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ENHANCING ENGLISH RECEPTIVE SKILLS THROUGH PROJECT-BASED LEARNING: A STUDY OF NON-ENGLISH MAJORS IN VIETNAM

Pham Quang Binh^{1*} and Tran Thi Kim Quy²

¹*Faculty of English Language, Lac Hong University, Vietnam*

²*Faculty of Basic Sciences, Posts and Telecommunications Institute of Technology, Vietnam*

**Corresponding author, Email: binhpq@lhu.edu.vn*

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Abstract

This study examines the effects of project-based learning (PBL) on the attitudes of Vietnamese university students in non-English major as well as their receptive English abilities (listening and reading). After a 15-week project-based learning intervention, a quantitative method including pre- and post-tests as well as an attitude survey revealed significant improvements in total receptive skill scores. Additionally, students expressed increased involvement and favorable sentiments toward group and independent study. These results show how well project-based learning works to improve language proficiency and attitudes toward learning, making it a strong substitute for conventional approaches. With ramifications for curriculum design worldwide, this study offers empirical support for project-based learning effects on non-English majors' receptive abilities in an EFL environment. The study underscores the role of student-centered pedagogies like project-based learning in developing comprehensive language proficiency for learners outside English-specialized disciplines.

Keywords: *Non-English major students, project-based learning, receptive skills, student attitudes.*

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TĂNG CƯỜNG KỸ NĂNG TIẾP NHẬN TIẾNG ANH THÔNG QUA HỌC TẬP THEO DỰ ÁN: NGHIÊN CỨU TRÊN SINH VIÊN KHÔNG CHUYÊN NGỮ TẠI VIỆT NAM

Phạm Quang Bình^{1*} và Trần Thị Kim Quý²

¹Khoa Ngôn Ngữ Anh, Đại học Lạc Hồng, Việt Nam

²Khoa cơ bản, Học viện Công nghệ Bưu chính Viễn thông cơ sở TP.HCM, Việt Nam

*Tác giả liên hệ, Email: binhpq@lhu.edu.vn

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Tóm tắt

Nghiên cứu này khảo sát ảnh hưởng của phương pháp Học tập theo Dự án (Project-Based Learning) đến thái độ và năng lực tiếp nhận tiếng Anh (nghe và đọc) của sinh viên không chuyên ngữ tại các trường đại học Việt Nam. Sau can thiệp Học tập theo Dự án kéo dài 15 tuần, phương pháp định lượng, bao gồm các bài kiểm tra trước và sau can thiệp cùng với một khảo sát thái độ, cho thấy có sự cải thiện đáng kể về tổng điểm kỹ năng tiếp nhận. Ngoài ra, sinh viên thể hiện sự tham gia tích cực hơn và thái độ tích cực đối với việc học nhóm và tự học. Những kết quả này chứng minh hiệu quả của Học tập theo Dự án trong việc nâng cao năng lực ngôn ngữ và thái độ học tập, biến nó thành một giải pháp thay thế mạnh mẽ cho các phương pháp truyền thống. Với những tác động đối với việc thiết kế chương trình giảng dạy trên toàn cầu, nghiên cứu này cung cấp bằng chứng thực nghiệm về tác động của Học tập theo Dự án đối với các kỹ năng tiếp nhận của sinh viên không chuyên ngữ trong môi trường Anh ngữ như một ngoại ngữ (EFL). Nghiên cứu nhấn mạnh vai trò của các phương pháp sư phạm lấy người học làm trung tâm như Học tập theo Dự án trong việc phát triển năng lực ngôn ngữ toàn diện cho sinh viên ngoài các ngành chuyên về tiếng Anh.

Từ khóa: Học tập theo dự án, kỹ năng tiếp nhận, sinh viên không chuyên ngữ, thái độ của sinh viên.

