

# Project Based English Teaching Strategies to Develop Students' Communicative Competence Skills Effectively

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## Abstract

Communicative competence is a central goal in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because language functions primarily as a tool for meaningful interaction in social and academic contexts. However, English instruction in many educational settings still focuses heavily on grammar and vocabulary, which often limits students' ability to communicate effectively. Therefore, innovative teaching strategies are needed to promote active language use. This study aims to explore how Project-Based Learning (PBL) strategies can support the development of students' communicative competence in English learning. The research employed a qualitative approach using a literature review design. Data were collected from various secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, conference proceedings, and relevant research reports related to project-based learning, communicative competence, and English language teaching. The findings indicate that PBL effectively enhances students' communicative competence by promoting active participation, collaborative learning, authentic language use, and problem-solving activities. Through project activities such as presentations, group discussions, and collaborative tasks, students have more opportunities to practice speaking, share ideas, negotiate meaning, and develop confidence in using English in real communication situations.

**Keywords:** Project-Based Learning, Communicative Competence, English Language Teaching.

## INTRODUCTION

Communicative ability is one of the main objectives in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) because language is essentially used as a tool for communication in various social and academic contexts (Song et al., 2024). In modern educational contexts, communicative competence does not only include grammatical knowledge but also the ability to use language effectively, contextually, and interactively in real-life situations (Probert, 2024). However, English language teaching in many educational institutions still tends to emphasize structural aspects such as grammar and vocabulary mastery rather than authentic communicative practice (Kovalyova et al., 2016). As a result, many students experience difficulties in applying English communicatively even though they have studied the language for a considerable period of time (Vaca Torres & Gómez Rodríguez, 2017).

The development of 21st-century education paradigms requires learning approaches that are more student-centered and that provide opportunities for learners to actively participate in the learning process (Belda-Medina, 2021). One approach that is widely recommended in language learning is Project-Based Learning (PBL) because it provides authentic learning experiences through the completion of projects that are relevant to real-life situations (Wang, 2020). Through project activities, learners are encouraged to collaborate, discuss ideas, and present their work results, which allows meaningful communication interaction in the target language (Kelsen, 2018). Furthermore, PBL also allows the integration of language skills such as speaking, writing, reading, and listening in a single integrated learning activity (Chao et al., 2025).

In the context of English language teaching, project-based approaches provide opportunities for learners to actively use the language during the process of searching for information, participating in group discussions, and presenting project outcomes (Roy et al., 2020). These activities encourage learners to use English as a real communication tool rather than merely as theoretical learning material (Posada et al., 2022). Through this process, learners can develop confidence in using English and improve their ability to interact both orally and in written forms (Sirisrimangkorn, 2018). Therefore, project-based learning is considered capable of creating a more communicative and contextual learning environment in English language classrooms (Song et al., 2024).

Besides improving communication skills, project-based learning can also develop various 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving abilities (Gabaardi, 2021). This approach positions learners as active subjects in the learning process, enabling them to directly engage in exploration, investigation, and knowledge production (Norawati & Puspitasari, 2022). In this situation, teachers act as facilitators who guide learners in completing learning projects independently



and collaboratively (Belda-Medina, 2021). Therefore, the implementation of project-based teaching strategies is considered relevant for improving the quality of English language learning oriented toward the development of communicative competence (Wang, 2020).

Despite the development of various learning approaches aimed at improving students' communicative competence, English language teaching practices in many classrooms still face several challenges, such as low student participation in oral communication and limited opportunities to use the language authentically (Vaca Torres & Gómez Rodríguez, 2017). Therefore, effective teaching strategies are needed to create a more communicative, interactive, and meaningful learning environment for students (Posada et al., 2022). The implementation of project-based learning is considered a potential alternative strategy to increase student engagement and facilitate the use of English in real communicative situations (Roy et al., 2020).

