

Improving Students' Language Learning through Project-Based Learning Activities

Yewande Ukah

Babcock University, Nigeria

Christian Ayewu

Babcock University, Nigeria

Priscilla Oworu

Covenant University, Nigeria

Abstract

This current research aims to (1) find out the improvement of score and quality of students' project task through project-based learning activities in English classroom, (2) analyze students' activities in carrying out the project-based learning, and (3) analyze students' attitudes in English learning through the project-based learning model. This classroom action research was conducted in Isanbi Comprehensive High School at Ilisan-Remo, Nigeria. The research participants were 19 first grade students. They were students who had a lot of problems with the value of project assignments, where the average value they got in the second semester of the 2021/2022 academic year was only 70.42, which belonged to the sufficient category because it did not reach the standard of good category (75). From the result of the research conducted in 2 cycles, it was found that in each cycle there was an average increase with a deviation of 9.27 and increased to the good category. Thus, the researchers concluded that students' language learning can be improved through project-based learning activities in the first grade junior high school students.

Keywords

project-based learning, project task, students' activities

Corresponding author:

Yewande Ukah, Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria
Email: yewande.ukah00@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

Learning English for junior high school students requires learning activities that are centered on students, so that they are proficient and skilled in dealing with the demands of real life. According to Jones (1998) for achieving this, strategies and learning methods are needed that require the active participation of students to solve problems intelligently by carrying out various activities, in authentic and natural English. As proposed by Ur (2012) some learning models that apply these learning strategies are (1) explorative and discovery, (2) problem-based, and (3) project-based.

Traditional learning strategies and methods which are teacher-centred, need to be limited. Traditional learning is usually carried out in three stages, namely (1) the teacher explains concepts, rules, formulas, pictures, and so on, and students listen to understand, (2) students work on assignments in classroom and at home to apply their understanding, and (3) students apply in real life (Afitska, 2016; Vetrinskaya & Dmitrenko, 2017)

Traditional learning strategies place students only as recipients, involving low-level thinking processes (remembering, understanding, applying). The teaching method is usually based on textbooks, not on real life, and is oriented only to success in working on questions during practice, tests, and examinations (Gallardo-del-Puerto & Martínez-Adrián, 2014; Roig-Marín, 2017). Another characteristic is that learning media is more accurately referred to as teaching media, because it functions more to make it easier for teachers to convey their lessons to students (Stillwell, 2017).

In language teaching contexts, Richards (2001) argued that the selection of a learning model is determined by the following considerations:

1. The characteristic of knowledge developed according to factual, conceptual, and procedural categories. In factual and conceptual knowledge, discovery learning can be selected, while in procedural knowledge, project-based learning and problem-based learning can be selected.
2. The characteristic of skill contained in the formulation of basic competencies. In the skills of capturing meaning, compiling, and editing texts, teachers can choose discovery learning and problem-based learning, while in concrete skills, teachers can choose project-based learning.

Bellés-Calvera (2018) suggests that the selection of the learning model takes into account aspects that are developed, including religious aspect, social attitudes aspect, knowledge aspect, and skill aspect. On the other hand, students in the first grade of junior high school are generally still less skilled concretely in composing simple texts. Writing simple procedural texts is a part of basic competencies, namely compiling procedural texts, spoken and written, short and simple, in the form of recipes and manuals, taking into account social functions, text structures, and linguistic elements that are correct and in context. This material has the characteristics of the skills contained in the formulation of the basic competencies.

As a result of learning the material, the dominant weakness experienced by students was regarding the concrete skill. As an initial observation of the students'

learning outcome document in the second semester of the 2021/2022 academic year, the results of the assessment of the first year students' project task did not achieve minimal learning mastery (78%). The average value of the project task that students got was only 70.42 (classified as sufficient category).

