



Implementation of Project-Based Learning Towards Reading Achievement of Eighth Grade Students at SMPN 20 Bengkulu City

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the effect of the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) on the reading achievement of eighth-grade students at SMPN 20 Bengkulu City. The PjBL model was chosen because it is believed to be able to increase students' involvement, creativity, and critical thinking skills through structured and contextual project activities. This study used a quasi-experimental method with a non-equivalent control group design. Data analysis was carried out through normality tests, homogeneity tests, paired sample t-tests, and independent sample t-tests using SPSS. The results showed that both the experimental and control groups experienced an increase in reading scores, but the increase in the experimental group was much more significant. The average pre-test score of the experimental group was 65.66 and increased to 78.48 in the post-test, while the control group increased from 61.10 to 73.93. The t-test showed a significance value of 0.007 ($p < 0.05$), so H_0 was rejected and H_1 was accepted. Thus, this study concludes that Project-Based Learning has a significant impact on improving students' reading skills, thus PBL can be recommended as an effective learning model for improving students' literacy competencies at the junior high school level.

Keywords: Achievement, Implementation of Project-Based Learning, Reading

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has intensified competition among nations, particularly after the implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). This condition requires countries to prepare skilled and educated human resources who possess critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration skills. Education plays a strategic role in developing these competencies, especially at the secondary school level.

Twenty-first-century education emphasizes competency-based learning, life skills development, and meaningful learning experiences. Innovative learning models, such as Project-Based Learning (PjBL), are strongly recommended because they encourage active learning, collaboration, and the development of higher-order thinking skills. Previous studies have reported that PBL positively influences students' motivation, engagement, and academic achievement, particularly in language learning contexts.

However, in the Indonesian educational context, learning practices often remain teacher-centered and less interactive. At SMPN 20 Bengkulu City, English reading instruction still faces several challenges, including low student participation, limited learning media, and students' difficulties in comprehending English texts. These conditions indicate a gap between the potential benefits of innovative learning models and their actual implementation in real classroom settings.

Based on these issues, this study aims to examine the effect of Project-Based Learning on students' reading achievement at SMPN 20 Bengkulu City. The novelty of this study lies in the application of Project-Based Learning to improve reading achievement at the junior high school level within a real classroom context in Bengkulu. In recent years, reading skill has been recognized as a fundamental component of English language learning, particularly at the junior high school level. Reading not only supports students' academic achievement but also enhances their ability to access information, develop vocabulary, and build critical thinking skills. However, many students face difficulties in reading English texts due to limited vocabulary, lack of background knowledge, and low motivation to read.

Several studies have highlighted that traditional teacher-centered instruction often fails to engage students actively in reading activities. As a result, students tend to rely heavily on teachers and are less encouraged to explore texts independently. Project-Based Learning offers an alternative approach by integrating reading activities into meaningful projects, allowing students to interact with texts in contextual and purposeful ways.

Previous research has demonstrated that Project-Based Learning can improve students' motivation, collaboration, and comprehension skills (Bell, 2010; Thomas, 2000). However, most of these studies focus on speaking or writing skills, while empirical evidence related to reading achievement, especially in Indonesian junior high schools, remains limited. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by investigating the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning in improving students' reading achievement at SMPN 20 Bengkulu City.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group. The population of this study consisted of all eighth-grade students at SMPN 20 Bengkulu City. A total of 58 students were selected as the sample and divided into an experimental group and a control group.

The experimental group was taught using Project-Based Learning, while the control group received conventional teacher-centered instruction. Data were collected through reading comprehension tests administered before and after the treatment. The data were analyzed using statistical techniques, including normality tests, homogeneity tests, paired-sample t-tests, and independent-sample t-tests, to determine whether there were significant differences between the two groups.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The results indicated that both groups experienced improvement in reading achievement; however, the experimental group demonstrated a greater increase than the control group. The higher post-test scores achieved by the experimental group indicate the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning in improving students' reading skills.

