant difference between the pre and post-test of language skills (listening and speaking) in terms of the mean scores of (t=37.112, p=.000) listening skill as well as speaking skill (t=-45.593 p=0.000) as shown in the table provided below.

Table 4 shows that there is a significant difference in listening skills between pre and post-tests of the control group. A paired samples t-test also revealed statistically significant difference between the mean scores of both pre-test and post-test of the control group in listening and speaking skills.

The experimental group (M=31.25, SD=4.623) scored higher than the control group (M=12.31, SD=2.857). Based on the result of independent sample t-test, the significant value was less than .5 (p=.000 < .05). This implied that there was a significant difference in listening skills and speaking skills between post-test of experimental and control group. Therefore, it can be concluded that PBLM is a more effective methodology to improve EAP students' listening and speaking skills as compared to Traditional teaching methodologies.

Analysis of Speaking Projects

The mean scores of recitations, role-play, and drama performance are compared. It is found that the variance of the groups is not equal. The mean scores of Recitations is (10.63), mean score of role-play is (14.59) and the mean score of drama performance is (19.65). The results indicate that mean scores of all the three projects are unequal with a maximum difference (9.052). It shows that there is a gradual improvement in listening and speaking skills from projects 1 to projects 3. Subsequently, all the projects of speaking skills also correlated with each other as presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Descriptive and Correlational Analysis of Speaking Projects

Descriptive Analysis					
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Project 1 Recitation	79	7	8	15	10.63
Project 2 Role-play	79	8	10	18	14.59
Project 3 Drama	79	9	15	24	19.65
Valid N (list wise)	79				
Pearson Correlation					
	Correlation			Sig. (2-tailed)	
Project 1 Recitation	.897			.000	
Project 2 Role-play	.857			.000	
Project 3 Drama	.871			.000	
Valid N (list wise)			79		

In the above correlation tables, the value of Pearson's r is greater than 0. So, it is concluded that all the speaking skills projects are positively correlated. The continuous progress and positive correlation among all the projects are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows the effectiveness of PBLM in language acquisition in terms of content and presentation skills of participants from project 1 recitation to project 3 performance of drama. The Pearson's bivariate correlation analysis showed that all the projects of speaking skills developed for the experimental group are positively co-related. Overall results of the projects showed continuous improvement in the language skills (speaking and listening), content learning, and presentation skills.

Figure 1

Progress of Experimental Group
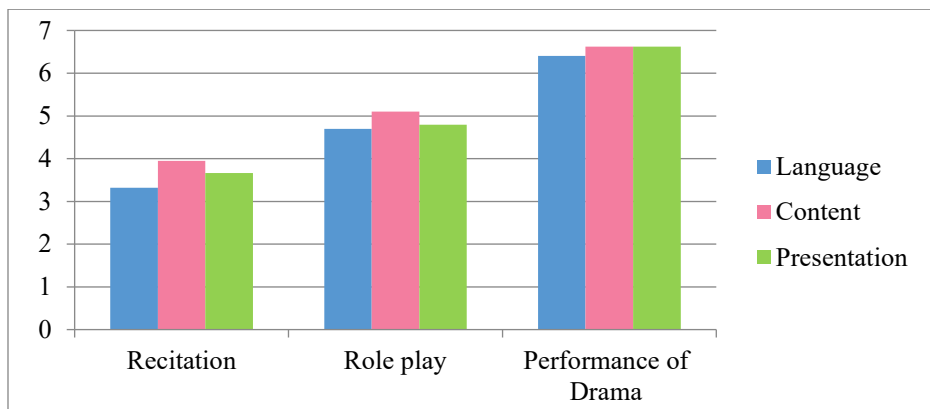
PBLM was implemented in the form of content-based project in the English compulsory course for first-year college students to improve their speaking and listening skills. Moreover, it was applied to investigate students' opinion about the implementation of project-based learning in language classroom to cover the prescribed content and language skills simultaneously. The statistics revealed significant differences between the two groups in terms of the mean score of the post-test. A significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group was observed and this indicated that PBLM is an effective methodology for improving speaking and listening skills. The post-tests scores of both the groups indicated that experimental group performed much better in the post-test as compared to the control group.

Teachers' Observation

Learners of experimental group felt responsibility for their own learning as they gradually owned the learning process and demonstrated autonomy by showing that they were not dependent on their teacher anymore as was the usual practice before the experiment. Every student tried to contribute in the group work assigned to them and tried cooperating and collaborating with their group members as well as peers in their class. Students shared responsibilities and worked together to solve the problems and complete the tasks and the assigned projects.

