

ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS OF EFL STUDENTS IN THAILAND'S EEC CONTEXT THROUGH PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

This quasi-experimental study investigated the impact of Project-Based Learning (PBL) on the English-speaking skills of Grade 9 students at Angsilapittayakom School in Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). Recognizing the critical role of English proficiency in accessing global economic opportunities, the study compared PBL with traditional Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methods. Seventy-seven students participated, with 39 in the experimental group engaging in PBL and 38 in the control group receiving CLT-based instruction. The intervention spanned eight weeks during the 2024 academic year. Research instruments included PBL and CLT lesson plans, along with pre- and post-tests measuring English-speaking skills. Data were analysed using paired sample t-tests and independent sample t-tests. The results showed that the experimental group's post-test speaking skills improved significantly compared to their pre-test scores ($p < .01$). Additionally, the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in post-test speaking skills ($p < .01$), demonstrating the effectiveness of PBL in fostering language acquisition. This study provided evidence that PBL could revolutionize English instruction by promoting active, inquiry-driven learning and addressing the limitations of traditional methods. PBL not only enhanced language proficiency but also better prepared students for real-world communication in dynamic economic contexts like the EEC. These findings offered valuable insights for educators and policymakers seeking innovative, skill-focused pedagogies aligned with 21st-century educational goals. Moreover, the results will be beneficial to language teachers worldwide, offering a practical framework to improve language learning outcomes and equip students for future success in globalized environments.

Keywords: Eastern Economic Corridor, EFL, English Language Skills, Project-Based Learning, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the demand for English proficiency grew rapidly as globalization and technological advancements reshaped global economies. This global shift was particularly relevant in Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), a region designated as a hub for industrial, technological, and tourism development. Industries within the EEC increasingly required workers proficient in English to meet the demands of international collaboration, trade, and service provision (Crystal, 2012; Graddol, 2006). Despite English being a critical skill for economic opportunities, many Thai students struggled with oral communication due to the prevalence of traditional teacher-centered instruction that emphasized grammar and rote

memorization rather than practical language use (Levitskaia, 2023; Kirkpatrick, 2010).

Challenges in Traditional EFL Instruction

Traditional Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), widely used in Thai classrooms, focused on structured dialogue practice and teacher-led instruction. While CLT emphasized communication, it often fell short in developing fluency in real-world contexts because students primarily engaged in controlled practice rather than authentic, open-ended conversations (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). As a result, students frequently experienced anxiety when using English in unscripted situations, which further hindered their oral proficiency (Setiana et al., 2019). Furthermore, standardized assessments in Thailand often prioritized reading and writing over speaking, compounding

students' limited opportunities to practice spoken English in meaningful contexts (Simbolon et al., 2019).

Emergence of Project-Based Learning

Project-Based Learning (PBL) emerged as a promising alternative to traditional instruction, emphasizing real-world tasks, collaboration, and active learning. PBL, grounded in constructivist theory, enables learners to construct knowledge through hands-on experiences, fostering deeper engagement and retention of content. Dewey (1938) emphasized that learning through experience was essential for meaningful education, a principle echoed in modern PBL frameworks (Thomas, 2000). By allowing students to work on long-term projects that mimicked real-world challenges, PBL promoted autonomy, critical thinking, and practical application of language skills (Zhang, 2023).

Recent meta-analyses have confirmed PBL's effectiveness in improving academic outcomes across disciplines, including language learning. Lu & Ma, (2023) conducted a meta-analysis involving 66 studies and found that PBL significantly enhanced student achievement, engagement, and problem-solving skills, especially in contexts where collaborative group work was emphasized. These findings were particularly relevant in EFL settings, where students needed both linguistic competence and confidence to communicate effectively.

PBL and EFL: A Synergistic Approach

In EFL education, PBL created a rich environment for language acquisition by integrating authentic communication tasks into the learning process. Students participating in PBL projects engaged in inquiry-based activities that required negotiation, discussion, and presentation skills essential for fluency and effective oral communication (Kassim et al., 2024; Zhang, 2023). Wuntu et al. (2022) demonstrated that PBL significantly improved EFL learners' speaking skills in Colombia by providing opportunities for meaningful language use in authentic contexts. This aligns with findings from other studies that highlighted how PBL fostered both linguistic and cognitive growth, preparing students for real-world

communication challenges (Lavado et al., 2024).

