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Using Immersion Teaching Process to Develop EFL Learners' Speaking skill

ABSTRACT

Speaking skill is one of the most significant skills because it is one of the means of conversation and communication with others. Thus, this paper aims at investigating the development of the students' speaking skills by using the immersion teaching process, in addition to observing the authentic level of the students' implementation in their speaking performance. To achieve these objectives, a questionnaire is designed to be administered to the research sample. The research sample consists of students selected from the second stage in the Dept. of English, College of Education, Salahaddin University. The research findings revealed that improving students' speaking skills requires at least an initial level of language speaking competence. Based on the results discussion, a number of suggestions and recommendations are presented to investigate the impact of project-based learning (PBL) on speaking skills.

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استخدام عملية التدريس الانغماسية لتطوير قابلية التحدث لدى متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية

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الخلاصة

تعد مهارة التحدث من أهم المهارات لأنها من وسائل المحادثة والتواصل مع الآخرين. وبالتالي، يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة تطوير مهارات التحدث لدى الطلاب باستخدام عملية التدريس الانغماسية، بالإضافة إلى ملاحظة المستوى الحقيقي لتنفيذ الطلاب في أداء التحدث. لتحقيق هذه الأهداف، تم تصميم استبيان ليتم توزيعه على عينة البحث. تتكون عينة البحث من طلاب تم اختيارهم من المرحلة الثانية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية التربية، جامعة صلاح الدين. كشفت نتائج البحث أن تحسين مهارات التحدث

لدى الطلاب يتطلب على الأقل مستوى مبدئيًا من كفاءة التحدث باللغة. بناءً على مناقشة النتائج، يتم تقديم عدد من الاقتراحات والتوصيات للبحث في تأثير التعلم القائم على المشروع على مهارات التحدث.

1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

A major part of current learning environments is PBL. It is considered an alternative to paper-based, rote memorizing, or instructor-led lessons. PBL supporters cite various benefits in integrating their strategies in the classroom. These benefits include an extra level of connotation expertise, a comprehensive interpretation framework, better performance and interpersonal/ social skills, enhanced leadership skills, improved creativity and advanced writing skills. This also consists of a certain kind of training where the learners work together in their schools and communities to solve real-world problems. Problem solving also allows students to attract and follow guidance from various disciplines and observe them in very evidence-based design. This principle of training and being acquainted with a technique known as a "project-based experiment" of the tidal way is superior.

Two analyses (see Jones, Rasmussen & Moffitt, 1997; Thomas, Mergendoller & Michaelson, 1999: 47) are being used by Thomas (2000: 1) to describe PBL as complex assignments focused on difficult questions or issues involving students in design. This requires students to work relatively autonomously over considerable periods of time, resulted in practical products or presentations.

According to Bell (2010: 83), PBL is a key method for creating unbiased thinkers and learners. It solves real-world problems by designing their investigations, planning their learning, organizing their research, and implementing a multitude of mastering strategies. PBL is the pedagogical

strategy of all learners motivating them to pursue subject awareness on their own and to demonstrate their new understandings throughout a wide range of presentation methods. The use of project-based classroom teaching is possible after providing the knowledge required for the project. Classroom performance should be student-centered, cooperative and interactive. The members of the group are responsible for their learning. Instructors play the role of co-operators, mediators and students (Moursund, 1999: 81).

1.2 Research Questions:

The researcher tries to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the forms of language competence and comprehension that are expected to be enhanced and developed through the use of project-based learning in our English Language classes?
2. Does a PBLT project appear to provide opportunities for meaningful interactional skills?

1.3 Aims of the Study:

1. Investigating the impact of immersion PBL method of teaching on developing students' speaking skills and finding out to what extent this approach boosts students' careful selection and exploitation of techniques of learning new concepts and encounter new perspectives.
2. Investigating about the best teaching learning strategies that foster speaking skills in English Teaching and Learning.

1.4 Limits of the Study

This study is confined to assess the integration of the major English language skills among second-level students in the Department of English Language, College of Education, Salahaaddin University, Erbil, for the academic year 2018-2019.