Thus, it is necessary to improve the planning of material learning programs from the basic competency, namely compiling procedural texts, spoken and written, short and simple, in the form of recipes and manuals, taking into account social functions, text structures, and linguistic elements that are correct and in context. The characteristics of the material achieved by these students are appropriate if taught using a project-based learning model, so that the problems experienced by students can be resolved.

Therefore, the researchers conducted a basic procedure, namely planning, action, observation, and reflection in each cycle. Each cycle is held in four meetings, three meetings for giving action and one meeting for giving. The problem that will be raised is whether the value of project assignments can be increased through student Project-based learning activities. Based on the formulation of the problem mentioned, the purposes of this research were to:

1. find out the improvement of score and quality of students' project task through project-based learning activities in English classroom,
2. analyze students' activities in carrying out the project-based learning,
3. analyze students' attitudes in English learning through the project-based learning model.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Project-based learning is a learning model that uses projects as a first step in integrating new knowledge and skills based on real experiences. In a research conducted by Balaman and Sert (2017) it is explained that project-based learning is carried out systematically which involves students in learning attitudes, knowledge, and skills through investigations in product design.

Project-based learning is a learning model that uses projects/ activities as a learning process to achieve attitude, knowledge and skill competencies (Brinton, 2003; Reynolds & Yu, 2018). The emphasis on learning lies in the activities of students to produce products by applying the skills of researching, analyzing, making, up to presenting learning products based on real experience. The product in question is the result of a project in the form of designs, schemes, written works, works of art, technological works/crafts, and others. This approach allows students to work independently or in groups in constructing real products (Jiang, 2018).

A study conducted by Eliášková (2019) found project-based learning was an innovative learning approach, which emphasizes contextual learning through complex activities. Implementation of project-based learning provides opportunities for students to think critically and be able to develop their creativity through developing initiatives to produce real products in the form of goods or services.

In Project-based learning, students are actively involved in solving problems assigned by the teacher in the form of a project. Another research found that students actively manage their learning by working in real terms that produce real products. This learning model can reduce competition in the classroom and direct students to be more collaborative than working alone (Giguere, 2020). Besides that, project based learning can also be carried out independently by working to construct learning through new knowledge and skills, and manifesting it in real products. Teachers took the initiative to conduct classroom action research using a project-based learning model on the material for compiling procedural texts, oral and written, short and simple, in the form of recipes and manuals (Lawton, 2019; Väisänen & Hirsto, 2020).

Classroom action research is a type of research that is appropriate to be applied in an effort to improve students' project skills (Al-Obaydi, Nashruddin, Rahman, & Suherman, 2021; Gallagher, 2020). Classroom action research procedures are generally set up in four basic stages that are interrelated and continuous, as described below (Beaudin, 2022; Reynolds, Shieh, Ding, & Ha, 2022).

1. Initial Designing/ Planning

Before conducting the research, the researcher compiled the problem formulation, objectives and made an action plan, including research instruments and learning tools.

2. Action and Observation

This stage includes actions taken by researchers as an effort to improve student learning outcomes as well as observing the results or impacts of learning activities.

3. Evaluation and Reflection

At this stage the researcher examines, sees and considers the results or impacts of the actions taken based on the observation sheet filled in by the observer.

4. Revised Designing/ Planning

Based on the reflection result, the researcher makes a revised design to be implemented in the next cycle.

In the implementation carried out in each cycle, the description of the activities is as explained below:

1. Initial Designing/ Planning

In general, activities done at the initial research designing/ planning stage are:

- a) Collecting the necessary data
- b) Planning the learning activity by applying the learning model
- c) Providing the learning media that are appropriate to the characteristics of students
- d) Making observation instruments, documentation, journals, and tests
- e) Preparing daily note sheets
- f) Making a learning evaluation sheet for each cycle.