Furthermore, there is limited research comparing PBL with traditional methodologies, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), in preparing EFL students for real-world communication and career readiness in sectors critical to the EEC's economic growth (Kassim et al., 2024).

PBL in the Context of the EEC

Although Project-Based Learning (PBL) has been extensively researched in global contexts, limited studies have explored its application in Thailand, particularly within the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). This region's emphasis on tourism, technology, and manufacturing creates distinct challenges and opportunities for English language education that remain underexplored (Lu & Ma, 2023).

The EEC's focus on sustainable economic growth provides a unique context for exploring the impact of PBL on language acquisition. As the region continued to attract foreign investment and tourism, English proficiency became a critical asset for students seeking employment in high-growth sectors. Projects that simulated real-world scenarios, such as creating tourism marketing campaigns or conducting interviews with local industry leaders, provided students with opportunities to apply their language skills in practical ways (Lu & Ma, 2023; Zhang, 2023). By engaging in such projects, students not only improved their English proficiency but also gained a deeper understanding of the economic landscape in which they would work.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the impact of PBL on the English-speaking skills of Grade 9 students at Angsilapittayakom School in Thailand's EEC. Specifically, the study sought to 1) compare students' speaking proficiency before and after the PBL intervention and 2) evaluate differences between students taught using PBL and those taught through traditional CLT methods. The study also aimed to contribute to the growing body of research advocating for innovative, student-centered pedagogies that better prepared students for the linguistic and cognitive demands of a globalized economy.

By comparing PBL with CLT, this research aims to provide insights into innovative teaching methodologies that align with the region's economic and educational needs.

Contributions to the Field

This research had the potential to inform educators and policymakers on the efficacy of PBL as a tool for language instruction. By demonstrating the impact of PBL on English-speaking skills, the study offers a practical framework for integrating active learning strategies into EFL curricula. Additionally, the findings would be valuable for language teachers worldwide, providing insights into how PBL could be adapted to various educational contexts to enhance language learning outcomes.

The current study builds on a growing body of literature that highlighted the transformative potential of PBL in language education. In a rapidly changing world where English proficiency is increasingly essential, PBL offers a dynamic and effective approach to language instruction. By fostering active engagement, critical thinking, and practical language use, PBL not only enhanced students' academic achievement but also equipped them with the skills necessary for success in the global economy. This research aimed to provide evidence-based insights that would support the adoption of PBL in EFL classrooms, particularly in regions like the EEC, where English proficiency was a key driver of economic opportunity.

METHOD

This study used a quasi-experimental design, specifically a pretest-posttest control group format. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed throughout the process. Before participating, students were fully informed about the study's purpose, including that they were being observed, and reassured that their results would not impact their course grades or academic standing. Informed consent was obtained from both students and their legal guardians, ensuring participation was voluntary and data remained confidential.

To maintain fairness, the control group was given equivalent learning resources and opportunities, even though they did not receive PBL. Group allocation was done

randomly to reduce bias and ensure equal treatment. The following section outlines the methodology, with a focus on ethical considerations and the reasoning behind the design choices:

Population and Samples

The target population for this study included 15,476 ninth-grade students enrolled in schools under the Chonburi-Rayong Secondary Educational Service Area Office during the first semester of the 2024 academic year (Angsilapittayakom School, 2024). A multi-stage sampling process was employed to ensure representativeness. First, schools within the educational service area were stratified based on location, size, and available resources. Angsilapittayakom School was purposively selected due to its alignment with the study's objectives, including its emphasis on fostering English proficiency in alignment with the Eastern Economic Corridor's workforce development goals. Additionally, ninth-grade students were chosen as they are at a critical stage of transitioning to higher education and professional pathways, making it essential to evaluate innovative teaching methods like PBL at this level.