1.5 Definition of Basic Terms

1. **Project-Based Learning:** Thomas (2000: 1) defined it as a model that organizes learning around projects, which represent complex responsibilities that are based on hard questions or challenges, involving students in design, problem-solving, selection or investigative activities; allowing students to work particularly independently over long periods of time and culminating in the development of projects.
2. **Student-Centered Learning:** Rogers (1983: 188) defined it as the wish for... "a leader or person who is regarded as a figure of authority in a situation is sufficiently secure within himself or herself and in his or her relationship with others that he or she experiences an important confidence in the capacity of others to think for themselves, to learn for themselves".
3. **Autonomy Learner:** this implies the selection of aims, content, procedures and/or types of evaluation based totally on reflection associated with man or woman's wishes and interests. Many activities in textbooks help beginners to be objective by developing learning techniques and specializing in learner training (Dang, 2012: 35).

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Project-Based Learning

One of the effective techniques that turn the attention in the learning process to the learner rather than the teacher is Project Based Learning (PBL). PBL has received a great attention since the late 1950s due to its high significant effect and major role in creating independent thinkers and learners and increasing the effectiveness of learning language and other educated subjects (Ying, 2002: 22).

Hence, this section reviews the literature on PBL in terms of its origin, characteristics, advantages and disadvantages of its implementation in language learning in general and its contribution to English learning in particular. Also, it focuses on the learner's autonomy, its nature and the way to promote it through

the PBL process. This is to reveal the effect of applying PBL process to teaching English language, known as Project-Based Language Learning (PBL), on the development of learners' autonomy.

Dewey is considered the intellectual father of PBL and the first figure of dynamic instruction. Dewey assumed that the child is a perplexing person and that the students feel an internal desire to learn alongside their understanding of the reasons behind the research. As stated by Guven (2014: 183), Dewey has upheld the term "learning by doing" and has set out the conceptual frameworks for PBL. The founder of the PBL approach, however, is his fellow-worker, American educator William Heard Kilpatrick, who stressed the importance of student's attention and recommended concentrating on the instructive content of the project work. His fundamental goal was to construct the students' identity and to emphasize their responsibility for their learning (Kalabzová, 2015: 5).

Moreover, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of development highlights that "zone of proximal development" has a critical role in the establishment of PBL. According to this theory, learning is performed when students resolve their issues beyond their real advancement level under the guidance of teacher or in collaboration with more proficient peers (Guven, 2014: 184).

2.2 The Role of the Teacher in PBL

Being a teacher is a standout amongst the most requesting and responsible profession. Despite social and time framework, instructors come just after parents to assist children and students to integrate in the community, gain essential and useful skills, knowledge, attitudes, and capabilities, motivate esteems and the growth of a sense of cultural and moral values (Gülbahar & Tinmaz, 2006: 310).

Educational books and research represent the position of director, planner, manager, guide, assessor, prompter, participant, tool and investigator. The latter deserves further attention because of the continuous improvement and growth associated with this role. After many years of instructing, the job may fall into an unacceptable routine when a teaching style comes to be inflexible

and mechanical. General self-reflection should help in preventing this circumstance. It is proposed that a reflective instructor with a flexible approach is creative, inventive, and open-minded to new patterns and techniques. One of the effective ways that help in keeping out of the method is PBL (Lam & Lawrence, 2002: 300).

However, PBL is one of the most substantial methods that play an essential part in the academic institution to real worlds. It affects the students' interpersonal skills and progress, leading them to utilize their talents and professions. It also promotes communication skills and allows students to work cooperatively to grow their personalities, allowing them to diversify into self-employed learners. Finally, PBL helps students to solve real-world problems and train them for real-world achievements.

