The Use of Project-based Learning in EFL Classrooms: A Literature Review

El uso del aprendizaje basado en proyectos en las aulas de inglés como lengua extranjera: una revisión bibliográfica

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Resumen

El aprendizaje basado en proyectos (ABP) es un enfoque pedagógico innovador que se centra en la participación activa de los alumnos en proyectos del mundo real para adquirir conocimientos mejorando la competencia lingüística de forma auténtica. Este estudio tiene como objetivo explorar el uso del ABP en las aulas de inglés como lengua extranjera, identificando las estrategias pedagógicas y las experiencias de los profesores al implementar este enfoque. Se utilizó una revisión cualitativa integrativa como metodología de investigación para analizar la literatura de 29 artículos provenientes de varias bases de datos, tales como Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO, ResearchGate y Redalyc, empleando criterios de inclusión y exclusión. Los resultados se agrupan en tres categorías: Estudios sobre el ABP en las aulas de inglés como lengua extranjera, estrategias pedagógicas que integran el ABP para fomentar el habla y experiencias de los docentes al implementar el ABP. Se concluye que el uso del ABP en las aulas de inglés como lengua extranjera es un enfoque adecuado para fomentar las habilidades de expresión oral a través de la interacción social mientras se trabaja en proyectos.

Palabras clave: Aprendizaje Basado en Proyectos; inglés como lengua extranjera; destreza del habla; Teoría del Constructivismo Social; estrategias pedagógicas; experiencias de los profesores

Abstract

Project-based Learning (PBL) is an innovative instructional approach that centers on students actively engaging in real-world projects to acquire knowledge and authentically enhance language proficiency. This study explores the use of PBL in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, identifying pedagogical strategies and teachers' experiences when implementing this approach. A qualitative integrative review was used as the research methodology to analyze the literature from 29 articles from several databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO, ResearchGate, and Redalyc, employing inclusion and exclusion criteria. The results are grouped into three categories: Studies on PBL in EFL Classrooms, Pedagogical strategies that integrate PBL to foster Speaking, and Teachers' experiences when implementing PBL.

Using PBL in EFL Classrooms is an adequate approach to fostering Speaking skills through social interaction while working on projects.

Keywords: Project-based Learning; EFL; Speaking skill; Social Constructivism Theory; pedagogical strategies; teachers' experiences

Introduction

English teachers have widely used different methodologies to engage students with learning experiences. Project-based Learning, a strategy rooted in social constructivism and a learning theory propounded by Lev Vygotsky in 1962, uses a project or activity as a medium that lets learners transfer knowledge and skills through experiences and interactions (Mujiono et al., 2023; Vera et al., 2020). As Vygotsky prominently highlighted in his theory, knowledge is constructed through human activity, reality is created jointly by members of a society, learning is an active and social process, individuals make meaning through interactions with others, and meaningful learning happens when individuals engage in social activities. The philosophy of PBL considers that learning is more engaged when triggered by a student's "I need to know" than by a teacher's "because you should know" (Lenz et al., 2015, p. 68).

One of the significant limitations that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners encounter in their language learning process is that they only have a few opportunities to practice speaking outside the classroom. According to Cahyana et al. (2022), Mafruudloh et al. (2020), and Ratna et al. (2019), PBL is an alternative to teaching speaking because it is a student-centered, cooperative teaching-learning process that gives students more opportunities to share their ideas and help each other deal with their problems in speaking while working on real-world projects. Furthermore, Sanz and Sanchez (2021) consider PBL to be one of the effective hands-on methods closely related to the communicative approach (CA) or communicative language teaching (CLT).

Most empirical and theoretical articles come from Eastern countries, and they refer to studies focused on how PBL enhances learners' engagement, collaboration, and communication skills. So, it means an opportunity to contribute to EFL teachers in our context, where the application of PBL is recent. There is a pressing need for practical communication skills in diverse, real-world scenarios, preparing students for the complexities of a globalized and interconnected world.

This study uses the integrative qualitative method to gather and analyze studies that become relevant in a specific field according to the researchers' opinions. Consequently, this review aims to explore previous studies on PBL in EFL classrooms to identify pedagogical strategies and teaching experiences in its implementation. The rapid evolution of student-centered EFL teaching-learning approaches has transformed educational paradigms worldwide. In this context, where educational challenges may differ, the need arises to understand profoundly this approach. How is PBL used in EFL classrooms to foster speaking skills? What are the teachers' experiences in developing assignments through PBL? These questions motivate this study, which seeks to contribute to educators and researchers in developing evidence-based practices and making informed decisions.

Materials and methods

This paper uses an integrative qualitative method, like Snyder's (2019), which is more flexible and acceptable for topics needing a more well-defined body of research. It means using various sources and search engines to understand the existing studies, even if the search process is not strictly systematic. Therefore, this review explores using PBL in EFL classrooms to enhance speaking skills. The study focuses on the procedures, scaffolds, and strategies developed by teachers who executed this approach. It analyzes teachers' experiences who integrated PBL as their primary approach to fostering speaking in their students.