From Angsilapittayakom School, a simple random sampling method was used to select 77 ninth-grade students to participate in the study. These students were then randomly assigned to two groups to enhance internal validity: Group A (experimental) with 39 students and Group B (control) with 38 students. Group A received instruction through Project-Based Learning (PBL), while Group B followed a traditional teaching approach.

To ensure group equivalence beyond random assignment, baseline characteristics such as prior English language proficiency, as measured by a standardized pre-test, were compared. The pre-test results confirmed no significant differences between the two groups in terms of language ability prior to the intervention ($p > 0.05$). This step was crucial for isolating the effects of the instructional method on language acquisition. The research hypotheses were tested using paired sample t-tests and independent sample t-tests, ensuring robust statistical analysis of the intervention's impact.

Research Instruments

1) The PBL lesson plans were developed to enhance Grade 9 students' English-speaking skills through a real-world project focused on promoting tourism in local areas of Angsila, Chonburi, Thailand, with destinations like Ang Sila Fish Market, Ang Sila Temple, and Ang Sila Old Market. Spanning 8 weeks, students were divided into groups and tasked with creating four 4–5-minute promotional videos in English.

In the first two weeks, they selected local tourist spots and conducted field research to gather cultural, historical, and practical information.

Weeks 3–4 involved script development and speaking practice, emphasizing fluency, pronunciation, non-verbal communication, and content presentation, supported by peer and teacher feedback.

During weeks 5–6, students filmed and edited their videos, showcasing their ability to use English in real-world contexts.

In weeks 7–8, the groups presented their videos to the class and a panel of teachers and native speakers, receiving peer feedback and refining their work.

This project-based approach allowed students to take ownership of their learning while developing critical thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. The lesson plans were evaluated by three foreign language learning experts using a 5-point rating scale, achieving a high score of 4.71, indicating their effectiveness in enhancing students' English-speaking skills in a tourism context. By connecting language learning with real-world applications, this PBL approach not only improved students' linguistic abilities but also deepened their understanding of local culture, preparing them for future communication in the global tourism industry.

2) The Traditional Teaching Approach Lesson Plans: In this study, the researcher implemented the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach without incorporating Project-Based Learning (PBL). The lesson plans consisted of five stages: 1) Warm-up, 2) Presentation, 3) Practice, 4) Production, and 5) Wrap-up. Group B students developed their English-speaking skills through various classroom-based tasks and activities assigned by the researcher, without the use of PBL. Like the PBL lesson

plans, these CLT lesson plans were reviewed by three foreign language experts, receiving an average rating of 4.62, indicating a high level of effectiveness and appropriateness.

3) This study developed a 5-point Likert scale to assess the English-speaking skills of Grade 9 students, focusing on their ability to communicate effectively in general speaking situations. The students' speaking skills were evaluated using a 30-point rubric co-developed by the researcher and two native speakers, which assessed five key areas: fluency, pronunciation, non-verbal communication, content, and creativity.

To ensure validity, the rubric was reviewed by three foreign language assessment experts, yielding a Content Validity Index (CVI) ranging from 0.67 to 1.00. Inter-rater reliability was determined by comparing scores from the researcher and two native speakers. Four students were randomly selected to perform assigned speaking tasks, and their performances were scored using the developed rubric.

The Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to determine score consistency, with results showing high agreement: 0.94 between the researcher and Native Speaker 1, 0.92 between the researcher and Native Speaker 2, and 0.95 between the two native speakers. This assessment framework ensured both the reliability and validity of the evaluation process, providing a clear measure of students' general English-speaking proficiency.

Data Collection

The data collection process was carefully structured into five key phases to ensure reliable measurement of the impact of Project-Based Learning (PBL) on English-speaking proficiency among Grade 9 students:

1) Introduction and Explanation

At the start of the first teaching session, both the experimental group (PBL) and the control group (Communicative Language Teaching, CLT) were provided with a clear explanation of the study's objectives and procedures. The PBL group received a detailed overview of how project-based learning would be incorporated into their lessons, emphasizing inquiry-driven and collaborative learning. In contrast, the CLT group was briefed on their

traditional, teacher-led language instruction methods. This step ensured that students in both groups understood the structure and purpose of their respective learning approaches.