Several previous studies have shown that the implementation of Project-Based Learning in English language teaching has a positive impact on the development of students' communication skills (Kovalyova et al., 2016). Research indicates that this approach can increase students' oral language production and help them overcome anxiety when speaking a foreign language (Vaca Torres & Gómez Rodríguez, 2017). In addition, project activities involving presentations, discussions, and group collaboration have been proven to improve communicative competence as well as students' confidence in using English (Becerra-Posada et al., 2022). Other studies also emphasize that project-based learning can enhance various language skills such as writing, speaking, and critical thinking in English learning contexts (Andargie et al., 2025).

Based on the explanations above, this study aims to analyze and describe project-based English teaching strategies in developing students' communicative competence skills effectively. This research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of English language teaching strategies and practical implications for teachers in implementing more communicative, collaborative, and contextual learning approaches in English language classrooms.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a literature study (literature review) design. A qualitative approach was selected because the purpose of this research is to explore, interpret, and synthesize theoretical concepts and previous research findings related to project-based English teaching strategies and the development of students' communicative competence. Qualitative research focuses on understanding phenomena through the interpretation of texts, concepts, and meanings derived from various academic sources rather than numerical data (Creswell, 2021). In this context, a literature study is used to systematically review and analyze previous scholarly works to obtain a comprehensive understanding of a particular research topic (Snyder, 2019). Through this method, researchers can identify research trends, theoretical developments, and research gaps related to project-based learning in English language teaching.

### **Data Sources**

The data used in this research were obtained from secondary data sources in the form of academic literature. These sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, conference proceedings, and relevant research reports discussing project-based learning, communicative competence, and English language teaching strategies. The literature was accessed through several academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, ERIC, and other educational journal databases. The selection of literature sources was conducted using several criteria, including relevance to the research topic, credibility of the publication source, clarity of research methodology, and contribution to the development of English language teaching theory and practice. Using credible academic sources is essential in literature review studies to ensure the validity and reliability of the synthesized information (Boote & Beile, 2005).

### **Data Collection Techniques**

The data collection technique used in this research was document analysis, which involves identifying, collecting, and reviewing relevant academic documents related to the research topic. The literature search process was conducted using specific keywords such as *project-based learning*, *communicative competence*, *English language teaching*, and *project-based language teaching*. After the initial search process, the researcher conducted a screening process by reviewing the titles, abstracts, and full texts of the identified articles to determine their relevance to the focus of the study. Only sources that directly addressed project-based learning strategies and communicative competence development in English language learning were selected for further analysis. Document analysis is widely used in qualitative research because it enables researchers to systematically examine written materials to gain deeper insights into a particular phenomenon (Bowen, 2009).

### **Data Analysis Method**

The data analysis in this research employed qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is a systematic method used to interpret textual data by identifying patterns, themes, and meanings within the collected literature (Krippendorff, 2018). The analysis process followed several stages. First, data reduction, where relevant information from the selected literature was identified, categorized, and organized according to the research focus. Second, data display, in which the extracted information was systematically presented in descriptive form to facilitate interpretation and comparison across studies. Finally, conclusion drawing and interpretation were conducted to synthesize the key findings from the reviewed literature and to identify how project-based English teaching strategies contribute to the development of students' communicative competence. Through this analytical process, the study aims to provide a comprehensive conceptual understanding of the effectiveness of project-based learning strategies in improving students' communicative competence in English language education.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Analysis of Project-Based English Teaching Strategies**

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is widely recognized as an effective instructional strategy in English language teaching, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. This approach emphasizes student-centered learning in which learners actively engage in meaningful projects that require them to use English as a tool for communication, collaboration, and problem-solving. In this strategy, students are not merely passive recipients of language knowledge; instead, they become active participants who construct their understanding through authentic tasks and real-life communication activities.

From a pedagogical perspective, PBL aligns with communicative language teaching principles because it provides opportunities for students to practice language in authentic contexts. Through projects, students must negotiate meaning, share ideas, present information, and collaborate with peers, which directly contributes to the development of communicative competence. Research indicates that PBL encourages students to produce more oral language, improve vocabulary usage, and reduce anxiety when speaking English because the learning process focuses on meaningful interaction rather than memorization of grammatical structures (Vaca Torres & Gómez Rodríguez, 2017).