The search strategy for this Integrative Review was based on a keyword search. Thus, Google Scholar was selected as the primary search engine because of its universal familiarity. Searches were conducted using the combination of the following keywords: "Project-based learning," "EFL," and "Speaking." Furthermore, additional online databases, such as Scopus, SciELO, Web of Science, Redalyc, and Research Gate, were checked, and inclusion and exclusion criteria were added to reduce bias and ensure more comprehensive coverage of the literature relevant to the research questions.

According to Snyder (2019), the criteria that can be considered and are commonly used to write a literature review are year of publication, language of the article, type, and journal. Based on the criteria, this research included peer-reviewed EFL journal articles regarding Project-based learning in EFL to foster speaking skills, excluding theses, conference papers, technical reports, or discussion papers (that do not discuss the study procedures).

Additionally, empirical articles (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies) were considered for the review. Moreover, the criteria covered Spanish and English articles published within the last five years.

The initial searches, with 6624 articles, provided a good overview of the literature related to Project-based learning. However, the number of studies decreased significantly after thoroughly screening titles and abstracts and evaluating full texts using the defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. As a result, 29 articles were produced, which formed the results. As Halim et al. (2023) and Whittemore and Knafl (2005) suggest, all the studies examined in this paper were analyzed and registered in a reference matrix.

The review is divided into three sections. First, the status of research on how PBL enhances speaking skills is analyzed, and scientific production is presented by years of publication and continents of origin. Second, empirical studies integrating this approach within EFL curricula were reviewed to discuss the pedagogical strategies, such as key scaffolding techniques and

the implementation of technological tools that best benefit speaking skill development in specific contexts and learner groups. Finally, the teachers' experiences are included so researchers can identify best practices, potential pitfalls, and areas for improvement, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of how PBL can be optimally integrated into EFL educational practices.

Analysis and Results

The results are organized into three sections: 1) Studies on PBL in EFL Classrooms, 2) Pedagogical strategies that integrate PBL to foster Speaking, and 3) Teachers' experiences when implementing PBL. A summary of its content can be seen in Figure 1, which shows that the method used is qualitative integrative and groups the content of the review into three major categories.

Figure 1

Summary of the three categories of the Literature Review on using PBL in EFL Classrooms
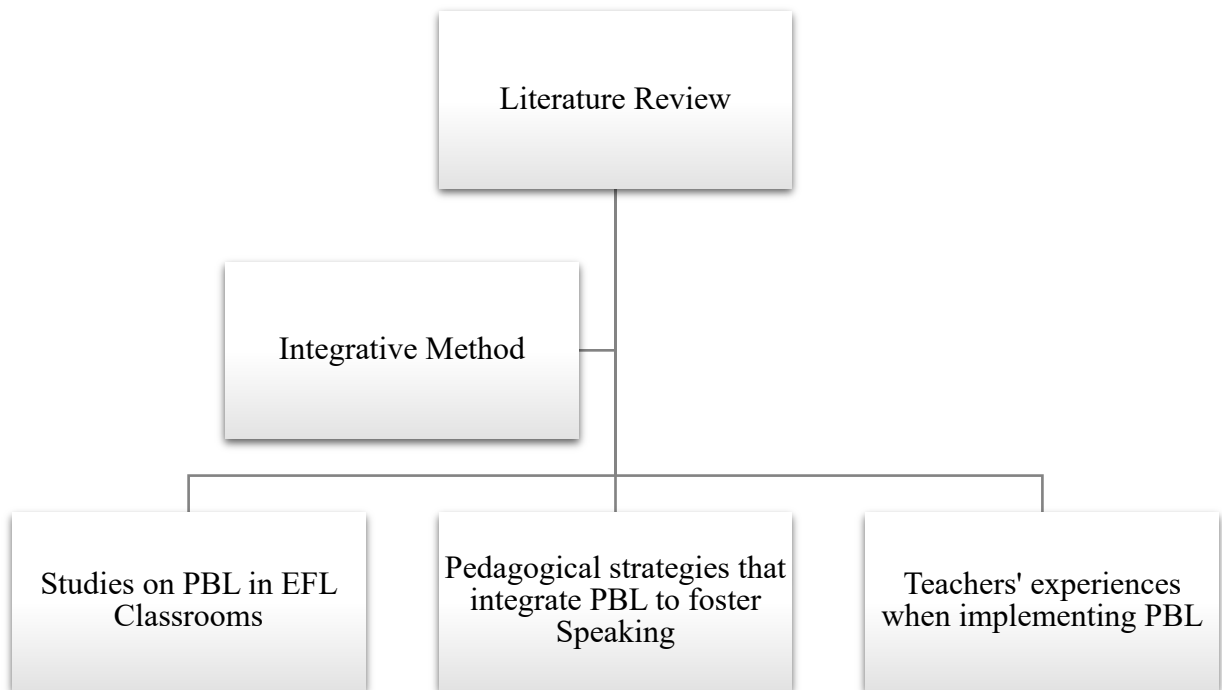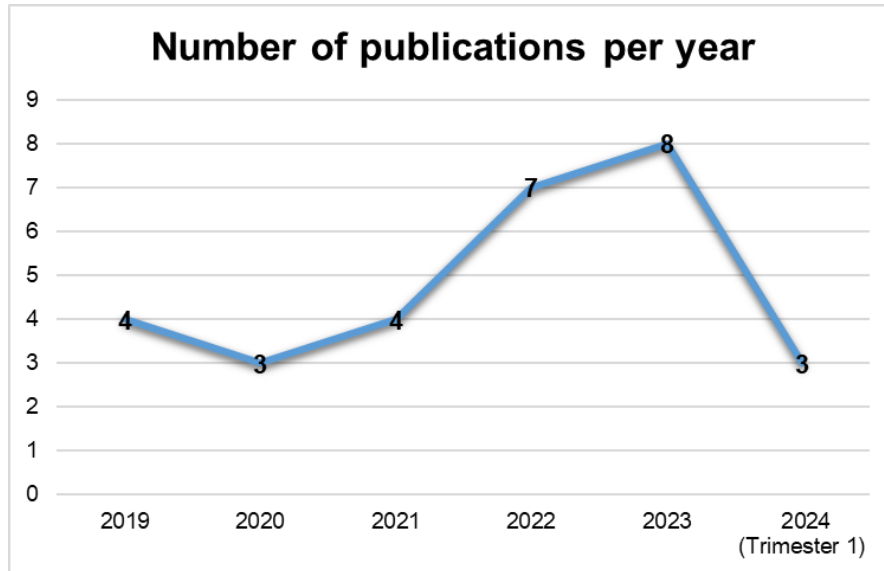