The method of learning the language through PBLM was completely different from the current teaching methodology of English language in

Pakistani colleges, especially public sector institutes, where it is treated as a content-based subject rather than a skills-based (Sultana & Zaki, 2015). The findings of the study revealed that there was no significant difference between the two groups in pre-test scores. However, a significant difference between pre- and post-test scores of the experimental groups was observed and this indicated that PBL is an effective methodology for teaching compulsory English at public colleges in Pakistan. Furthermore, the post-test scores of experimental and control groups showed a significant difference in their listening and speaking skills.

PBL has several positive effects on content knowledge and academics gains are much better than those generated by other models. When compared with traditional classes, students in PBL performed better on assessments of content knowledge and were able to demonstrate specific content area skills after taking part in PBL (Sultana & Zaki, 2015). The projects that were carefully designed around curriculum content and language skills managed to involve learners inside and outside the classroom. It was repeatedly observed by the investigator during the course of experiment and something that was voiced out by students that the projects involved students, teacher, mentors, and even parents. This contributed in building an environment that generated understanding and support at different levels among students-students, students, teacher, teacher-teacher, college management-teacher, and student-parent.

Students' Reflections

The responses from participants' post-experiment questionnaire showed that the majority of the participants (86%) were not familiar with the PBLM, while the rest only heard about it (14%) but never used it. Most of the participants (82%) found it interesting and most of them (76%) considered PBLM as a motivational pedagogy in improving their speaking and listening skills. Regarding its utility, 84% students found PBLM as a useful teaching strategy (more precisely 10% reported as very useful and 74% as useful). The students responded that it changed their thinking and feeling about English language and the classes, motivated them to learn English, changed the way English classes were taught in the college, helped in practicing speaking, developed confidence, and taught them skills that they can apply in other classes.

They also expressed positive feelings towards collaboration in diverse strategies. Following are students' comments regarding PBLM (slightly modified to remove mechanical errors).

"The combination of skills was an effective way to learn English. I gained more knowledge from doing the project. I learned more about courage and communication skills."

> The PBLM was effective and interesting. In the past, we usually spent much time on textbook and still did not know how to use English when needed it. I learned how to do work by ourselves, in group, and get help from others and how to get information from varied sources.

The reflections taken before the experiment revealed three major issues including the use of language, coverage of content in the projects, and presentation skills. It was observed that most of the learners enjoyed the PBLM activities. Post-reflections of the students revealed that PBLM was highly successful in enhancing their language skills (listening and speaking). In addition, their speaking was definitely enhanced when they rehearsed their projects as well as at the presentation stage when they performed their projects. While doing the projects, students not only learnt language skills, but also learning skills such as working in groups, presentation skills, self-confidence, and autonomy.

Out of 79 students, 70 students were ready to join PBLM again. An interesting fact that emerged in the analysis of post-PBL questionnaire was that the majority of learners who opposed working in groups and did not feel the need for group/ peer support, had secured high marks in public examination. In the post PBLM reflections, 90% of the participants recommended that PBL should be introduced as a regular program for learning English. The responses of the students suggest that they found PBLM a confidence building activity in using English in or outside the classroom. "They had never done an activity like this before this." "Being used to rote learning, doing role play on their own and performing drama before all students of the college and staff was like achieving a mission impossible." They term it as 'A great challenge'.

Conclusion

The current study tackled a serious problem faced by teachers and learners pursuing English courses at colleges. It provides a pedagogy that teachers

may adopt within the existing setups. The pedagogy focused on using PBLM, a modern, communicative, and interactive method of teaching English to EAP/ESL learners at local colleges in Karachi, Pakistan. The study has expanded the concept of 'learning by doing' (Shukla et al., 2024) and attempted to implement PBLM for enhancing speaking and listening skills of EAP learners. The focused remained on whether or not PBLM is a significantly more effective teaching strategy in promoting speaking and listening skills of EAP/ESL learners as compared to the traditional pedagogy. The results support the notion that the use of PBLM can make a positive and significant effect on the speaking and listening skills of EAP/ESL students (Tuyen & Tien 2021; Wahbeh et al., 2021). The implementation of PBLM in the classroom brought a positive change in learners' perceptions and attitude about PBLM and teaching and learning language. The analysis of data revealed that PBLM implementation solved the skills' enhancement issue of college students which is a major challenge posed by the second language learners in the local context. The students recognized that the PBLM can help them actively and confidently in developing and using English language in real life contexts, especially during listening and speaking encounters. The major study outcome remains the provision of opportunities to students for collaboration, engagement, and motivation (Saalh & Kadhim, 2020; Yamada, 2021) in the classrooms and on the campus. This encourages the students to actively use language around educational expertise which is considered essential for language proficiency.

Implications

The study findings and resulting implications are important for EAP learners, English language teachers, institutional heads, teacher educators directly and also for policy makers and curriculum designers. The students desperately need to develop listening and speaking skills through practice owing to their impact on their language development, achievement as well as for performance in further education and career. As demonstrated through experimental intervention and established through the study findings reported in this research paper, PBLM can effectively replace traditional ELT pedagogy in English courses at public colleges.