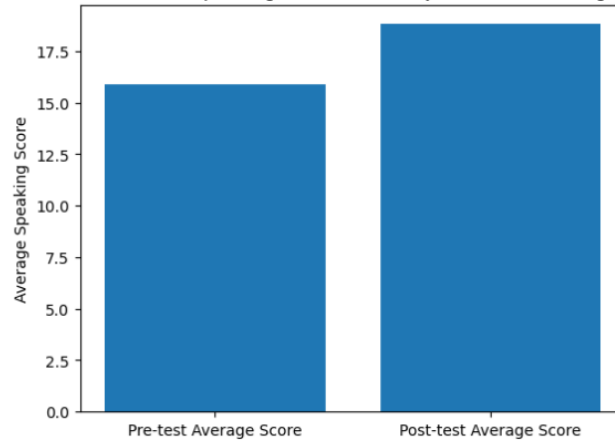
Furthermore, PBL integrates collaborative learning environments in which students work in groups to accomplish shared goals. In such environments, learners engage in discussion, negotiation, and peer feedback, which significantly contributes to the development of interpersonal communication skills. Through activities such as drama performance, project presentations, and group discussions, students actively use English in communicative situations that simulate real-world interaction (Sirisrimangkorn, 2018).

Another important characteristic of PBL is its focus on problem-solving and authentic tasks. Instead of learning isolated language skills, students develop integrated language abilities, including speaking, writing, reading, and listening, as they complete meaningful projects. This integrated approach enhances students' engagement and helps them understand how language functions in real communication contexts (Lungu, 2022).

The implementation of project-based learning in English classrooms has also been widely practiced in Indonesia. Several studies conducted in Indonesian educational contexts demonstrate that PBL can significantly improve students' communicative competence and speaking performance.

For example, a study conducted at SMAN 2 Sidenreng Rappang, Indonesia implemented project-based learning in teaching speaking to twelfth-grade students. The study showed that students' speaking performance improved significantly after participating in project-based activities such as designing project themes, preparing project proposals, conducting projects, and presenting their results. The average speaking score increased from 15.88 in the pre-test to 18.81 in the post-test, indicating a substantial improvement in students' speaking ability (Abdullah & Sunra, 2024).

Improvement of Students' Speaking Scores after Project-Based Learning Implementation



**Figure 1.** Improvement of Students' Speaking Scores Before and After the Implementation of Project-Based Learning in an Indonesian EFL Classroom

Another example comes from a study conducted at Universitas Negeri Makassar, where students were assigned to create food vlog projects as part of project-based learning activities in their English speaking classes. In this project, students worked in groups to design, record, and present food review videos in English. The results revealed that this project helped students improve their vocabulary mastery, speaking confidence, and learning autonomy. Students also reported that creating vlogs made them more motivated to practice English outside the classroom because the project was meaningful and connected to real-life communication activities (Yusuf et al., 2023).

Similarly, research conducted in Indonesian universities also shows that PBL increases student participation and encourages innovative teaching practices. For instance, (Mali, 2016) reported that students who participated in project-based English courses demonstrated higher engagement in learning activities and actively used English when completing collaborative projects such as creative writing tasks and language learning projects.

In addition, research involving students from several universities across Indonesia found that PBL helps develop interpersonal communication skills because students must interact, negotiate ideas, and collaborate during project completion. These activities strengthen both micro components of communicative competence (such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation) and macro components (such as discourse and sociolinguistic competence) (Menggo et al., 2023).

Based on the analysis and real cases presented above, it can be concluded that project-based English teaching strategies effectively promote communicative competence in EFL classrooms. The success of this strategy lies in several key aspects.

1. First, PBL provides authentic communication opportunities for students. Instead of focusing solely on grammar exercises, students engage in meaningful communication activities that require them to express ideas, negotiate meaning, and collaborate with others.
2. Second, PBL increases student motivation and engagement. When students work on interesting projects such as creating videos, conducting interviews, or presenting research findings, they become more motivated to use English actively.

3. Third, PBL encourages learner autonomy and collaborative learning. Students are responsible for planning, implementing, and presenting their projects, which fosters independent learning and teamwork skills.