Source: Own elaboration

1. **Studies on PBL in EFL Classrooms**

This section shows the current research results on using Project-based Learning in EFL classrooms to foster speaking skills. Figure 2 summarizes the amount of scientific production linked to the research topic per year from 2019 until now.

Figure 2

Publications per year

Source: Own elaboration

The analyzed articles related to the research topic have been published in the established years of publication: 2023 has the highest number of publications, with eight contributions from different journals; 2020 has the lowest number of articles, with only three; and three articles based on the proposed research have already been published in the first trimester of 2024. Consequently, the results show increased scientific production between 2019 and 2024. The following figure shows the distribution of scientific production by continent of origin.

Figure 3

Distribution of scientific production by continent of origin

Distribution of scientific production by continent of origin
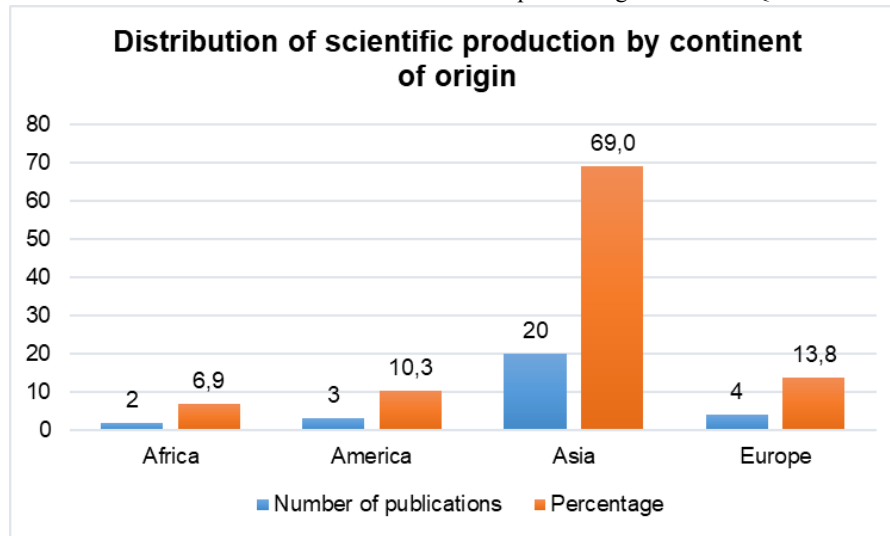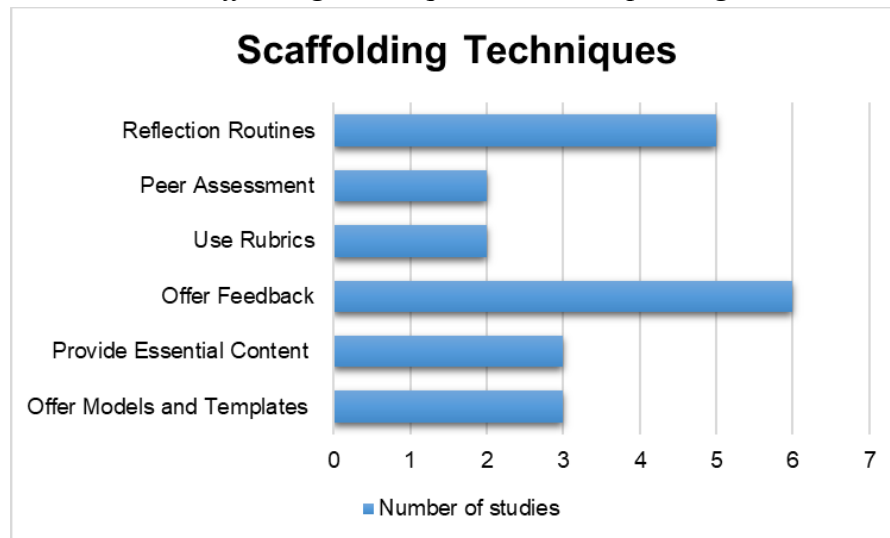
Source: Own elaboration

With twenty articles, 69% of scientific production comes from the Asian continent, followed by Europe, with four articles representing 13.8%; America, with three articles equivalent to 10.3%; and Africa, with two articles equivalent to 6.9%.

