



## IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING PROFICIENCY AND MOTIVATION THROUGH PROBLEM-BASED APPROACH

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### Abstract

Project Based- Learning (PBL) is one of teaching technique where the students work in group project and it is required students for designing, planning, and carrying out an extended project that produces a publicly- exhibited output such as a product, publication, or presentation. Problem Based Learning (PBL) is a learning method through which the learners gain and develop upper level skills such as problem solving and critical thinking while eliciting information from personal real life experiences and acquiring determinate knowledge about their own learning. PBL has gained much currency among educators not only as a teaching approach but also as a radical philosophy that seeks to change the theory of teaching and learning. It is described as the most outstanding educational innovation in the 20th century. In this regard, the strength of the PBL approach resides in the following points: (1) relying on a reliable theory in the field of cognitive psychology; (2) calling for an active and central role of students; (3) minimizing the over-dominant role of instructors; (4) advocating self and peer assessment instead of teacher's assessment; (5) fostering students' critical and creative thinking; (6) relating learning to real world problems; and (7) enhancing students' motivation.

**Keywords:** Problem-Based Learning, Speaking proficiency, Motivation, Student-centered classroom

### Introduction

Speaking in the English language has been considered the most challenging of the four skills given the fact that it involves a complex process of constructing meaning. This process requires speakers to make decisions about why, how and when to communicate depending on the cultural and social context in which the speaking act occurs. Therefore, the key role of the speaking skill in developing learners' communicative competence has also become evident, since this skill requires learners to be in possession of knowledge about how to produce not only linguistically correct but also pragmatically appropriate utterances. Drawing on these considerations, this subtheme first outlines the advances that have been made in learning the skill of speaking over the last decades. It then considers how this knowledge becomes the basis for teaching speaking from a communicative perspective. Finally, it presents the importance of integrating this skill within a communicative competence framework





so that learners can acquire their English language communicative competence through speaking.

Ramelan [The Implementation of Crossword Puzzle game,1991] states that the poor mastery of English speaking of students is result of the old ways of teaching which do not give stress to the mastery of spoken language. It means the poorness of students' speaking ability becomes the problem of learning process because some teachers still use the old ways to teach the students as like the old methods and the teachers do not use the good media in the teaching learning process. They just concern on the theory not on the practiced.

Problem based learning is entirely different from deductive teaching. In the former, in each case, learners face a new/different event/problem, which is undefined. Learners are asked to identify the essential knowledge required in order to comprehend the problem. PBL is a method that requires learners to work in groups. Thus, learners learn to work collaboratively to find solutions for real-life problems. PBL is an instructional method aimed at preparing students for real-world settings. With requiring students to solve problems as the main format of instruction, PBL enhances students' learning outcomes by promoting their abilities and skills in applying knowledge, solving problems, practicing higher order thinking, and self-directing and reflecting their own learning. White emphasizes the role of the instructor in PBL, indicating that they play a critical role in helping students become self-directed learners and must create a classroom environment in which students "receive systematic instruction in conceptual, strategic, and reflective reasoning in the context of a discipline that will ultimately make them more successful in later investigations". In his research White also stresses that group work is also an essential aspect of PBL for several reasons. First, group work helps develop learning communities in which students feel comfortable developing new ideas and raising questions about the material

In addition, group work enhances communication skills and students' ability to manage group dynamics. Finally, group work is interesting and motivating for students because they become actively involved in the work and are held accountable for their actions by group members. For these reasons, group work can enhance student achievement. However, groups do not always work effectively without guidance. Usually the instructor facilitates and monitors group interactions because many students have not been taught how to work effectively in groups. Well designed, open-ended problems that require the input and skills of all group members also are essential to positive group work experiences. Yet, due to the individual nature of their responsibilities within the team, learners are also compelled to work in a student-





based style. The learning process is far more active. The teacher has various roles in this educational approach, namely the teacher is the narrator, resource supplier, and coach. Moreover, the PBL approach develops learners' critical thinking skills and teaches how to solve complicated real-life problems. This is a process during which learners discuss, debate, write, and consequently learn to work collaboratively in a group.