2) Pre-Learning Assessment

Before the PBL intervention was introduced, a baseline assessment of English-speaking proficiency was conducted for both groups. Participants recorded 4–5-minute videos based on one of two real-world scenarios: (1) Introducing the School or (2) Introducing Tourist Attractions. These tasks were designed to simulate authentic communicative situations, mirroring the language skills required in professional contexts. Video submissions were collected through a Google Form tailored for this study.

To ensure objective and reliable evaluation, the videos were assessed by the researcher and two native English-speaking raters using a 30-point rubric. This rubric, co-developed by the researcher and native speakers, evaluated five key areas: fluency, pronunciation, non-verbal communication, content, and creativity.

The pre-test results confirmed that there was no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups at the 0.01 significance level. This ensured that both groups were comparable before the intervention, validating that any subsequent improvements could be attributed to the PBL approach. The pre-test thus provided a solid baseline for measuring the impact of the PBL intervention on students' English-speaking abilities.

3) Teaching Sessions

Over the course of eight weeks, both groups participated in 20 hours of instruction. The experimental group engaged in PBL activities aligned with lesson plans designed to foster active learning, collaboration, and problem-solving. In contrast, the control group followed CLT lesson plans focused on structured practice, teacher-led instruction, and controlled language drills. Each teaching session adhered strictly to its respective instructional framework to maintain consistency.

4) Post-Learning Assessment

After the completion of the instructional period, a post-test was administered to assess improvements in English-speaking skills. Students were tasked with creating a new 4–5-minute video response, this time focusing on a scenario requiring them to propose a solution to a real-life problem, such as reducing plastic waste in their school. This scenario differed from the pre-test, which involved narrating a personal experience, such as describing a memorable holiday. By introducing a task with a distinct communicative goal, the post-test ensured variation while maintaining comparability in assessing speaking skills.

As with the pre-test, students recorded their responses without using electronic devices or external resources. The evaluation of the videos adhered to the same rubric, and the same raters were employed to ensure scoring consistency. These post-test results provided critical data for measuring the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in enhancing speaking proficiency.

Data Analysis

The data from both the pre-test and post-test were subjected to rigorous statistical analysis. Paired sample t-tests were used to compare pre- and post-test scores within each group, determining whether significant improvements occurred. Independent sample t-tests compared post-test scores between the PBL and CLT groups to assess the relative effectiveness of the two instructional methods. This comprehensive analysis validated the study's findings and provided empirical evidence of the impact of PBL on English-speaking skills.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Objective 1: Comparison of Students' English-Speaking Proficiency Before and After PBL Intervention

The results of this study demonstrated a significant improvement in students' English-speaking proficiency after the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL). As shown in Table 1, the mean score of English-speaking proficiency post-intervention ($\bar{X} = 25.64$, S.D. = 3.37) was markedly higher than the pre-intervention mean score ($\bar{X} = 14.58$,

S.D. = 6.45), with the difference reaching statistical significance at the 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that PBL effectively enhanced the students' speaking

skills, validating the hypothesis that this pedagogical approach has a positive impact on oral communication abilities in the target population.

Table 1. Comparison of Students' English-Speaking Skills Before and After PBL Intervention

English Speaking Skills	\bar{X}	S.D.	t	p-value
Before PBL intervention	14.58	6.45	16.83	< .01
After PBL intervention	25.64	3.37		

This finding aligned with recent research emphasizing the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in fostering language development by immersing students in meaningful, real-world communicative tasks. Gras-Velazquez (2019) highlighted that PBL enhances critical thinking and communicative skills, which are crucial for language acquisition, particularly in preparing students for authentic interactions. Similarly, Guo et al. (2020) demonstrated that PBL's collaborative components, such as group discussions and shared problem-solving, significantly enhance learners' fluency and confidence in speaking by providing opportunities to practice language in realistic and engaging scenarios.