2.3 The Implementation of Immersion PBL

The project, as Fried-Booth (2000: 10) states, undergoes three stages: beginning in the classroom, moving out into the world, and moving back to the classroom. These three steps lead to:

1. Classroom planning: in cooperation with their instructor, students explore the design and scope of the project.
2. Project implementation: learners leave the classroom to complete their proposed tasks, such as conducting interviews and gathering data.
3. Job analysis and monitoring: this involves discussion and input sessions to assess the proposal.
4. In addition to these steps, Fried-Booth (1997: 10) points out that a follow-up program to monitor the language requires students to observe activities during the implementation step that are beneficial to the students' linguistic competence.

PBL enables the students to apply their skills to issues that may occur in real-life circumstances.

2.4 Benefits of Immersion PBL in Teaching English language

From a motivational perspective, the authentic tasks of the project are more important for students who increase their willingness to participate, boost their engagement and can advance learning. PBL is said to empower students because they are completely engaged in learning. Inspiration is likewise extracted from the fact that the vocabulary of the classroom is not predetermined. However, it relies upon the idea of the project (Lam, 2011: 143).

The project might be associated with certain professionals with the use of credible procedures, approaches and audiences. Genuine link to the outside world of the classroom may be built up employing the Internet or cooperative effort with community individuals and experts. PBL accordingly improves the experiences and lives of a student as s/he is required to communicate with people outside his global connections of contacts (Lam, 2011: 144).

Given adequate time to finish the project of PBL, students would be sufficiently given time to revise, plan, and reflect their learning. These exercises prompt meaningful and significant learning. Through reflective learning, learners can consolidate what they have accomplished for themselves regarding knowledge and build their mindfulness on their impediments and how these shortcomings could be overcome. This implies that PBL is an innovative method that utilizes an alternative means of evaluation. Using the PBL method in language learning, students could assess themselves regularly. Evaluation is viewed as a continuous, frequent, and varied process including self-evaluation, peer review, teacher evaluation, self-assessment and reflection (Kalabzová, 2015: 9). To sum up, PBL is extremely useful and beneficial to students generally and EFL students particularly.

3. Research Method

3.1 Experimental Design

Good (1973: 174) defines the experimental design as “the strategy by which experimental groups are chosen, experimental treatments are administered and their effect is evaluated.” Based on this idea, Bachman (2007: 266) states that

two distinguishing characteristics of an actual experimental design must be taken into consideration when implementing an empirical study. The first characteristic is randomization and the second one is the experimental intervention or treatment. This means that the different individuals of a sample are exposed to distinct sets of circumstances as part of the experiment. In the current research, the post-test is applied to two groups (i.e., experimental and control) to discover the impact of integrating English PBL on developing learners' autonomous language acquisition.

3.2 Research Sample

The targeted sample of this study is limited to the second stage students at the Department of English, College of Education, Salahaddin University for the academic year 2018-2019. The total number of sample is (66) male and female students, representing two classes A and B (see Table 1). This college is selected for having an English communication course, as well as offering the resources to carry out a successful research.

Table (1): Population of the Study

Gender	Group A	Group B	Total
Male	14	11	25
Female	19	22	41
Total	33	33	66

3.3 Students' Age as Measured in Months

Age variable represents learner's experience in learning, and it may influence the objectivity of the experimental study. As far as this variable is concerned, learners' age is measured in months so that members of the two groups are equalized in age. So, Mann-Whitney U is used through SPSS, which is computed for the two groups of the experiment (see Table 2).

Table (2): Sample of the Study

Groups	No. of Students
Experimental	33
Control	33
Total	66

3.4 Instrument of the Study

To achieve the objectives of the study, a questionnaire is developed to survey the learners' use of individual projects in their studying of communication, such as whether they actively chose to use a particular project and believed it to be useful. The questionnaire is designed to examine the linguistic and non-linguistic background knowledge of the English language and the projects used by students in studying it. The items used in the questionnaire are of open format, asking for voluntary opinions, i.e., the participants are free to answer the questions in accordance with their preference and what is applied to his/her case.