The main objectives of PBL approach are to structure new knowledge by creating an environment in which students can employ their previous knowledge with the one acquired during their problem-solving sessions, to develop flexible and extensive knowledge, to foster the acquisition of problem-solving and reasoning skills.

In other words, in the PBL approach, real learning takes place when learners practice problem-solving skills and develop their language skills. PBL approach was first introduced at McMaster University as an experiment model to evaluate whether learning acquired in school was relevant to future career. With the implementation of the PBL approach, students were required to first identify problems and then attempt to resolve them through inquiry and exploration. This necessitated that they learn key concepts and strategies necessary for resolving problems. Wu illustrates that the PBL approach can be implemented in full and in a hybrid or guided mode. The former type requires students to define the problem through exploration and understanding the scenario; to learn on their own, with teacher only facilitating and prompting them to give further clarification and explanation. No lectures are given by the teacher.

Eventually, students are required to work independently to offer best solutions to the problems under study and justify them. On the other hand, the hybrid mode, first introduced in Harvard Medical School takes a case-based approach wherein the teacher presents the problem case-scenario contextually, delivers lectures to explain basic concepts, defines its theoretical perspectives and divides students into groups requested to determine the problem(s) based on the facts, identify the issues and propose the best solutions based on their newly acquired knowledge and skills. The PBL approach is based on constructivism which postulates that learners' attitude, behavior and overall learning are based on their prior knowledge. According to Gijbels and Loyens, constructivism considers learning the ultimate outcome of the interaction between learner's current knowledge and new experiences acquired by the learner from the environment. Thus, the constructivists adopt a student-centered learning approach in which students are actively involved in a process of new knowledge construction [Liang & Gabel, the effects of using Problem-based learning, Research Gate 2005]. Similarly, Ben-Ari observes that, in order to construct new ideas or concepts and to pave the way for real interaction with prior knowledge, a learner must





be involved consistently into an act of mental balancing instead of obtaining information directly from the teacher. In this regard, learning environment plays a major role as it allows the learners to gain learning experiences, to retain learning and to improve problem-solving, critical and creative thinking skills.

Exploring what a student is expected to do in a PBL approach is of paramount significance. The PBL approach requires that the individual student should participate actively in his own learning and undertake the responsibility for identifying his or her learning needs and achieving the desired outcomes. Simultaneously, the students are expected to use the PBL approach with interdisciplinary, additional learning resources and apply measures, such as critical thinking, fun learning experiences or any contextualized issues to understand and gain knowledge. In conclusion, the study aimed at investigating how the PBL approach can be utilized to create a learning environment that will not only facilitate the improvement of students' speaking proficiency but can also result in positive changes in their motivation too.

### **Using PBL to Improve Students' Motivation**

Reviewing previous studies shows that the PBL approach seeks to provide learners with more choices, autonomy and self-determination to keep them motivated. For instance, Mossuto in his empirical study found out that using PBL in which learners studied in interactive groups and their learning depended on open-ended tasks was significant in triggering students' thinking throughout the learning process and keeping them highly motivated. Four variables were qualitatively investigated including students' attitude, satisfaction, motivation, and self-achievement. Findings revealed that students' attitude toward learning was positive and their motivation level was significantly high compared to the traditional group.

### **Using PBL to Improve Speaking**

In EFL context, several studies were conducted to assess the effectiveness of the PBL approach in developing speaking skills, for instance, examined the use of PBL approach in contrast with the traditional learning approach. Rosalina implemented PBL approach in an EFL university speaking class in Indonesia. Her study revealed that the use of PBL not only improved students' speaking skills but also positively affected the other relevant components such as grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.