The results of the independent-sample t-test revealed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups ($p < 0.05$). This finding confirms that Project-Based Learning had a significant effect on students' reading achievement. The improvement can be attributed to students' active involvement in reading tasks, collaborative group work, and project-based activities that encouraged deeper comprehension of texts.

Furthermore, Project-Based Learning created a more engaging learning environment in which students actively constructed meaning through discussion, collaboration, and presentation. This finding supports constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that learning is more effective when students are actively involved in the learning process rather than passively receiving information.

The implementation of Project-Based Learning encouraged students to become more actively involved in the reading process. Instead of merely answering comprehension questions, students were required to analyze texts, discuss ideas with peers, and present project outcomes. This process helped students develop deeper comprehension and a better understanding of text structure and meaning.

In addition, collaborative project work allowed students to share reading strategies, clarify misunderstandings, and learn from one another. This finding aligns with Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in learning. Through group discussions and collaborative tasks, students were able to construct meaning more effectively and improve their reading comprehension.

Moreover, Project-Based Learning increased students' motivation to read English texts. When reading tasks were connected to real-world projects, students perceived reading as a meaningful activity rather than a burdensome task. This motivational aspect plays a crucial role in improving reading achievement, as motivated students tend to invest more effort and attention during the learning process.

Discussion

The results of this study indicated that both the experimental and control groups showed improvements in reading achievement. However, the experimental group exhibited a more significant increase in their reading scores compared to the control group. This suggests that Project-Based Learning (PBL) was more effective in enhancing students' reading skills, as evidenced by the higher post-test scores of the experimental group.

The independent-sample t-test results further supported this finding, revealing a statistically significant difference between the two groups ($p < 0.05$). This confirms that PBL had a notable impact on the reading achievement of the students. The improvement in the experimental group can be attributed to the active involvement of students in reading tasks, the collaborative group work, and the project-based activities that fostered a deeper understanding of the texts.

In addition to academic improvement, Project-Based Learning created a more dynamic and engaging learning environment. Students were actively engaged in constructing meaning through discussions, collaborations, and presentations, rather than passively receiving information. This aligns with the principles of constructivist learning theory, which asserts that learning is most effective when students are directly involved in the learning process.

One of the key elements contributing to the improvement in reading achievement was the active participation of students in reading activities. Instead of simply answering comprehension questions, students were tasked with analyzing texts, discussing ideas with their peers, and presenting the outcomes of their projects. This approach encouraged students to delve deeper into the text, improving both their comprehension and their ability to understand text structure and meaning.

Moreover, the collaborative nature of the project work allowed students to share reading strategies, clarify misunderstandings, and learn from each other. This supports Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in the learning process. Through group discussions and collaborative tasks, students were able to co-construct meaning, which in turn led to improved reading comprehension.

The implementation of PBL also had a positive effect on students' motivation to read English texts. By connecting reading tasks to real-world projects, students viewed reading as a meaningful and purposeful activity, rather than a mere academic requirement. This

motivational factor played a crucial role in the improvement of reading achievement, as motivated students are more likely to invest effort and attention in the learning process.

Furthermore, the project-based approach fostered an environment in which students felt ownership of their learning. They were given the opportunity to take responsibility for their projects, which enhanced their engagement and sense of accomplishment. This sense of autonomy, coupled with collaborative learning, further strengthened their commitment to improving their reading skills.

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that Project-Based Learning is an effective approach to enhancing students' reading achievement. Through active engagement, collaborative efforts, and meaningful learning experiences, students were able to improve their reading comprehension and develop a deeper understanding of texts. The motivational and social aspects of PBL also played a key role in boosting students' interest in reading and encouraging them to take a more active role in their learning.

CONCLUSSION

This study concludes that Project-Based Learning has a positive and significant effect on the reading achievement of eighth-grade students at SMPN 20 Bengkulu City. Students who were taught using PjBL demonstrated better reading performance than those who received conventional instruction.

Despite limitations such as the relatively small sample size and the short duration of the treatment, the findings suggest that Project-Based Learning can be recommended as an alternative instructional model for teaching reading at the junior high school level. Future research is encouraged to examine the long-term effects of PjBL and its integration with local cultural content to further enhance students' engagement and learning outcomes.

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