In the Indonesian context, where students often experience limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom, PBL offers an effective solution by creating authentic communication environments within the classroom. Therefore, integrating project-based learning into English language teaching can significantly contribute to developing students' communicative competence skills effectively.

### **The Role of Project-Based Learning in Developing Students' Communicative Competence**

The findings of many studies indicate that Project-Based Learning (PBL) plays a significant role in developing students' communicative competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Communicative competence refers not only to the ability to speak grammatically correct sentences but also to the ability to use language appropriately in social, cultural, and interactive contexts. In English language teaching, communicative competence generally includes several components such as linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

Project-based learning facilitates the development of these competencies because it requires students to actively use language in meaningful communication situations rather than simply memorizing grammatical rules.

#### **1. Encouraging Active Participation in Communication**

One of the main contributions of PBL to communicative competence is that it encourages students to actively participate in communication activities. In traditional classrooms, students often play passive roles where they mainly listen to the teacher and complete grammar exercises. In contrast, PBL requires students to interact with peers, discuss ideas, negotiate meaning, and present their project outcomes.

Through project activities such as group discussions, presentations, interviews, and collaborative problem-solving, students are placed in real communicative situations where they must express their ideas clearly. These activities help students improve their speaking fluency, vocabulary usage, and ability to maintain conversations.

Research shows that project-based learning increases students' oral production because learners must use English actively when planning and presenting their projects. This process helps them overcome anxiety and develop confidence in speaking English (Vaca Torres & Gómez Rodríguez, 2017).

Similarly, PBL has been shown to promote communicative competence by encouraging students to use various communication strategies when collaborating and presenting their projects (Posada et al., 2022).

A study conducted in an Indonesian EFL classroom at MAN 1 Soppeng implemented project-based learning in English classes to increase student engagement. Students were assigned to complete collaborative projects involving research, group discussions, and oral presentations. The results showed that PBL significantly increased students' participation and engagement in classroom communication. Students became more active in discussions, took responsibility for their learning tasks, and showed greater willingness to speak English during group interactions (Armas et al., 2025).

This finding demonstrates that PBL creates a student-centered communication environment, which is essential for developing communicative competence.

#### **2. Increasing Students' Motivation and Engagement**

Another important role of project-based learning is that it increases students' motivation and engagement in language learning. Motivation plays a crucial role in second language acquisition because students who are motivated are more willing to practice the language and participate in communicative activities.

PBL enhances motivation by connecting learning activities with real-world contexts and meaningful tasks. For example, students may be asked to create video projects, conduct interviews, organize events, or produce digital presentations. These activities make learning more interesting and relevant to students' daily lives.

Studies show that PBL improves students’ motivation, creativity, and language use because learners are encouraged to express their ideas freely in communicative tasks such as vlogs, storytelling projects, and digital presentations (Kurniawan, 2025). Furthermore, collaborative projects can increase students’ confidence and critical thinking skills while strengthening their speaking competence (Salikhova & Zeki, 2024).

A study conducted at a university in Makassar, Indonesia explored the use of Facebook live streaming projects in English classes. In this project, students worked in groups to prepare and broadcast live presentations in English through a Facebook group. The findings revealed that this project-based activity significantly increased students’ speaking confidence, autonomy, and engagement in learning English. Students reported that using social media projects made them more motivated to practice English because the activity felt authentic and meaningful (Yusuf et al., 2023).

This case demonstrates that integrating technology with PBL can create interactive and motivating language learning environments.