## **The role and influence of various activities of Problem-Based Approach in the classroom**

Problem-based learning (PBL) provides real-world, purposeful interactions to help graduate and undergraduate students learn how to work with and learn from a diverse group of people laterally and horizontally within a learning community. At the same time, information technology in the 21st century provides the opportunity to integrate learner support into PBL learning environments. PBL and technology provide the opportunity for communities to grow and learn together. Various types of activities implementing PBL shape the classroom activities and reform the roles and duties of undergraduates and teachers as well.

In the 21st century up-to-date, promptly adaptable, practical knowledge form the base for successful career, competitive advantage, success and achievements in the life of graduates. Professional knowledge and language competencies are among the skills and knowledge that promote career and success in life. The boom and buzz words of the 21st century like lifelong learning, promptly adaptable knowledge, self-directed study, multimedia or information society all reflect the significant characteristics of the information society. In the 'learning society' the attitude to learning, the structure and organization of the learning process have been changing. The teaching-learning process moves from the 'product-based' to 'process-based' learning, and, in parallel, both content and structure of lessons encourages students to engage in active and meaningful learning. The learning environment facilitates such instructional methods that require learners to actively gather and apply knowledge, therefore, takes another shape in which the student's as well as the teacher's roles and duties alter.

### **The Structure of the Lesson**

The structure of the lesson, the students' roles and their activity, as well as the teacher's role significantly differs from the conventional roles in the traditional teaching-learning environment. Schmidt determined the phases of a PBL lesson in seven steps. The tutorials practically are split into two, since the evaluation and assessment of a problem is conducted in the following tutorial. The table below presents these seven steps:





Steps	Activities in and outside the tutorial
<b>1 Clarify terms and concepts that are not clear</b>	Clear away unnecessary obstacles such as terms and concepts that are unknown or not understood
<b>2 Define the Problem</b>	Clarify the problem that is to be solved by formulating one or more questions Give possible explanations base on prior knowledge. No discussion: brainstorming.
<b>3 Analyze the problem</b>	Give as many different explanations as possible on the basis of prior knowledge, practical experience or your own ideas.
<b>4 Discussion</b>	Discuss the possible explanations of step 3. Make the connection between them clear. What knowledge is lacking?
<b>5 Formulate learning goals</b>	On the basis of the results of step 4, formulate learning assignments in the form of questions that have to be answered.
<b>6 Self study</b>	Look for literature and sources of information to gain knowledge and understanding of the subjects that are formulated in the learning goals. First, study the theoretical concepts, than apply these to the problem afterwards
<b>7 Evaluation</b>	The agenda of the evaluation is determined by the learning goals formulated in the previous step. Take stock of the used sources of information. Discuss the theories and explanations that were found for the problem. Formulate in your own words (do not read out!). Have the learning goals been reached?

## Conclusion

The research shows that the effectiveness can be achieved through PBL in language acquisition. According to the results of the students, it can be concluded that materials of PBL can provide twice as much results as the lessons held. It is because not only it helps to have a clear image of what is being taught, but also it provides great motivation and interest in the lessons. It is known that motivation is more important than the attempt with no interests. As PBL such as round table discussions with posters, case studies, diaries and debates with weighty matters to discuss can give the information to the learners, the teacher will not have to make a lot of effort explaining the topics in detail. Therefore, they will have more time concentrating on the organization of the lesson without being tired, which means the efficiency can be achieved when materials come to help.

In conclusion, problem-based learning in the student-centered classroom maximizes the student's involvement in the learning process. Within a PBL student-centered classroom, students are able to use the knowledge they have and apply it towards a





meaningful problem. Students start to see how the knowledge they learn helps them to solve problems in life, therefore giving them a love for learning and turning them into lifelong learners. As education learns to embrace this new type of teaching, teachers will have to learn to give the control of the problem and the classroom to the students. Teachers need to take on a new role in the classroom; they themselves need to become part of the learning process, acting as a guide and a resource for the students. Once a teacher learns to become part of the learning process, and students are immersed in the problem, knowledge flows freely and students learn to apply their knowledge in meaningful and productive ways.

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