2. Pedagogical strategies that integrate PBL to foster Speaking

2.1. Key Scaffolding Techniques

This cluster introduces several scaffolding techniques EFL teachers applied in their classes when assigning activities through PBL to foster Speaking. Figure 4 illustrates the number of studies that address each technique.

Figure 4

Scaffolding Techniques to Foster Speaking

Source: Own elaboration

Twenty-one articles contain substantial information regarding scaffolding techniques teachers implement within the PBL Framework to enhance Speaking. "Offer feedback" is the most popular technique mentioned in six studies, followed by "Reflection routines" brought up in five investigations; "Offer models and templates" and "Provide essential content" reported in three articles each; and "Use Rubrics" and "Peer assessment" suggested in two research papers each.

2.1.1. Offer Models and Templates

Teachers engage learners by demonstrating how to accomplish a skill and explaining each step with a rationale. This technique gives students a visual and verbal sample of what they will be required to achieve; however, it merits closer examination. Butarbutar et al. (2023) highlight the importance of students observing models or factual presentations before engaging in speech crafting, asserting that such exposure is a vital preparatory step. Nugroho and Anugerahwati (2019) also consider that as a language learning strategy, the teacher should give a specific example to make learners understand the standards and expectations for their work. Sundus and Majed (2024) further underscore the multifaceted nature of data collection in PBL, emphasizing the role of teachers in providing resources and introducing diverse methodologies such as interviews, questionnaires, and library searches. Educators can offer students the necessary tools for inquiry and the guidance needed to navigate the complexities of real-world projects effectively.

2.1.2. Provide Essential Content

Providing essential content during the research, planning, and preparation stages is a pivotal scaffolding technique. Guslyakova et al. (2021) reveal a common challenge young EFL learners encounter: insufficient vocabulary impedes their ability to effectively engage with project tasks, leading them to revert to their native language. To address this issue, teachers must manage preliminary groundwork by introducing relevant vocabulary and communication phrases, thus mitigating the reliance on the native language during PBL activities. Moreover, Solorzano and Loor (2023) advocate for supplementary sessions outside regular class hours to enrich students' understanding and skill development within the project framework. They consider educators vital in providing vital content and creating opportunities for deeper engagement and reinforcement of language skills essential for project success.

2.1.3. Offer Feedback

Most researchers highlight this scaffolding technique. Winasih et al. (2019) shed light on incorporating feedback into the PBL process, where students present draft oral presentations during the monitoring stage, receiving guidance and feedback from their teacher. This iterative process of delivering, receiving feedback, and revising refines students' oral communication skills and reinforces their understanding of project content. Similarly, Kemaloglu-Er (2022) emphasizes the significance of feedback during the oral presentation stage, where students undergo intensive training and subsequently receive evaluations from both their teacher and peers using rubrics. The feedback obtained catalyzes improvement, guiding students toward effective communication practices.

Besides, Butarbutar et al. (2023) stress the importance of post-presentation discussions, enabling students to reflect on their performance and receive feedback on audience response and delivery style. This reflective process fosters self-awareness and promotes continuous growth in speaking proficiency. Additionally, Sundus and Majed (2024) focus on integrating language enhancement activities within the project framework, emphasizing the role of feedback in refining oral presentations and written texts. Eneko (2023) further champions the relevance of feedback in enhancing students' oral skills, attributing its efficacy to the iterative nature of speaking activities and the opportunities they afford for rehearsal and practice. Solorzano and Loor (2023) reinforce the importance of ongoing monitoring and feedback provision by teachers throughout the project development process, ensuring adequate progress and skill development.

2.1.4. Use Rubrics

Winasih et al. (2019) emphasize integrating scoring rubrics for speaking and multimedia presentations, facilitating a structured assessment process within the PBL framework. Their study demonstrates the tangible benefits of employing rubrics, as evidenced by the higher speaking ability scores attained by students in the experimental group compared to those in

the control group. They explain that rubrics clarify evaluation criteria and enhance students' speaking proficiency. Similarly, Kemaloglu-Er (2022) elucidates a comprehensive feedback mechanism involving analytic and holistic rubrics in evaluating oral presentations and project processes. Including peer evaluation and self-assessment enriches the feedback loop, empowering students to reflect on their performance and project progression. Teachers offer structured feedback and cultivate students' metacognitive awareness and self-regulation skills through rubrics, essential for ongoing improvement.

Furthermore, rubrics' dual function of assessing language and content-related aspects underscores their versatility and relevance in EFL speaking skill development within PBL.

2.1.5. Peer Assessment

Peer assessment is a dynamic and effective scaffolding technique. Widyastuti (2021) accentuates the positive impact of peer assessment in improving students' speaking proficiency and fostering a deeper understanding of correct pronunciation through corrective feedback. Students refine their speaking skills and develop a heightened awareness of language errors in the assessment process. In addition, the interactive nature of peer assessment, where students assess and be assessed, promotes a collaborative learning environment and empowers students to take ownership of their learning when evaluating their peers' oral presentations.