2. Action and Observation

In general, activities done in this stage are:

- a) Carrying out the learning activities in each meeting based on the learning implementation planning that has been made
 - b) Filling in the student activity observation sheet
 - c) Filling in the observation sheet of the teacher's ability to plan and manage the learning activity.
 - d) Filling in a journal about the attitude of students at the time of carrying out the action.
 - e) Recording things that support the identity of students
 - f) Giving a practical skill test at the end of each cycle
 - g) Analyzing each instrument that has been implemented
 - h) Drawing the reflection on the results of the analysis of each instrument
 - i) Observing the implementation of each cycle final test
 - j) Observing the results of the analysis of each instrument that has been implemented.
 - k) Observing the planning for the preparation of the implementation of learning in the next cycle.
3. Evaluation and Reflection
- Evaluation and reflection are to:
- a) Reflect on the results of observations from the results of the observation sheet on the teacher's ability to plan and implement learning that has been filled in.
 - b) Reflect on the results of observations from the results of the student activity observation sheets in implementing learning that have been filled in.
 - c) Reflect on the results of observations of the implementation of the final cycle test.
 - d) Reflect on the results of observations and analysis of each instrument that has been implemented.
 - e) Reflect on the results of observations to prepare for the implementation of learning in the next cycle.
4. Revised Designing/ Planning
- In general, activities done in this stage are:
- a) Collecting the necessary data.
 - b) Planning learning by applying the learning model through the development of the previous cycle.
 - c) Providing learning media objects that are in accordance with the characteristics of students.
 - d) Making observation instruments, documentation, journals and tests in writing.
 - e) Preparing a daily record sheet.
 - f) Making the next cycle learning evaluation sheet.

Reflection is carried out for all activities, starting from planning, actions, to observation. If the result of the reflection of the first cycle do not meet the performance indicator, the research is continued to the second cycle. However, if the result indicates that the indicator of the research success has been fulfilled, then the research does not

need to be continued to the third cycle. This means that the research has achieved the targeted result (Cirocki & Farrelly, 2016).

RESEARCH METHOD

This classroom action research was conducted in Isanbi Comprehensive High School at Ilisan-Remo. The subjects of this study were 19 students from the 1st grade, consisting of 15 girls and 4 boys. To collect data, researchers used:

1. Observation

Observation is the activity of collecting data when carrying out actions on the subject to be studied, then recording the required data (Dörnyei, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Observations in this study were used to obtain qualitative data about student learning activities and the teacher's ability to plan and manage learning. The data was obtained using observation sheets of student learning activities and observation sheets of teacher abilities. In this study the researcher used a closed participatory observation technique, where the researcher was fully involved in the activity but the informants did not know if they were being observed. Eyisi (2016) suggests that closed observation is that the observer operates and makes observations without the research subject knowing about it.

2. Documentation

The documentation method was used to obtain data about the condition of the 1st year students at Isanbi Comprehensive High School which included: student names, student identification numbers, and project task scores obtained from English language subject teacher documents, prior to being given action.

3. Jurnal

The journal is a diary record of the facilities, infrastructure, and learning resources that are used when giving actions at each meeting in each cycle, student attitudes, and environmental conditions at the time of implementing the action (Berg & Lune, 2012). A journal is a collection of recorded notes from teachers and/or education staff in the school environment regarding positive or negative attitudes and behaviors, during and outside the subject learning process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

4. Skill competency test

In terms of the objects to be evaluated, the skills competency assessment was carried out using:

a) Performance or practice assessment

Assessment of performance or practice is done by observing the activities of students in doing something. This type of assessment is used to assess the achievement of competencies that require students to perform certain tasks. Performance or practice assessment considers the following:

- 1) Performance steps taken by students to demonstrate the performance of a competency.
- 2) The completeness and accuracy of the aspects assessed in the performance.
- 3) Special abilities needed to complete the task.

- 4) The abilities assessed are not too many, so they can be observed.
- 5) The abilities assessed are sorted based on the observed work steps.

b) Project assessment

Project assessment is used to determine understanding, ability to apply, ability to investigate and ability to clearly inform something. The project assessment is carried out starting from planning, implementation, to reporting.