3. Developing Communication and Collaboration Skills

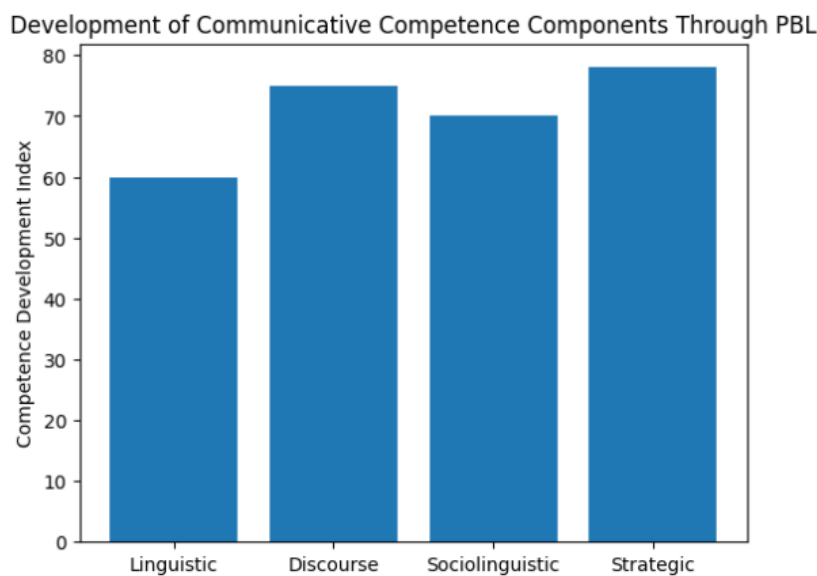
Another significant contribution of PBL is its ability to develop communication and collaboration skills, which are essential elements of communicative competence. In project-based learning, students usually work in teams to plan, design, and complete projects. This collaborative process requires them to share ideas, negotiate roles, provide feedback, and solve problems together.

Through this collaborative interaction, students learn how to organize their ideas, present arguments, and respond to others’ opinions in English. These skills are important aspects of discourse competence and strategic competence in communicative language use.

Research shows that collaborative project activities significantly improve students’ speaking performance and learning engagement because students actively use language during group discussions and project presentations (Huang, 2021).

One example of PBL implementation in Indonesia is the “English Fun Fair” project conducted in a university English education program in Central Java. In this project, students organized an English-language fair where they created booths, presentations, and interactive activities using English. Students had to collaborate in teams to design their projects and communicate with visitors in English during the event.

The results showed that the project helped students improve their speaking skills, teamwork abilities, and confidence in communicating in English. Many students reported that interacting with real audiences during the event provided authentic communication experiences that significantly improved their communicative competence (Apriliani & Listyani, 2020).



**Figure 2.** Development of Communicative Competence Components Through Project-Based Learning

Based on the analysis and empirical cases above, it is evident that project-based learning plays a crucial role in developing students' communicative competence in English learning. The effectiveness of this approach lies in its ability to create authentic communication opportunities, increase motivation, and foster collaborative learning environments.

In the Indonesian EFL context, where students often have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, project-based learning provides meaningful opportunities to practice communication skills in realistic situations. By engaging students in projects that require interaction, collaboration, and presentation, PBL helps learners develop not only linguistic competence but also social and strategic communication skills.

Therefore, integrating project-based learning into English teaching strategies can significantly enhance students' communicative competence and prepare them for real-world communication in academic and professional settings.

### **Effectiveness of Project-Based English Teaching Strategies**

Project-Based English Teaching is widely recognized as an effective instructional approach in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms because it emphasizes authentic learning experiences, collaboration, and student-centered instruction. In this approach, students learn language through meaningful projects that require them to communicate, solve problems, and present ideas in English. These activities help students develop communicative competence naturally because language is used as a tool for interaction rather than merely as a subject to be memorized.

One important reason why project-based learning is effective is that it creates authentic communication contexts in which students actively use English to accomplish specific goals. Unlike traditional teaching methods that focus mainly on grammar exercises and teacher-centered instruction, PBL encourages learners to interact with peers, discuss ideas, conduct research, and present project results in English. Through these activities, students practice various aspects of communicative competence such as fluency, vocabulary usage, and discourse organization.

Research shows that project-based learning significantly improves students' speaking skills because students are required to communicate actively during the project process. For example, an experimental study conducted in an Indonesian EFL classroom found that students' speaking performance improved after the implementation of project-based learning. The average speaking score increased from 15.88 in the pre-test to 18.81 in the post-test, indicating a significant improvement in students' communication ability (Abdullah & Sunra, 2024).