However, this study extends prior findings by contextualizing them within Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), a region focused on industries such as tourism, technology, and manufacturing. Traditional methods like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) often fall short in these settings due to their emphasis on structured dialogues, which may not adequately prepare students for the dynamic and unpredictable nature of real-world communication. For example, CLT frequently lacks the integration of industry-specific tasks, limiting its ability to bridge classroom learning with practical language use.

In contrast, this study demonstrates how PBL addresses these gaps. By engaging students in tasks relevant to the EEC's economic sectors, such as creating presentations for tourism or designing technological solutions in English, PBL prepares learners for professional and situational demands. This approach not only enhances linguistic competence but also aligns language learning with career

readiness, a critical need in the EEC. Furthermore, the constructivist principles underlying PBL foster intrinsic motivation and active engagement, which Kassim et al. (2024) emphasized as vital for sustained language development and learner autonomy.

The findings also revealed challenges in implementing PBL, such as resource limitations and teacher preparedness. For instance, insufficient training in PBL pedagogy or a lack of access to industry-specific resources may hinder effective execution. Addressing these challenges, the study suggested practical solutions, including professional development programs for educators and collaboration with local industries to provide real-world materials. By tackling these obstacles, PBL could become a more accessible and effective instructional strategy within the EEC and similar contexts, offering valuable insights for policymakers and educators alike (Lu & Ma, 2023).

This study contributes to the growing body of evidence that PBL, when contextualized to regional needs, can significantly enhance language learning outcomes while addressing practical and professional demands in unique economic landscapes like Thailand's EEC.

Research Objective 2: Evaluation of Differences Between PBL and Traditional CLT Teaching Methods on Students' Speaking Skills

Table 2 highlighted a clear distinction in speaking skills between students taught using Project-Based Learning (PBL) in Group A and those who followed the traditional Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in Group B. The mean speaking score for Group A ($\bar{X} = 25.64$, S.D. = 3.37) was significantly higher than that of Group B

(\bar{X} = 21.53, S.D. = 5.21), with a statistical significance at the 0.01 level.

These findings emphasized the effectiveness of PBL in fostering better

speaking skills compared to traditional methods, offering practical implications for educators aiming to enhance communicative competence in English.

Table 2. Evaluation of Differences Between PBL and Traditional CLT Teaching Methods on Students’ Speaking Skills

English Speaking Skills	\bar{X}	S.D.	t	p-value
Students engaged with PBL intervention	25.64	3.37	17.23	< .01
Students engaged with traditional CLT	21.53	5.21		

The success of PBL in this EEC context could be attributed to its alignment with constructivist learning theories, which posit that knowledge is actively constructed through experiential and meaningful engagement with content. Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasized the role of social interaction in cognitive development, supported the effectiveness of PBL by advocating for collaborative learning environments where learners engaged in authentic tasks. PBL’s emphasis on real-world applications allowed students to interact in scenarios that simulated practical language use, fostering deeper linguistic competence. Unlike CLT, which often emphasized predetermined dialogues and grammatical drills, PBL immersed students in problem-solving tasks requiring them to use language in dynamic and situational contexts, thereby enhancing fluency, pronunciation, and overall communication skills.

A significant body of contemporary research had reinforced the advantages of PBL in second-language acquisition. For instance, Krajcik and Shin (2014) noted that PBL integrates the cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions of learning, making it particularly suited for language acquisition, which requires not only linguistic input but also authentic communicative practice. In a similar vein, Guo et al. (2020) demonstrated that PBL significantly improved students’ speaking performance, particularly in fluency and confidence, as students engaged in real-world tasks that required active problem-solving and negotiation of meaning. The findings from this study aligned closely with these perspectives, as students in the experimental group displayed enhanced fluency and self-assurance in their spoken

English, attributes commonly linked to task-based learning environments.