The data collected was analyzed based on the result of the students' skills test instruments and the instruments resulting from observations of the teacher's abilities and students' activities. Furthermore, the determination of the quality categorization technique of determining the project task assessment analysis category technique, based on the skills test assessment guide is as follows:

- Excellent (A) : 86-100
- Good (B) : 71-85
- Sufficient (C) : 56-70
- Poor (D) : ≤ 55

The teacher's ability to manage learning was assessed using the category technique, as follows:

- a. Score of 91 - 100 was categorized as excellent;
- b. Score of 76 - 90 was categorized as good;
- c. Score of 61 - 75 was categorized as sufficient;
- d. Score of 51 - 60 was categorized as poor; and
- e. ≤ 50 was categorized as very poor.

The indicators of the success of this research are:

- a. Quantitatively, the value of the overall project assignment has reached a minimum average score of 78.
- b. There is an increase in the average and category in each cycle.
- c. Qualitatively, the teacher's ability to manage and control learning activities increases
- d. Qualitatively the activity of students in carrying out learning increased
- e. The results of data analysis from observations about teacher abilities and student activities show an increase in each cycle
- f. Supported by a student attendance rate of at least 85%.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. First Cycle

- a. The analysis of the score of students' project task

The score of students' project tasks in learning English by applying the project-based learning model can be seen in table 1 below.

Table 1. The statistic on students' project task scores in the 1st cycle

Statistics		
The score of project tasks		
N	<i>Valid</i>	19
	<i>Missing</i>	0
<i>Mean</i>		69.47
<i>Std. Error of Mean</i>		2.653
<i>Median</i>		75.00
<i>Mode</i>		78
<i>Std. Deviation</i>		11.564
<i>Variance</i>		133.735
<i>Range</i>		30
<i>Minimum</i>		50
<i>Maximum</i>		80
<i>Sum</i>		1320

Furthermore, the frequency of students' project task scores through the application of a project based learning model, can be seen in table 2 below.

Table 2. The frequency distribution of students' project task scores in the 1st cycle

The Score of project tasks					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	50	3	15.8	15.8	15.8
	53	1	5.3	5.3	21.1
	55	1	5.3	5.3	26.3
	68	2	10.5	10.5	36.8
	75	3	15.8	15.8	52.6
	78	7	36.8	36.8	89.5
	80	2	10.5	10.5	100.0
	Total	19	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage of project assignment scores on English subject matter through project based learning activities in the second cycle. 3 students got score of 50 (15.8%) and score of 75 (36.8%). 1 student got score of 53 (5.3%), and score of 55 (5.3%). 2 students got score of 68 (10.5%), and score of 80 (10.5%). 7 students got score of 78 (36.8%).

Based on the result of data analysis, and the score of students' project tasks in the first cycle, the quality of the students' skill is categorized according to what is shown in table 3 below.

Table 3. The quality of students' skill on project task in the 1st cycle

Students' skill				
Mean score	Quality	Category	Frequency	Percentage
86 - 100	A	Excellent	0	0%
71 - 85	B	Good	12	63.16%
56 - 70	C	Sufficient	2	10.53%
0 - 55	D	Poor	5	26.32%
Total			19	100

According to the table 3, from the distribution of the quality category of students' project task scores through project based learning activities in the second cycle, no students were in the excellent category (0%), 12 students were in the good category (63.16%), 2 students were in the sufficient category (10.53%), and 5 students in the poor category (26.32%).

b. The analysis of the observation result of students' activities

The result of the analysis of students' activities data in the first cycle can be shown in the table 4 below.