Limitations

However, it is important to acknowledge a limitation of the present study that it was carried out at only one institution comprising merely female student population. Hence, the study needs to be carried out at more colleges both public and private and include both male and female population in order for the study findings to be generalized. Future studies may also focus on using other types of project-based activities for promoting listening and speaking skills within and outside classrooms. Through this paper and the reported study, it is hoped that interest is created in revisiting the pedagogical practices in English classrooms to help learners develop all four language skills.

Conflict of Interest

The author of the manuscript has no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The data associated with this study will be provided by the corresponding author upon request.

References

Abdullah, H., Harun, H., Wahab, N. A. Juo, S. Y., Aidrin, M., & Ali, M. (2022). Teaching English for academic purposes through Project-Based learning method and process writing approach. *International Journal of Languages and Education*, *1*(1), 49–62. https://doi.org/10.33102/alazkiyaa.v1i1.8

Albritton, S., & Stacks, J. (2016). Implementing a project-based learning model in a pre-service leadership program. *NCPEA International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, *11*(1), 1–28.

Anderson, A. (2002). *Metacognitive approaches to second language listening: Where learner and text meet*. Routledge.

Anderson, N. J. (2002). *The role of metacognition in second language teaching and learning*. ERIC Digest. https://www.cal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/RoleofMetacognitioninSecondLanguageTeachingandLearning.pdf

Arif, M., Zaki, S., & Ali, H. M. (2019). A three-tiered evaluation framework for effective writing instructions in English for Academic Purposes course. *Malaysian Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, *4*(2), 68–79. https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v4i2.185

Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Sorensen, C., & Walker, D. A. (2014). *Introduction to research in education* (9th ed.). Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Barrows, H. S., & Kelson, A. (1995). *Problem-Based learning in secondary education and the problem-based learning institute, 1995*. Archives Space Public Interface. https://libarchive.siumed.edu/public/repositories/2/archival_objects/604

Beckett, G. & Slater, T. (2005). The project framework: A tool for language, content, and skills integration. *ELT Journal*, *59*(2), 108–116. https://doi.org/10.1093/eltj/cci024

Beckett, G., & Slater, F. (2005). *Teaching English through project work*. Routledge.

Brown, D. H. (2000). *Principles of language learning & teaching* (4th ed.). Longman.

Brush, T., & Saye, J. (2008). The effects of multimedia-supported problem-based inquiry on student engagement, empathy, and assumptions about history. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning*, *2*(1), 21–56. https://doi.org/10.7771/1541-5015.1052

Bytyqi, B. (2021). Project-based learning: A teaching approach where learning comes alive. *The Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes*, *5*(4), 775–777. https://doi.org/10.22190/JTESAP2104775B

Dehghani, A. P., & Jowkar, M. (2012). The impact of Computer-Video projector on EFL learners' listening comprehension. *Academic Research International*, *3*(1), 106–113.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. Kappa Delta Pi.

Diamond, R. M. (1997). Curriculum reform needed if students are to master core skills. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *43*(1), Article eB7

Felder, R. M., Woods, D. R., Stice, J. E., & Rugarcia, A. (2000). The future of engineering education II. Teaching methods that work. *Chemical Engineering Education*, *34*(1), 26–39.

Fragoulis, I. (2009). Project-Based learning in the teaching of English as a foreign language in Greek primary schools: From theory to practice. *English Language Teaching*, *2*(3), 113–119.

Fried-Booth, D. L. (1986). *Project work*. Oxford University Press.

Fried-Booth, D. L. (2002). *Project work*. Oxford University Press.

Galloway, N., & Rose, H. (2015). *Introducing blobal Englishes*. Routledge

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. Basic Books.

Haines, S. (1989). *Projects for the EFL classroom*: *Resource material for teachers*. Nelson.

Hedge, T, (2002). *Teaching and learning in the language classroom.* Oxford University Press.

Howard, J. (2002). Technology-Enhanced project-based learning in teacher education: Addressing the goals of transfer. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*, *1*0(3), 343–364.

Hymes, D. (1964). *Language in culture and society: A reader in linguistics and anthropology*. Harper & Row.

Ilham, I. (2022). Implementing project-based learning for EFL students' writing achievement at the tertiary level. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, *10*(3), 1003–1012. http://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v10i3.6470

Jarvis, A., Kohnke, L., & Guan, G. (2020). Academic listening strategy use at an English medium university. *The Asian ESP Journal*, *16*(3), 8–29.

Jonassen, D. H. (2003). Toward a design theory of problem solving. *Educational and Technology Research and Development*, *4*8(4), 63–85. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02300500

Kachru, B. B. (2006). Standards, codifications, and sociolinguistics realism: The English language in the outer circle. In K. Bolton & B. B. Kachru

(Eds.), *World Englishes: Critical concepts in linguistics* (pp. 2421–267). Routledge.