The substantial improvement in speaking skills was further supported by the integration of collaborative and reflective practices inherent in PBL. Collaboration among peers and reflective feedback from instructors allowed students to refine their communication skills through iterative cycles of practice and feedback. According to Thomas (2020), reflective feedback in PBL fostered metacognitive awareness, enabling learners to identify areas of improvement and make necessary adjustments. This iterative process played a pivotal role in boosting students’ self-confidence and competence in English speaking, as evidenced by their enhanced performance in post-test evaluations.

Another contributing factor to the success of PBL in this study was the inclusion of authentic assessment methods. The students’ performances were evaluated using a comprehensive 30-point analytical rubric that assessed fluency, pronunciation, non-verbal communication, content, and creativity. This holistic assessment approach, co-developed by the researcher and native English-speaking evaluators, ensured that multiple dimensions of language proficiency were accounted for, providing a nuanced understanding of each student’s speaking abilities. The high inter-rater reliability scores (ranging from 0.95 to 0.98) demonstrated the consistency and fairness of the assessment process, which further validated the efficacy of PBL in enhancing students’ communicative competencies.

The findings also provided critical insights into the limitations of traditional CLT approaches in developing speaking skills.

While CLT focuses on communicative competence through structured dialogues and interactive activities, it often falls short in creating authentic, problem-solving scenarios that PBL inherently provides. Studies by Yede (2020) indicated that CLT's reliance on scripted conversations and controlled practice could limit learners' ability to adapt language use in unpredictable, real-world situations. This limitation was evident in the control group's lower post-test scores, suggesting that the structured and predictable nature of CLT did not adequately prepare students for the spontaneity and complexity of authentic spoken communication.

Moreover, the pre-test results of this study, which showed no statistically significant differences in English-speaking proficiency between the experimental and control groups, established a solid baseline for evaluating the impact of PBL. The equivalence of both groups prior to the intervention underscored that the significant improvements observed post-intervention could be directly attributed to the PBL approach. This reinforces findings by Beckett and Slater (2020), who argued that PBL, through its emphasis on real-world relevance and learner autonomy, led to measurable improvements in language outcomes over traditional instructional methods.

In addition to its pedagogical implications, this study highlighted the broader benefits of PBL in fostering 21st-century skills, such as collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity, which are essential for students' future academic and professional success. PBL's ability to integrate these skills within language learning is particularly significant in today's globalized world, where communicative competence in English serves as a critical asset in both educational and occupational contexts. Studies by Bell (2021) and Markham et al. (2019) had similarly emphasized the transformative potential of PBL in preparing students for real-world challenges, noting that its interdisciplinary and problem-based nature equips learners with the adaptability and resilience needed in diverse professional settings.

While the findings of this study offered strong support for the adoption of PBL in language instruction, it was important to acknowledge potential challenges in its

implementation. Effective PBL required considerable planning, resource allocation, and teacher training to ensure its success. As Larmer and Mergendoller (2021) pointed out, educators must be equipped with the necessary pedagogical skills and instructional strategies to facilitate PBL effectively, particularly in diverse classroom settings where students may have varying levels of language proficiency. Addressing these challenges through targeted professional development programs and resource support would be crucial in scaling PBL as a viable instructional model in language education (Laksanasut, 2024).

In short, this study provided compelling evidence that PBL is a superior instructional approach for enhancing English-speaking skills compared to traditional CLT methods. The significant gains in students' speaking proficiency, coupled with the theoretical and empirical support from contemporary research, underscore the potential of PBL to transform language education. By fostering authentic communication, collaboration, and critical thinking, PBL not only enhances linguistic competence but also prepares students for real-world success, making it an invaluable pedagogical tool in today's interconnected and multilingual world.

Recommendations for Utilizing Research Findings

The findings of this study offer valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders invested in enhancing language education in Thailand, particularly in the context of the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). To effectively apply the results, the following recommendations are proposed:

1) Integration of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in English Curricula

Educational institutions should consider incorporating PBL into English language curricula to foster active, inquiry-driven learning. The results demonstrated that PBL significantly enhances English-speaking skills, suggesting it is a viable alternative to traditional teaching methods such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). By focusing on real-world tasks, PBL better prepares students for authentic communicative contexts.