1. Introduction

The increasing importance of English in a globalized world necessitates strong English skills for university students, especially in non-English-speaking countries. In Vietnam, despite initiatives like the National Foreign Languages 2020 Project (Hoang, 2015), English proficiency remains low, ranking 63rd out of 116 countries in the 2024 EF English Proficiency Index (VnExpress International). This highlights the need for better pedagogical approaches.

While both English productive (speaking and writing) and receptive skills (listening and reading) are essential for academic and professional success, receptive skills are often poorly taught. Traditionally, Vietnamese English education has relied on teacher-centered, direct-teaching methods that emphasize rote memorization (Le, 2017). This approach limits student engagement and fails to foster authentic skill development (An, 2023). A further issue is the lack of culturally relevant content in textbooks, which can hinder student comprehension and motivation (Huong & Albright, 2018; Timmis & Jones, 2018).

To overcome these pedagogical challenges, this study proposes an innovative, student-centered approach: project-based learning (PBL). While PBL is known to boost language skills and motivation (Aldobekhi & Abahussain, 2024), its specific impact on the receptive skills of non-English major students in the Vietnamese context remains underexplored. This research aims to investigate how PBL affects these students' listening and reading skills and their attitudes toward using this approach for learning. The research questions guiding this study are:

- 1. To what extent does PBL affect non-English major students' English receptive skills?*
- 2. What are these students' attitudes towards using PBL to engage in English listening and reading practices?*

2. Literature review

2.1. Project-Based Learning in Language Instruction

PBL is defined as a student-centered teaching and learning method that engages students in investigating real-life questions or problems and constructing their own understanding through hands-on projects (Mason, 2020). This approach emphasizes active learning, where students are responsible for their own learning process, including planning, problem-solving, decision-making, and creating substantive products or presentations (Guo et al., 2020). PBL contrasts with traditional teacher-centered methods, as it encourages students to think critically, discover, and create rather than passively receive information from teachers (Dawson, 2023). According to Jones et al. (1997), PBL allows students to engage in authentic questions and activities, fostering deeper learning and critical thinking skills.

PBL are designed to foster an engaging and effective learning environment that promotes critical thinking, collaboration, and real-world problem-solving. One key principle is the emphasis on real-world connections, where projects are crafted to be relevant and meaningful, allowing students to see the practical application of their knowledge and skills (Cocco, 2006). PBL is inherently student-centered, encouraging learners to take an active role in their educational journey by exploring, asking questions, and making decisions about their projects, which fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility (Bytyqi, 2022).

Collaboration is another essential aspect, as students work in teams to share ideas and learn from one another, developing vital interpersonal skills (Artama et al., 2023). Inquiry-based learning is also central to PBL, prompting students to engage in exploration and research to solve problems, thereby enhancing their critical thinking and analytical abilities (Dawson,

2023). Also, assessment in PBL is often authentic, focusing on real-world tasks rather than traditional tests, which provides a more accurate measure of students' understanding and capabilities (Simpson, 2011). Reflection plays a crucial role as well, encouraging students to think about their learning experiences, evaluate their progress, and consider areas for improvement, thus deepening their understanding and promoting continuous learning (Almulla, 2020).

While the implementation of PBL involves a structured approach with different terms defined by various researchers (Kim, 2021; Artama et al., 2023; Yuliansyah & Ayu, 2021; Simpson, 2011), the process can be broadly summarized into 10 key stages (Stoller, 2002). The process begins with the instructor and students agreeing on a theme for the project, followed by determining the final outcome, such as a presentation or report. Next, the relevant project structure is established, identifying the necessary information and student roles. Students are then prepared for the language demands of the project before gathering information through research. This is followed by additional preparation for the language skills needed to compile and analyze the collected data. Once the information is organized and analyzed, students receive further support for the language demands of presenting their final product. The project culminates in the presentation of the completed work, where both students and instructors evaluate the overall experience, reflecting on the learning outcomes and potential improvements for future projects.