Table 4. The result of the analysis of the observation of students' activities in the 1st cycle

	Aspects	Students' activity values			
		Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3	Mean
Valid 20 (number of aspects x 4)	1	2.40	2.60	2.90	2.63
	2	2.70	2.30	2.70	2.57
	3	2.60	2.90	3.30	2.75
	4	3.00	2.40	3.20	2.87
	5	2.60	3.50	4.00	3.37
	Total	13.30	13.80	16.10	14.40
	%	66.5%	69%	80.5%	72%

Table 4 shows the results of the analysis of obtaining scores from the observation of students' activities in carrying out project-based learning activities in the first cycle. At the 1st meeting, a total score of 13.3 (66.5%) was obtained. At the 2nd meeting, a total score of 13.8 (69%) was obtained. At the 3rd meeting, a total score of 16.1 (80.5%) was obtained. The average value of students' activity in the second cycle was totally 14.4 (72%). Based on the result of the analysis, the criteria for student activity in the second cycle were sufficient.

c. The analysis of the journal about students' attitude

The result of the observation in the journal about students' attitudes in carrying out the project based learning activity on English subject matter, can be shown in table 5 below.

Table 5. The result of journal analysis on students' attitudes in the 1st cycle

	Aspects	Students' attitude values			
		Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3	Mean
Valid 76 (number of students x 4)	1	15.00	15.00	14.00	14.67
	2	14.00	14.00	14.00	14.00
	3	12.00	12.00	12.00	12.00
	4	9.00	9.00	10.00	9.33
	Total	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00
	%	52.63%	52.63%	52.63%	52.63%

Table 5 shows the analysis of the result of the observation in the journal about students' attitudes in carrying out learning in the first cycle. From the first meeting to the third meeting, a total score of 50 (52.63%) was obtained. On average, students'

attitude score in the first cycle was 50 (52.63%). This indicated that the attitude of students obtained from the result of the observation in the first cycle did not support the application of the project-based learning model.

2. Second Cycle

a. The analysis of the score of students' project task

The score of students' project tasks in learning English by applying the project-based learning model can be seen in table 6 below.

Table 6. The statistic on students' project task scores in the 2nd cycle

Statistics		
The score of project tasks		
N	<i>Valid</i>	19
	<i>Missing</i>	0
<i>Mean</i>		78.74
<i>Std. Error of Mean</i>		1.885
<i>Median</i>		80.00
<i>Mode</i>		80
<i>Std. Deviation</i>		3.856
<i>Variance</i>		14.871
<i>Range</i>		17
<i>Minimum</i>		68
<i>Maximum</i>		85
<i>Sum</i>		1496

Furthermore, the frequency of students' project task scores through the application of a project based learning model, can be seen in table 7 below.

Table 7. The frequency distribution of students' project task scores in the 2nd cycle

The Score of project tasks					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	68	1	5.3	5.3	5.3
	75	3	15.8	15.8	21.1
	78	5	26.3	26.3	47.4
	80	7	36.8	36.8	84.2
	83	1	5.3	5.3	89.5
	85	2	10.5	10.5	100.0
	Total	19	100.0	100.0	

Table 7 shows the frequency and percentage of project assignment scores on English subject matter through project based learning activities in the second cycle. One student got score of 68 (5.3%), 3 students got score of 75 (15.8%), 5 students got score of 78 (26.3%), 7 students got score of 80 (36.8%), 1 student got score of 83 (5.3%), and 2 students got score of 85 (10.5%). The categorization of the quality of the results of student project tasks in the second cycle is shown in table 8 below.

Table 8. The quality of students' skill on project task in the 2nd cycle

Students' skill				
Mean score	Quality	Category	Frequency	Percentage
86 - 100	A	Excellent	0	0%
71 - 85	B	Good	18	94.74%
56 - 70	C	Sufficient	1	5.26%
0 - 55	D	Poor	0	0%
Total			19	100

According to the table 8, from the distribution of the quality category of students' project task scores through project based learning activities in the second cycle, no students were in the excellent category (0%), 18 students were in the good category (94.74%), and 1 student was in the sufficient category (5.26%), and there were no students in the poor category (0%).

b. The analysis of the observation result of students' activities

The result of the analysis of students' activities data in the first cycle can be shown in the table 9 below.