2) Professional Development for Educators

Teachers should be provided with professional development opportunities to understand and effectively implement PBL strategies. Workshops, seminars, and training programs can equip educators with the necessary skills to design and facilitate PBL lessons, ensuring they can maximize the benefits of this student-centered approach.

3) Curriculum Alignment with 21st-Century Skills

Given the demands of the globalized economy, curricula should be designed to integrate PBL with a focus on developing critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and problem-solving skills. Aligning language instruction with these broader educational goals ensures students are well-prepared for future economic and professional opportunities.

4) Supportive Learning Environments

Schools should create environments conducive to PBL by providing access to resources such as collaborative workspaces, multimedia tools, and flexible classroom setups. These resources can enhance students' engagement and enable more effective implementation of PBL activities.

5) Continuous Assessment and Feedback Mechanisms

Institutions should establish systems for ongoing assessment and feedback to monitor the effectiveness of PBL in improving language proficiency. Regular evaluations, both formative and summative, can help refine instructional practices and ensure continuous improvement in student outcomes.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study provides evidence of the effectiveness of PBL in enhancing English-speaking skills, further research is needed to explore additional dimensions of its impact. The following areas are suggested for future inquiry:

1) Longitudinal Studies on PBL's Impact

Future research should examine the long-term effects of PBL on language acquisition to determine whether the observed

improvements are sustainable over time. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into the lasting benefits of PBL on students' language proficiency and overall academic performance.

2) Student Perceptions and Engagement

Investigating students' perceptions of PBL could provide valuable qualitative data on its effectiveness and appeal. Surveys, interviews, or focus group discussions could explore how students experience and engage with PBL, shedding light on motivational factors and areas for improvement.

3) Comparative Studies Across Grade Levels

This study focused on Grade 9 students; future research could compare the effectiveness of PBL across different educational levels to determine its impact on younger or older learners. Such studies could reveal variations in how PBL influences language learning at different developmental stages.

4) Cross-Cultural Comparisons

Conducting cross-cultural studies could broaden the understanding of how PBL affects language learning in different cultural and educational contexts. Comparative research across countries could highlight universal principles of PBL effectiveness and culturally specific adaptations.

5) PBL's Impact on Other Language Skills

While this study focused on English-speaking skills, future research could explore how PBL influences other language skills such as reading, writing, and listening. Understanding its broader impact on language acquisition could provide a more comprehensive view of PBL's potential in language education.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that Project-Based Learning (PBL) significantly improved the English-speaking proficiency of Grade 9 students at Angsilapittayakom School, showcasing its potential as a transformative pedagogical approach in a Thai educational context. Through the comparison of pre- and post-intervention results, PBL was shown to enhance students' fluency, pronunciation, non-verbal communication, content delivery,

and creativity. The marked statistical improvement in their mean scores underscores PBL's ability to foster practical language skills through collaborative, contextually relevant tasks.

When compared to traditional Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), PBL proved more effective in addressing specific limitations of CLT, such as its inability to fully prepare students for unpredictable, real-world communication scenarios. By engaging students in hands-on, meaningful tasks, PBL promoted deeper language engagement and supported the development of broader cognitive skills like problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork.

These findings hold particular significance within the cultural and educational context of Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), where practical English proficiency is crucial for economic and professional opportunities. The success of PBL at Angsilapittayakom

School suggests that this approach may be particularly well-suited for schools in similar regions, where there is a need to align language education with local and global demands.

Grounded in educational theories emphasizing active participation and social interaction, this study reaffirms PBL's value in modern language education. By creating a meaningful, contextualized learning environment, PBL offers a compelling alternative to conventional methods, equipping students with the communication skills necessary for real-world success.

Future research could further explore the long-term impact of PBL and its adaptability to various educational settings. Specifically, studies could investigate how PBL can be scaled and tailored to resource-limited schools in rural or underprivileged regions, contributing to more equitable and effective language education strategies worldwide.

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