2.2. Attitude Framework

Attitude is a key concept in psychology that reflects an individual's positive or negative evaluation of various subjects, including people, objects, events, or ideas (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Gardner & Lambert, 1972). According to Wang (2022), attitudes are crucial in shaping learning outcomes; positive feelings such as interest, motivation, and belief can greatly enhance these outcomes. Similarly, Yusuf et al. (2023) found that students' attitudes toward learning play a key role in their academic success. Accordingly, students with positive learning attitudes tend to experience more effective learning processes (Minami & Ohura, 2015). Recognizing its importance, this paper investigates this concept through the application of PBL.

Attitude is typically broken down into three main components: cognitive, behavioral, and affective (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960). The cognitive component encompasses a person's beliefs and thoughts about a particular subject (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The behavioral component relates to how individuals intend to act or behave towards that subject (Ajzen, 1991). Lastly, the affective component involves the emotional responses individuals have towards the subject (Zanna & Rempel, 1988). Understanding these components is essential, as they shed light on how attitudes are formed, modified, and how they can influence behavior, especially within educational contexts of PBL.

2.3. Empirical Studies on Students' Perceptions and project-based learning Effects

A significant body of research underscores PBL's positive influence on student engagement. For instance, studies by Almulla (2020), Helwa and Sabry (2021), and Greenier (2020) converge on PBL's capacity to create a more dynamic and motivating learning environment. Almulla (2020) highlighted how PBL fosters engagement through collaborative learning and the development of 21st-century skills. Helwa and Sabry (2021) focused on its role in enhancing prospective teachers' EFL receptive skills and satisfaction, linking engagement to the perceived relevance of tasks. Greenier (2020) explored the "10Cs" of PBL curriculum, emphasizing authentic learning experiences as a driver of engagement.

While these studies robustly demonstrate PBL's efficacy in fostering active participation

and positive attitudes, their primary focus often lies on general engagement metrics, collaborative aspects, or engagement related to disciplinary content and, implicitly or explicitly, productive language skills. For example, Almulla's (2020) work, while comprehensive on engagement factors, does not deeply dissect how these factors specifically operate in terms of receptive skill enhancement. Similarly, Helwa and Sabry (2021) look at receptive skills but within a cohort of prospective teachers, whose motivations and learning trajectories differ from non-English majors. Greenier's (2020) framework, though valuable for curriculum design, does not offer specific insights into tailoring PBL for the nuanced development of listening and reading comprehension for this latter group. Thus, while the established positive link between PBL and overall engagement is a crucial foundation, a critical gap persists in understanding how PBL specifically cultivates positive attitudes when the intervention is tailored to develop the often-passive receptive language skills among non-English major university students. This study builds upon these foundational insights by investigating this specific nexus, positing that the nature of engagement might differ when the focus shifts from active production to nuanced comprehension.

As for PBL effects globally, the efficacy of PBL in enhancing specific language skills is increasingly documented internationally. Research highlights significant improvements in academic listening comprehension through real-world tasks and authentic materials (Sultana & Musavi, 2022; Febriani et al., 2024) and enhanced reading skills via engaging, problem-solving activities (Kavlu, 2015). Sultana and Musavi (2022), for example, found that PBL's authentic task-based nature improved EFL students' listening comprehension and retention. Febriani et al. (2024) further corroborated this, noting how PBL's dynamic framework aided EFL students in interpreting spoken language. Kavlu (2015) demonstrated PBL's positive impact on reading comprehension and critical thinking among undergraduate EFL students.

These studies, while valuable in establishing PBL's potential, predominantly focus on EFL students or general language learners. They often do not disaggregate the impact on receptive versus productive skills with the same level of detail, nor do they typically address the unique context of non-English major students whose primary field of study lies elsewhere and for whom English is an auxiliary tool rather than a central discipline. This study extends this line of inquiry by concentrating on the often-underemphasized receptive skills development of non-English majors, a demographic crucial for national development in many such countries.

