

Project-Based Learning and Its Contributions to French as a Foreign Language Learners

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Abstract:

In contemporary foreign language education, traditional methods are increasingly being replaced by student-centered and activity-based approaches that position learners as active participants in their own learning processes. Among these, Project-Based Learning (PBL) stands out as a multidimensional instructional strategy that supports learners' cognitive, affective, and linguistic development simultaneously. PBL allows students to use the target language in authentic and meaningful contexts, making the learning experience more engaging, memorable, and motivating. Particularly in modern language teaching, PBL is recognized for fostering communicative competence, promoting learner autonomy, and encouraging the integrated use of multiple language skills.

This study aims to investigate the effects of PBL on the language development of pre-service teachers learning French as a foreign language. The research was conducted with ten first-year students enrolled in a French Language Teacher Education program at Education Faculty of Anadolu University in Eskişehir, Turkey. The participants were considered to have attained a B1 level of proficiency, based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The sample consisted of eight female and two male students, most of whom expressed significant anxiety and lack of self-confidence when speaking French in front of an audience. This observed affective barrier served as a key rationale for the implementation of PBL in this context.

Within the scope of the study, students were assigned to create and present projects in French that would introduce the city they live in from various perspectives, including cultural, historical, social, and geographical dimensions. These projects were designed to be carried out in pairs or groups of three, in order to foster collaboration and peer learning. Throughout the project process, students engaged in both written and oral production in French and ultimately presented their projects to their classmates in a formal classroom setting.

Following the presentations, students were asked to reflect on their experiences with PBL by responding to a 13-item open-ended interview form. The qualitative data obtained were analyzed using content analysis. The findings revealed that PBL contributed significantly to the students' self-confidence, reduced their anxiety related to using the target language, and led to notable improvements in oral language skills, particularly in speaking, listening, and presentation abilities. Furthermore, students emphasized that the project process made language learning more enjoyable, relevant, and meaningful, while also enhancing their engagement and sense of responsibility. The collaborative nature of the projects was found to strengthen students' interpersonal communication, teamwork, and peer support.

The study concludes that PBL is not merely an instructional technique but a holistic pedagogical approach that fosters motivation, learner agency, and communicative competence in foreign language education. Considering the professional development of future language teachers, the integration of PBL into teacher education programs is strongly recommended, as it contributes to the development of essential skills such as critical thinking, planning, cooperation, and the effective and creative use of the target language.

Keywords:

Project-based learning; active learning; group work; self-confidence; French as a foreign language.