Additionally, Kemaloglu-Er (2022) elaborates on the structured implementation of peer assessment using analytic rubrics, which provides a systematic framework for evaluating presentation quality and providing targeted feedback. Rubrics ensure consistency and transparency in assessment criteria, facilitating meaningful peer-to-peer feedback exchanges. Peer assessment benefits the students' evaluative skills, reinforcing their understanding of speaking proficiency criteria and fostering a sense of responsibility towards their peers' learning outcomes.

2.1.6. Reflection Routines

Integrating reflection routines in PBL promotes metacognitive awareness, fostering continuous improvement and facilitating meaningful learning experiences. Winasih et al. (2019) focus on encouraging student reflection in the final stages of the project, providing an opportunity for learners to critically evaluate their experiences and learning outcomes. This reflective process enables students to consolidate their learning, identify areas of strength and improvement, and derive insights for future projects, enhancing their speaking skills through self-assessment and self-directed learning. On the other hand, Guslyakova et al. (2021) advocate for regular reflection sessions after each PBL class, where both teachers and students engage in discussions to analyze the lesson's effectiveness and identify areas for refinement. This collaborative reflection promotes a sense of ownership and accountability among students and enables educators to adapt instructional strategies to meet learners' needs better. Sundus and Majed (2024) further elucidate the integral role of reflection in the project

work process, underlining its contribution to students' understanding of language acquisition, content mastery, and procedural knowledge.

Similarly, Mantilla et al. (2020) stress the centrality of classroom interaction and reflection, emphasizing the reciprocal nature of teacher and student reflection throughout the pre-, during, and post-speaking phases. This iterative process of reflection enhances instructional effectiveness and nurtures a supportive learning environment conducive to language acquisition and skill development.

2.2. The Use of Technological Tools in PBL

Integrating technological tools within Project-based Learning (PBL) as a pedagogical strategy to foster EFL speaking skills represents a significant advancement in language instruction. It offers unique opportunities for innovation, engagement, and skill development. Table 1 summarizes the findings researchers encountered in their studies. Types of technological tools and authors sort them.

Table 1

Technological tools within PBL to foster Speaking

Technological tools	Authors	Findings
Digital Tools	Winasih, Cahyono, and Prayogo (2019)	Students exposed to PBL using e-posters significantly outperformed those taught through conventional methods, facilitating skill development.
Mobile applications	Nugroho and Anugerahwati (2019)	Vlogs enhance students' fluency, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary, and content mastery.
	Ikhsanuddin and Purwoko (2022)	TikTok fosters collaborative learning and provides language and media scaffolding opportunities.
	Kusmaryani and Tanjung (2023)	YouTube, Instagram, Duolingo, and Speech to Text are versatile tools for practicing EFL skills.
Artificial Intelligence	Kuswahyuningsih, Giyoto, Untari and Bustany (2023)	ORAI serves as a personal speech coach, giving users instant feedback on their speaking performance.

Source: Own elaboration

2.2.1. Digital Tools

Winasih et al. (2019) present compelling evidence of the efficacy of this approach by examining students' speaking ability following instruction through PBL utilizing e-posters as a final product. By combining Information and Communication Technology (ICT) with the traditional poster format, teachers aim to enhance the visual appeal, effectiveness, and efficiency of delivering ideas, creating a dynamic learning environment conducive to language acquisition. The findings of their study indicate that students exposed to PBL using e-posters significantly outperformed those taught through conventional methods, highlighting the potential of technological tools to facilitate meaningful learning experiences and skill development.

2.2.2. Mobile Applications

Nugroho and Anugerahwati (2019) demonstrate the efficacy of utilizing Vlog, a platform combining video content with blogging capabilities, to enhance students' speaking and digital literacy skills. Vlog applications, accessible on smartphones, engage students in authentic communication experiences when they create and upload videos to their blogs' YouTube channels. The findings of their study demonstrate that PBL through Vlog enhanced students' fluency, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary, and content mastery, stressing the potential of mobile applications to facilitate comprehensive language skill development.

Likewise, Ikhsanuddin and Purwoko (2022) emphasize using TikTok as a medium for students to create and share videos, while social media platforms serve as channels for communication among peers and between students and teachers. Integrating mobile applications within PBL fosters collaborative learning and provides language and media scaffolding opportunities, guiding students through the complexities of language production and digital literacy. Kusmaryani and Tanjung (2023) also highlight various mobile applications in language instruction, including YouTube, Instagram, Duolingo, and Speech to Text. These apps offer students versatile tools for practicing English skills, accessing materials, and completing assignments. The convenience and accessibility of mobile applications in the classroom are reflected in students' perceptions, indicating a positive impact on learning experiences and outcomes.

Though mobile applications in PBL have shown promise in enhancing speaking skills, Huang and Sun (2022) point out the need to critically examine their influence on oral proficiency, including fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. While PBL positively influences speaking proficiency, the impact on fluency and lexical resources appears more significant than grammar and pronunciation. This inconsistency may stem from the communicative nature of PBL projects, prioritizing fluency and content-related vocabulary over grammatical accuracy and pronunciation. Furthermore, selecting project types within PBL can further influence the focus on fluency rather than grammar and pronunciation practice.