Karimi, F., Chalak, A., & Biria, R. (2018). The impact of pre-listening activities on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension performance. *Asian EFL Journal*, *20*(12), 270–289.

Khan, S. T. (2002). Gender and education in Pakistan: Issues and challenges. *Gender & Education*, *14*(3), 319–334.

Krashen, S. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. Longman.

Kuhl, P. K. (1992). Psychoacoustics and speech perception: Internal standards, perceptual anchors, and prototypes. In L. A. Werner & E. W. Rubel (Eds.), *Developmental psychoacoustics* (pp. 293–332). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/10119-012

Lam, S., Cheng, R. W., & Ma, Y. K. (2009). Teacher and student intrinsic motivation in Project-Based learning. *Instructional Sciences*, *37*(6), 565–578. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11251-008-9070-9

Li, Y. & Wang, L. (2018). An ethnographic exploration of adopting project-based learning in teaching English for academic purposes. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, *15*(2), 290–303.

Massaro, D. W. (1989). Testing between the TRACE model and the fuzzy logical model of speech perception. *Cognitive Psychology*, *21*(3), 398–421. https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0285(89)90014-5

McClelland, J. L., & Elman, J. L. (1986). The TRACE model of speech perception. *Cognitive Psychology*, *18*(1), 1–86. https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0285(86)90015-0

McDonagh, C., Roche, M., Sullivan, B., & Glenn, M. (2012). *Enhancing practice through classroom research: A teacher's guide to professional development*. Routledge

Mendelsohn, D. (1995). Applying learning strategies in the second/foreign language listening comprehension lesson. In D. Mendelsohn & J. Rubin (Eds.), *A guide for the teaching of second language listening* (pp. 132–150). Dominie Press.

Mendelsohn, D. (1995). *Teaching listening comprehension*. Heinle & Heinle.

Nadeem, M. B. (2010). Learning styles of Pakistani students: Implications for effective instruction. *Journal of Educational Thought*, *44*(1), 129–143.

Nunan, D. (2006). *Task-Based language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Piaget, J. (1971). The theory of stages in cognitive development. In D. R. Green, M. P. Ford & G. B. Flamer (Eds.), *Measurement and Piaget*. McGraw-Hill.

Richards, J. C. (2005). *Communicative language teaching today*. Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge.

Rost, M. (2011). *Teaching and researching listening*. Pearson Education.

Saalh, S. M., & Kadhim, S. H. (2020). The EFL students' academic buoyancy in reading and listening skills. *Asian EFL Journal*, *27*(4.4), 226–253.

Shang, M. R. (2007, July 8–14). *Content-based instructional approach and its implementation: A report on international business curriculum* (Paper presentation)*.* International Conference on Language Education and Research, Urumqi, China.

Shukla, P. K., Kumar, R., & Shukla, A. (2024). Project based learning. In *Teaching and learning techniques*: *A new paradigm* (pp. 17–25). Government College Zirapur, Madhya Pradesh, India.

Stoller, F. (2002). Project work: A means to promote language and content. In J. C. Richards & W. A. Renandya (Eds.), *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* (pp. 107–119). Cambridge University Press.

Sultana, M., & Zaki, M. (2015). Proposing project based learning as an alternative to traditional ELT pedagogy at public colleges in Pakistan. *International Journal for Lesson and Learning Studies*, *4*(2), 155–173. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJLLS-09-2013-0049

Sun, X., & Zhu, P. (2023). Implementing project-based language teaching to develop EFL high school students' key competences. *Sustainability*, *15*(2), Article e1658. https://doi.org/10.3390/su15021658

Tuyen. V, L., & Tien, H. H. (2021). Integrating project-based learning Into English for specific purposes classes at tertiary level: Perceived challenges and benefits. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, *37*(4), 128–148. https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4642

Vandergrift, L. (1997). Comprehension monitoring strategies used by ESL listeners. *TESOL Quarterly*, *31*(4), 689–712.

Vega, O. (2018). An analysis of the most common methods used to teach English as a second and foreign language. *Mextesol Journal*, *42*(3). https://mextesol.net/journal/index.php?page=journal&id_article=3777

Vygotsky, L. (1978). Interaction between language and development. *Reading on the Development of Children*, *23*(3), 34–41.

Wahbeh, G. D., Najjar, E. A., Sartawi, A. F., Abuzant, M., & Daher, W. (2021). The role of Project-Based language learning in developing students' life skills. *Sustainability*, *13*(12), Article e6518. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13126518

Yamada, H. (2021). An implementation of project-based learning in an EFL context: Japanese students' and teachers' perceptions regarding team learning. *TESOL Journal*, *12*, Article e519. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.519