The questionnaire consists of three parts intended to collect data on students' perspectives on learning through a PBL approach. It is post-experimental, exploring the views of students after being exposed to the PBL curriculum. It includes (14) open-ended questions (see appendix 1), focusing on understanding how and what the learners learned through a PBL approach. It is administered to (68) students who attended PBL classes and agreed to participate in the study. It is structured to allow students to express their learning experiences through a PBL approach. Based on the obtained results from the pilot study, no ambiguity is found concerning the items content. The questionnaire content has matched the students' level of comprehension, and the average time allocated to fill the questionnaire form is (90) minutes.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

Test validity is characterized as "the degree to which the test measures what it claims or purports to measure" (Brown, 1988: 101). Likewise, Sliger and Shahomy (1989: 188) describe validity as "the degree to which the data collection process determines what it aims to measure." Research validity can

be decided by two different viewpoints: first, whether respondents who complete questions do so accurately, thoughtfully, and correctly or not. In this case, bias cases should be excluded from the research measurements of validity. Second, whether those who fail to return their questionnaire would have given the same distribution of answers as did the returnees” (Belson, 1968 as cited in Cohen et al., 2000: 128). The test is presented to the jury of experts in the area of English language teaching methodology to examine whether the items are expressed accurately and clearly and representing the projects expected to be used by the students. The referees suggest some opinions and modification, but they all agree that items are clearly and correctly represented PBL.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results Analysis

The following tables show the statistical analysis of teachers' responses to the questionnaire form. The domain is calculated according to percentages, frequency, mean and significance.

Table (3): the questionnaire domain

No.	Items	Frq	%	Mean	Sig
1-	It is useful using PBL when speaking English.	٦	31	١,٢٥	٠,٠٥
2-	By using PBL the students can speak English better.	17	86	٣,٤٤	٠,٠٥
3-	By using PBL the students can understand English better.	١٩	95	٣,٦٧	٠,٠٥
4-	The use of PBL comprehension of English vocabulary has increased.	٠	٠	٠	٠,٠٥
5-	By using PBL the students can read English better.	٩	47	١,٨٩	٠,٠٥
6-	By using PBL my English writing has improved.	١8	٩٠	٣,٦٦	٠,٠٥
7-	When using PBL, students feel more relaxed and	18	٩٤	٣,٧٠	٠,٠٥

	confident when they speak English.				
8-	When the students speak English, I don't worry, because they can use projects anytime they face a problem.	۱۱	56	۲,۲۵	۰,۰۵
9-	Students want to speak more English, and don't worry about not doing well on a mission.	۱۴	76	۳,۰۰	۰,۰۵
10-	By using project the students can be a successful language learner.	۱۳	52	۲,۶۶	۰,۰۵
11-	Speaking English provides interesting intellectual activities.	11	56	2.45	0.05
12-	I think speaking English helps my personality grow.	14	66	3.55	0.05
13-	Speaking English using Immersion PBL is an essential and sublime aim in my life.	15	69	3.66	0.05
14-	Operating on a project enhances the integrated skills of the students such as listening, speaking, reading and writing.	18	90	3.67	0.05

4.1.1 Results Related to the First Aim:

The first aim is on investigating the impact of immersion PBL method of teaching on developing students' speaking skills and finding out to what extent this approach boosts students' careful selection and exploitation of techniques of learning new concepts and encounter new perspectives. Hence, T-Test is applied to examine teachers' attitudes towards the form of language curricula in higher education. Results indicate that statistically there are no significant differences among teachers' attitudes towards using PBL to develop ELT speaking skills at $\alpha.0.05$. The measured T-value is (1,932), which is lower than the T-tabulated value (3,606) at (0.05) level of significance and (5) degree of freedom, as shown in table (4).

Table (4): The result of t- test for the teachers' attitude towards the impact of PBL on speaking skill

Variable	Number	Mean	standard deviation	T- Value		Level of Significance
				Calculated	Tabulated	
Boosts student's selection and exploitation of techniques of learning new concepts and encounter new perspectives	12	33.606	0.549	1.932	3.606	0.000 (HS)

4.1.2 Results related to the Second Aim:

The second aim is on investigating the best teaching/ learning strategies that foster speaking skills in English Teaching and Learning. Here, T- Test is applied to analyze teachers' attitudes towards using different main strategies of learning projects evaluation. Results indicate that there are statistically no significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ between them toward using this standardized model of evaluation. The calculated T-value is (2.467), which is less than the T-tabulated (4.242) at (0.05) level of significance and (5) degree of freedom, as shown in table (5).