2.2.3. Artificial Intelligence

AI represents a groundbreaking pedagogical strategy to enhance EFL speaking skills by offering personalized and real-time feedback to learners. Kuswahyuningsih et al. (2023) explain the functionality of ORAI as a mobile app designed to improve public speaking skills, targeting young professionals and students alike. ORAI serves as a personal speech coach, providing users with instant feedback on various aspects of their speaking performance, including pace, clarity, energy level, and the identification of filler words. Providing a speech transcript further enables learners to pinpoint areas for improvement, fostering self-awareness and targeted practice. This innovative approach addresses a common challenge in public speaking and empowers learners to develop their speaking abilities confidently.

Combining PBL and ORAI improves students' speaking skills, particularly in recounting tasks. They underline the efficacy of integrating AI-driven tools within pedagogical practices to boost language learning outcomes. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of teachers selecting appropriate media, emphasizing that teachers must be able to choose suitable media, not limited to conventional media such as mixes and tape recorders.

3. Teachers' Experiences when Implementing PBL

Project-based learning is increasingly considered a practical pedagogical approach in English EFL classrooms.

However, implementing PBL is often hindered by various challenges, such as the lack of teacher training workshops on PBL, classroom overcrowdedness, the lack of teaching and learning materials and infrastructure, time and labor consumption, students' attitudes and language proficiency, and teachers' engagement.

Moussaoui and Erguig (2024), Pérez et al. (2022), and Ram (2022) emphasize the need to understand teachers' experiences when implementing Project-Based Learning (PBL) to improve teaching methods. Teachers can lead to more effective educational practices by identifying successful strategies and addressing obstacles.

3.1. The lack of teacher training workshops on PBL

Pérez et al. (2022) emphasize the significance of teacher experience, highlighting that educators' inexperience in implementing PBL contributes to their struggles. Consequently, Baghoussi and El Ouchdi (2019) and Moussaoui and Erguig (2024) agree that teachers may need more pedagogical knowledge and skills to design and facilitate meaningful PBL experiences for their students.

Moussaoui and Erguig (2024) state that teachers face challenges balancing guidance and student autonomy. They focus on training to develop facilitation skills. They firmly believe that with adequate preparation, educators may be able to relinquish control and adopt a more learner-centered approach, undermining PBL's transformative potential.

Furthermore, Bhandari (2021) stresses the role of training in fostering teacher competence and confidence, assuring that effective PBL requires educators who are knowledgeable about the methodology and adept at motivating and guiding students through authentic inquiry processes.

Besides, Garib (2023) emphasizes the need for training to effectively leverage technology within the PBL framework, given the growing emphasis on technology integration in education. He also considers that while technology offers opportunities to enhance learning experiences and facilitate collaboration, educators require specialized training to harness its full potential and effectively address potential challenges.

3.2. Classroom overcrowdedness

Baghoussi and El Ouchdi (2019) say that 90% of teachers struggled to apply PBL, with overcrowded classrooms identified as a primary impediment. Teachers encounter substantial difficulties maintaining control and managing the class effectively in a classroom with more than twenty-five students. This obstacle can disrupt the project's flow, hindering students' engagement and learning outcomes. Latifaj (2022) echoes this sentiment, identifying classroom management as a pressing challenge for teachers implementing PBL. The sheer number of students also poses a logistical challenge as teachers need help to provide individualized attention and support to each student throughout the project process.

Furthermore, they agree that time scarcity exacerbates the challenges posed by overcrowded classrooms. Limited instructional time constrains teachers, forcing them to prioritize certain aspects of the project at the expense of others. As a result, opportunities for in-depth exploration, reflection, and collaboration are affected, undermining the holistic objectives of PBL, which include fostering critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and collaborative learning among students.

3.3. The lack of teaching and learning materials and infrastructure

Baghoussi and El Ouchdi (2019) identify a need for more essential resources such as computers, video projectors, posters, and photocopying machines as a significant obstacle teachers face in implementing PBL. Similarly, Bhandari (2021) underscores the importance of spacious classrooms equipped with modern technologies to support successful PBL implementation. Pérez et al. (2022) consider infrastructure and internet connection problems among the external factors teachers deal with when using PBL.

Essential technological tools such as computers and video projectors facilitate interactive learning experiences and engage students in authentic inquiry. With access to these resources, teachers can create immersive learning environments that stimulate student curiosity and creativity, igniting a new passion for learning.

Furthermore, the absence of teaching aids such as posters and visual materials limits teachers' ability to scaffold student understanding and reinforce key concepts effectively. Visual representations are crucial in clarifying abstract concepts and accommodating diverse

learning styles, making them indispensable in PBL contexts where inquiry-based exploration is paramount.

3.4. Time and labor consumption

Zhong (2023) notes that teachers often express concerns about the time and effort required to implement PBL effectively. Pérez et al. (2022) further emphasize that teachers encounter an excessive workload when employing PBL methodologies. Ram (2022) agrees that time management is a significant issue EFL teachers engaged in PBL face. According to Ram, designing, assigning, and evaluating projects within the constraints of a limited timeframe poses a considerable challenge.

Additionally, Kemaloglu-Er (2022) underscores the arduous nature of PBL implementation, particularly regarding the detailed assessment and feedback required from teachers, and emphasizes the need for extensive written and oral feedback and the effort invested in motivating students throughout the process. The teacher described by Kemaloglu-Er acknowledges the exhaustion resulting from the continuous support and encouragement needed to keep students engaged in the project.