Similarly, another study also reported that structured stages of project-based learning—including project planning, proposal development, project implementation, and presentation—help students practice speaking skills continuously throughout the learning process (Sunra, 2024).

#### **1. Development of 21st-Century Skills**

Another important aspect of the effectiveness of Project-Based English Teaching is its ability to develop 21st-century skills, including communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. These skills are essential for students to function effectively in modern educational and professional environments.

Project-based learning allows students to work collaboratively in groups to complete complex tasks such as conducting research, producing digital content, or presenting solutions to real-world problems. Through these activities, students not only practice English communication but also learn how to collaborate with others and express ideas creatively.

Empirical research conducted in Indonesian higher education institutions found that project-based learning significantly improves several 21st-century competencies, particularly critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills (Yuanti et al., 2025). Similarly, research involving Indonesian university students revealed that project-based learning positively correlates with collaborative skills and increases students' motivation and teamwork abilities (Andriyani & Anam, 2022).

A practical example of project-based learning implementation in Indonesia can be seen in a study conducted at Universitas Negeri Makassar, where students participated in a food-vlog project as part of their English speaking course. In this project,

students worked in groups to create video content reviewing local food while communicating in English. The project required students to plan the video concept, write scripts, record the vlog, and present the final product.

The results showed that this project significantly improved students' speaking confidence, vocabulary mastery, and learning autonomy. Students reported that producing video content made them more motivated to practice English because the project connected classroom learning with real-world communication activities.

Another study conducted across several Indonesian universities also demonstrated that project-based learning helps develop interpersonal communication competence in speaking courses. The findings indicate that students' communication skills improved because project activities required them to interact frequently with peers and express their ideas during group discussions and presentations (Menggo et al., 2023).

## 2. Challenges in Implementing Project-Based English Teaching

Several challenges are commonly found in the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in English language teaching:

### a. Speaking Anxiety and Low Confidence

Many students feel nervous and lack confidence when speaking English during discussions or project presentations (Syafryadin et al., 2024).

### b. Limited Vocabulary and Pronunciation Problems

Students often struggle with limited vocabulary and pronunciation, which affects their speaking fluency.

### c. Time Management Constraints

Project-based activities require more time because they involve planning, implementation, and presentation stages.

### d. Unequal Participation in Group Work

Some students may dominate the group work while others participate less actively.

### e. Difficulty in Project Design and Assessment

Teachers may face challenges in designing effective projects and assessing students' performance comprehensively.

Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that Project-Based English Teaching strategies are highly effective in developing students' communicative competence skills. This effectiveness is reflected in several aspects, including the improvement of speaking performance, the development of collaborative and critical thinking skills, and the increase in students' motivation to learn English.

In the Indonesian EFL context, where opportunities to use English in daily life are limited, project-based learning provides meaningful communication experiences that allow students to practice English in authentic situations. Therefore, integrating project-based learning into English teaching strategies can significantly enhance students' communicative competence and better prepare them for real-world communication.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight that project-based English teaching strategies play a significant role in developing students' communicative competence. By engaging students in meaningful projects, learners are encouraged to actively use English for communication, collaboration, and problem-solving. This approach shifts the learning process from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered learning, allowing students to practice language skills in authentic contexts. As a result, students become more confident in expressing ideas, interacting with peers, and applying language in real-life situations. Therefore, project-based learning can be considered an effective strategy to support communicative language teaching in EFL classrooms.

From a practical perspective, teachers are encouraged to integrate project-based activities into their English teaching practices. Educators should design meaningful projects that involve real-world tasks such as presentations, role plays, collaborative discussions, or multimedia projects that require students to actively use English. Teachers should also provide guidance, feedback, and opportunities for reflection so that students can continuously improve their communicative abilities during the learning process.

For future research, further empirical studies are recommended to examine the effectiveness of project-based English teaching strategies in different educational contexts and levels of learners. Researchers may also investigate the impact of PBL on specific language skills such as speaking fluency, interactional competence, or digital communication skills. In addition, quantitative or mixed-method studies could provide more comprehensive evidence regarding the long-term impact of project-based learning on students' communicative competence.

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