Table (5): The result of t- test for the teachers' attitude towards using different strategies of teaching after 2003

Variable	Number	Mean	standard deviation	T- Value		Level of Significance
				Calculated	Tabulated	
Using Learning Strategies of learning projects evaluation	12	18.743	42.94	2.467	4.242	0.000 (HS)

4.2 Discussion

With regard to the first objective of the research, the research participants showed no significant statistical differences between English teachers in both colleges, since both agreed that the project-based immersion methods of teaching require more updated teaching curricula. The use of PBL will provide more opportunities for students to talk and communicate with their teachers, on the one hand, and with peers, on the other. They can endure their interaction without any interruption and that the accuracy, fluency and subject relationship

of the learners are improved. Strategic skill of the learners has increased and they can quickly overcome difficulties in communication.

Concerning the second aim, an increase is recorded in most oral output categories, which is consistent with the assumption that EFL students need to be exposed to environments with opportunities to express them and authentically communicate with others to improve their speaking skills (Oradee, 2012). Students are expected to take part in small groups to complete some assigned learning tasks as discovered in the responses of the teachers. In addition, the results show increase in learner's motivation resulting from the adapted lessons and the fact they can communicate using only English in classroom. The majority view is that these activities are pleasant and can be used in other units. Some of the feedback indicates that the learners understand the value of learning interaction. Cooperation between groups is useful for debating the material of the course. It helps students understand the topic and gives them confidence that their opinions are relevant and valid. The students believe that the exercises are fascinating and thus they enjoy participating in them although it is often difficult for them to decipher context, an obstacle that is overcome by the presence of teachers/ researchers and by cooperation with classmates (see Luan & Guo, 2011).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

To sum up, teachers use different curricula based on their teaching experience combined with their real preference. Students in this study may be lacking awareness of the aspects of PBL. They may not be aware of available strategies they can use to facilitate their learning or the strategies that they are already employing. All these operators show that students should be trained in PBL so they will consciously start employing the right strategies to enhance their learning and to become more autonomous and competent language learners. Thus, it is important to emphasize that teachers can explain the way of learning appropriately to motivate language learners. It is important for the

students to be more efficient and develop strategies that help them improve their learning and how to approach a new language.

Therefore, the researcher suggests the following recommendations based on the above conclusions:

1. Since teachers play a significant role in the classroom, they should not devote the whole lesson depending on themselves in the interpretation and discussion. They need to motivate the students to participate actively and to reflect their background information by identifying their own strategies that are useful in learning process.
2. Empirical studies on the effect of teaching PBL on students' achievement are also needed and can be fruitful topics for future research.
3. Empirical studies on factors of language learning strategies at different stages of acquisition for language learners might help to answer different research questions.
4. It is also proposed that teachers should participate in supervised and ongoing global workshops to further teach production of this more globalized approach to language learning in modern classrooms.

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Appendix 1

Teachers' Questionnaire

Statement	Strongly dis agree	Dis agree	to some extent (not certain)	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. It is useful using PBL when speaking English.					
2. By using PBL the students can speak English better.					
3. By using PBL the students can understand English better.					
4. The use of PBL comprehension of English vocabulary has increased.					
5. By using PBL the students can read English better.					
6. By using PBL my English writing has improved.					
7. When using PBL, students feel more relaxed and confident when they speak English.					
8. When the students speak English, I don't worry, because they can use projects anytime they face a problem.					
9. Students want to speak more English, and don't worry about not doing well on a mission.					
10. By using project the students can be a successful language learner.					
11. Speaking English provides interesting intellectual activities.					

12. I think speaking English helps my personality grow.					
13. Speaking English using Immersion PBL is an essential and sublime aim in my life					
14. Operating on a project enhances the integrated skills of the students such as listening, speaking, reading and writing.					