3.5. Students' attitudes and language proficiency

Baghoussi and El Ouchdi (2019) consider the lack of motivation among students with language difficulties a significant challenge for teachers, inhibiting active participation and engagement in PBL activities.

In parallel, Yamada (2020) points out the importance of considering students' attitudes toward PBL. While some students may actively engage in project-based activities, others may need more motivation, specifically if they are accustomed to traditional teacher-centered instruction. This mixed perception reflects the influence of individual differences, learning experiences, and cultural backgrounds on students' preferences and engagement in PBL.

Ram (2022) identifies language proficiency as a critical factor influencing students' participation in PBL. Students with low proficiency in English may be less interested in collaborative learning, self-directed learning, and problem-solving approaches inherent in PBL. On the other hand, students with higher language proficiency may dominate learning processes, creating a divide between stronger and weaker students and impeding the successful implementation of PBL. Furthermore, personality constraints can impact students' participation in collaborative learning activities (Ram, 2022). Shy and introverted learners may be less likely to engage in group work. At the same time, active and extroverted students may dominate, discouraging others from participating fully, and it can interfere with the effectiveness of collaborative learning environments essential for PBL.

In addition, Maqbulin (2023) underscores the challenge of students' readiness for independence and reliance on teacher-led instruction. This dependence on the teacher inhibits students' ability to construct their knowledge.

Moreover, Zhong (2023) observes that learners' tendency to use their native language instead of the target language for group interactions constitutes a significant obstacle to language learning within the PBL framework.

3.6. Teachers' engagement

Widiyati and Pangesti (2022) draw their attention to the positive impact of PBL on students' speaking ability, indicating a substantial improvement after implementing PBL. Yamada (2020) finds teachers motivated to enhance their teaching practices to implement PBL and engage with students more effectively.

Likewise, Pérez et al. (2022) affirm that teachers demonstrated adeptness in shielding students from external factors that could disrupt the PBL process or compromise the quality of student work. It suggests teachers' high dedication and commitment to creating a conducive learning environment for PBL implementation, ensuring students can focus on the project tasks without unnecessary distractions.

Discussion

This study examined 29 articles from Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO, ResearchGate, and Redalyc for trends and findings. Based on this research, Project-based learning (PBL) is about actively getting students involved. It enhances learning through hands-on activities, experimentation, problem-solving, teamwork, and collaboration. Students develop their understanding, communication and social skills, and a sense of responsibility through working together. Correspondingly, Bell (2010) points out that PBL revolutionizes the classroom environment by instilling essential 21st-century skills in students. It stimulates curiosity and inquiry, enabling students to research and construct projects demonstrating their knowledge collaboratively. Similarly, Blumenfeld et al. (2011) further emphasize that PBL transcends the boundaries of a mere teaching technique. They perceive it as a holistic approach to education, actively involving students in exploring real-world issues.

The use of PBL in EFL classrooms is recent within the Latin American context and merits further investigation; most empirical research studies on this topic belong to Asia and Europe. Nevertheless, they provide EFL teachers with substantial strategies to be replicated, evaluated, and improved locally. In addition, the current literature reviews are systematic, so they do not critically tackle the teachers' procedures and experiences when applying PBL in ELT. Despite that, Halim et al. (2023), Adilah (2023), and Dawson (2023) concluded in their systematic reviews that using this teaching method in speaking classes is highly advised to increase students' speaking proficiency.

The data reveals an evident increase in scientific production regarding PBL in EFL classrooms to foster Speaking in 2023, which means this topic is gaining popularity worldwide.

This article embraces various pedagogical strategies that integrate PBL effectively within EFL curricula. The scaffolding techniques that best benefit speaking skill development in specific contexts and learner groups include offering models and templates, providing essential content, offering feedback, using rubrics, promoting peer assessment, and encouraging reflection routines.

As Butarbutar et al. (2023) and Nugroho and Anugerahwati (2019) previously stated, offering models and templates is crucial when implementing PBL. Nevertheless, educators must remain vigilant against the risk of overreliance on templates, which could inadvertently stifle creativity and inhibit critical thinking skills development. By doing it appropriately, PBL encourages learners to become independent and more competent in English speaking skills (Sirisrimangkorn, 2018).

Solorzano and Loor (2023) added that providing essential content is a valuable strategy to avoid learners using their native language while working on projects; they consider it imperative to carry out supplementary sessions that are carefully integrated into the curriculum to maintain coherence and maximize learning outcomes.

According to the findings, feedback integration within PBL is the most popular scaffolding technique for enhancing EFL speaking skills. Winasih et al. (2019), Kemaloglu-Er (2022), Butarbutar et al. (2023), Sundus and Majed (2024), Eneko (2023), Solorzano and Loor (2023), Huang and Sun (2022) clearly stated the relevance of feedback in fostering learners' speaking skills in terms of understanding, delivery style, pronunciation, and grammar.

Besides, Winasih et al. (2019) and Kemaloglu-Er (2022) pointed out that using rubrics is essential since it provides the evaluation criteria, letting the learners reflect on their progress and enhancing metacognition and self-regulation for ongoing improvement.
Vygotsky (1978) suggested that social learning directly ignites cognitive growth. Social constructivism theory implies that individuals, regardless of skill level, can learn through adult guidance or peer collaboration. It recommends creating avenues for students to work with teachers and classmates to construct knowledge and understanding collectively.