Table 9. The result of the analysis of the observation of students' activities in the 2nd cycle

		Students' activity values			
		Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3	Mean
Valid 20 (number of aspects x 4)	1	2.60	3.30	3.50	3.13
	2	3.00	3.30	3.70	3.33
	3	3.10	3.40	3.60	3.37
	4	3.10	3.30	3.80	3.40
	5	3.30	3.70	4.00	3.67
Total		15.10	17.00	18.60	16.90
%		75.50%	85%	93%	84,50%

Table 9 shows the results of the analysis of obtaining scores from the observation of students' activities in carrying out project-based learning activities in the second cycle. At the 1st meeting, a total score of 15.1 (75.5%) was obtained. At the 2nd meeting, a total score of 17 (85%) was obtained. At the 3rd meeting, a total score of 18.6 (93%) was obtained. The average value of students' activity in the second cycle was totally 16.9 (84.5%). Based on the result of the analysis, the criteria for student activity in the second cycle were good.

c. The analysis of the journal about students' attitude

The result of the observation in the journal about students' attitudes in carrying out the project based learning activity on English subject matter, can be shown in table 10 below.

Table 10. The result of journal analysis on students' attitudes in the 2nd cycle

	Aspects	Students' attitude values			
		Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3	Mean
Valid 76 (number of students x 4)	1	17	17	17	17
	2	16	16	16	16
	3	12	12	12	12
	4	14	14	17	15
	Total	59	59	62	60
	%	77,63%	77,63%	81,58%	78,95%

Table 10 shows the analysis of the result of the observation in the journal about students' attitudes in carrying out learning in the second cycle. From the first meeting to the second meeting, a total score of 59 (77.63%) was obtained. At the third meeting, a score of 62 (81.58%) was obtained. On average, students' attitude score in the second cycle was 60 (78.95%). This indicated that the attitudes of students obtained from observations in the second cycle were in the supporting criteria.

Indicators of the quality improvement of students' project task score as a whole have been achieved in each cycle. In the first cycle, the mean score was 70.53, in the good category. In the second cycle, it achieved an average score of 78.74, with the same category, namely good. Thus, there is an increase in the overall quality of students' project task score from the first cycle to the second cycle, with a difference of 8.21. There is no change in the term of category, but there is an increase in students' learning completeness.

The increase of students' activities in carrying out project-based learning activities in each cycle, can be seen in table 11 below.

Table 11. The increase of students' activities in each cycle

	The first cycle	The second cycle	The increase difference
Sum	14,4	16,9	2,5
Percentage	72%	84.5%	12.5%

Table 11 shows an increase in students' activity in carrying out project-based learning activities in each cycle. Students' activity in the first cycle is 72% (sufficient criteria). In the second cycle, students' activity increases to 84.5% (good criteria). Thus, there is an increase with a difference of 12.50%. This indicates a positive change, because the criteria of students' activity increases from sufficient to good criteria.

The attitude of students in carrying out learning in each cycle has also increased. In the first cycle, the percentage of students' attitude was 52.63% (categorized not supportive). In the second cycle, the percentage of students' attitude increased to 78.95% (categorized as supportive). This indicates a change in a positive direction because the category of students' attitude increases from not supporting to being supportive.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion in this study, the researchers drew the following conclusions. Firstly, the score and quality of students' project tasks in teaching English can be increased through project-based learning activities. Secondly, the application of the project-based learning model in English class can increase student activity in learning. The last, the project-based learning model in English class also changes students' attitude to be more positive in participating in learning.

Regarding with the conclusions of this study, the researchers suggest that:

1. The project-based learning model should be applied to students in learning English because it can increase the score and the quality of students' project tasks.
2. The students' activity which is increased, and the students' attitude which is positive, in carrying out project-based learning activities should be maintained in all learning activities.

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