Consequently, peer assessment is a dynamic and relevant strategy because of its interactive nature. Widyastuti (2021) highlighted its positive impact in improving students' speaking proficiency, accentuating learners better understand correct pronunciation through corrective

feedback. Despite its benefits, addressing potential bias and variability in feedback quality is vital.

Reflection routines are a great way to evaluate experiences and learning outcomes when implementing PBL in EFL classrooms. However, as Guslyakova et al. (2021) and Mantilla et al. (2020) suggested, regular reflection sessions after each PBL class are necessary to identify areas for refinement and enable teachers to adapt strategies to meet learners' needs better.

Another pedagogical strategy includes using technological tools to foster Speaking when implementing PBL successfully. According to the results, e-posters, vlogs, YouTube, Instagram, Duolingo, and speech text were effectively integrated, improving the learners' speaking ability. However, potential challenges such as access limitations, digital literacy disparities, and teacher training and support must be addressed. Educators must also ensure that technology integration aligns with pedagogical goals, promotes critical thinking, and enhances rather than detracts from the authenticity of the learning experience.

Moreover, combining PBL and Artificial Intelligence is an innovative pedagogical strategy for fostering EFL Speaking skills (Kuswahyuningsih et al., 2023). However, it also presents challenges related to access and the need for teacher training. Consequently, teachers must consider integrating AI, ensuring it complements rather than replaces traditional pedagogical approaches.

This paper also tackled the teachers' experiences when assigning activities through PBL. Based on the research findings, teacher training is one of teachers' most significant challenges. Pérez et al. (2022), Baghoussi and El Ouchdi (2019), Moussaoui and Erguig (2024), and Garib (2023) affirm that effective PBL requires experienced educators.

Addressing the deficiency of teacher training workshops on PBL demands concerted efforts at multiple levels. Educational institutions must prioritize providing professional development opportunities to improve educators' abilities for successful PBL implementation.

Additionally, Baghoussi and El Ouchdi (2019) and Latifaj (2022) emphasized that teachers who face overcrowdedness encounter difficulties in classroom management, affecting learners' engagement and learning outcomes. It is a joint concern for educators and policymakers. Professional development should focus on effective classroom management and differentiation strategies. Teachers can enhance classroom engagement through innovative approaches like technology integration and flexible grouping. Proactive measures at institutional and classroom levels, including class size reduction and targeted professional

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development, can create conducive learning environments and foster student achievement, which can be noticed when Baghoussi and El Ouchdi (2019), Bhandari (2021) and Pérez et al. (2022) emphasize that the lack of teaching and learning materials and infrastructure represents a significant challenge to successfully implementing PBL in EFL classrooms.

Prioritizing resource allocation, fostering technological integration, and promoting collaborative partnerships may overcome this obstacle. Teachers can also create enriching learning environments that empower students to thrive in project-based learning experiences.

Designing, implementing, and assessing projects requires meticulous attention to detail and extensive teacher involvement (Zhong, 2023; Pérez et al., 2022; Ram, 2022; Kemaloglu-Er, 2022). While PBL offers numerous benefits for language learning, including authentic language use and meaningful engagement, teachers must carefully consider the practical challenges associated with its implementation. Strategies for managing time effectively, streamlining assessment processes, and maintaining student motivation are essential for mitigating the burdensome nature of PBL in EFL contexts and inspiring teachers to deal with these challenges for their students' learning. Students' attitudes and language proficiency are the result of the complex interplay between individual differences, instructional approaches, and the cultural context in implementing PBL in EFL classrooms (Baghoussi & El Ouchdi, 2019; Yamada, 2020; Ram, 2022; Maqbulin, 2023; Zhong, 2023). Implementing thoughtful strategies to motivate students, effectively scaffold language learning, and create inclusive and supportive learning environments conducive to PBL is vital. Despite all challenges, teachers' experiences implementing PBL in EFL classrooms underscore the importance of self-reflection, dedication to student well-being, and recognition of PBL's positive impact on student learning outcomes. These insights inform ongoing professional development efforts and emphasize the value of innovative instructional approaches such as PBL in fostering language acquisition and creativity among EFL learners.

Conclusion

Project-based learning is a student-centered practical approach focused on learning through meaningful experiences and social interaction within a supportive environment while working on a project. Based on the results and discussion above, PBL is an excellent strategy for teachers to enhance students' Speaking skills in different education levels and geographical contexts. The results from this study are significant and replicable, particularly for EFL teachers who want to implement PBL effectively. This paper provided teachers and researchers with pedagogical strategies that were thoroughly organized into two subcategories: scaffolding techniques and integrating technological tools into PBL.

Likewise, teachers' experiences with this approach and suggestions for addressing the encountered challenges have been discussed. In addition, future studies should consider applying and evaluating these initial findings to prove their efficacy in different learners' groups and contexts through experimental research design. Therefore, as PBL is gaining popularity in ELT, more studies in the Latin American context are needed to investigate the impact of PBL on receptive and productive English Language skills. Finally, empirical studies should be conducted on leveraging strategies to deal with teachers' challenges when using PBL in EFL classrooms.

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