Research within the Vietnamese context has highlighted the pedagogical benefits of PBL. It has been found to improve self-regulated learning among high school students (Tran & Phan Tran, 2021) and boost motivation and speaking performance in university and high school classes (Truong, 2017; Pham, 2014). However, these studies primarily focus on productive skills, self-regulated learning, or general attitudes. There is a notable absence of research systematically investigating the direct impact of PBL on receptive skill enhancement for non-English major university students in Vietnam.

Overall, while PBL is widely recognized for its potential to enhance engagement and certain language skills, a specific and critical gap persists. There is a manifest lack of focused empirical investigation into the efficacy of PBL for systematically developing English receptive skills among non-English major university students within the Vietnamese context. Furthermore, how these students perceive and attitudinally respond to PBL when it is specifically geared towards enhancing these foundational receptive skills remains largely underexplored. This study, therefore, directly addresses this multifaceted gap by examining both the performance outcomes in listening and reading and the attitudinal responses of non-English majors in Vietnam when engaged in a PBL environment tailored to foster these

specific competencies.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative design using pre- and post-tests to investigate the impact of PBL on non-English majors' receptive English skills, and a survey to gauge student perceptions of PBL. To ensure the reliability of the findings, participants were divided into an experimental group, who received instruction through PBL, and a control group, who followed traditional teacher-centered methods. This quasi-experimental design allowed for a direct comparison between the two approaches, making it possible to isolate the effects of PBL on receptive skills. Employing both groups not only minimized potential bias but also strengthened the validity of the results by demonstrating whether improvements were attributable to PBL rather than other external factors.

3.2. Participants

Participants were 72 non-English major university students (aged 19-21) in Vietnam enrolled in compulsory general English courses. They were all native Vietnamese speakers who provided informed consent. Students were assigned to an experimental group (N=40) receiving PBL intervention and a control group (N=32) following the traditional curriculum, using convenience sampling due to logistical constraints. Baseline comparability was established with a TOEIC-formatted pre-test. The control group used a textbook-based approach focusing on grammar, vocabulary, and TOEIC exercises, with limited authentic communication.

3.3. Project-based learning intervention and activities

The 15-week PBL intervention for the experimental group was based on Stoller's (2002) framework, with projects designed around supplementary coursebook topics. Activities fostered listening and reading comprehension through authentic tasks. For example, the Information Gathering phase required research using diverse English resources (articles, videos, podcasts), necessitating extensive reading and critical listening. Compiling and Analyzing Information involved synthesizing information from multiple English sources and active listening during group discussions. Preparing for Final Product Presentation required reading guidelines and listening to instructions. These activities ensured consistent engagement with receptive skills in purposeful contexts related to project goals. Students worked in teacher-assigned groups of 4–6 throughout the semester. Each group completed two projects of their own choosing. Each project lasts about 7 weeks, aligned with supplementary coursebook topics

Table 1. Topics and Projects

Topics	Suggested projects
Politics	Conduct a brief report exploring how local political decisions affect job opportunities for young people in the area.
Recycling	Plan a public awareness campaign, including posters, social media content, and presentations, encouraging the community to recycle more effectively.
Education	Create lesson plans using technological tools, and present surveys on their effectiveness.
Sports	Conduct interviews with athletic students at your institute to compile a multimedia presentation that highlights the benefits of sports for mental health.

Topics	Suggested projects
Finance	Plan an online course for students on budgeting, saving, and investing.

Table 1 presents suggested project topics and tasks designed for students. These examples illustrate how learners can engage in real-world, inquiry-based activities—such as writing reports, conducting interviews, planning awareness campaigns, or creating lesson plans—that align with the principles of PBL.

3.4. Data collection instruments

English receptive skills were evaluated using researcher-developed TOEIC-formatted pre- and post-tests, designed to mirror the official TOEIC structure and question types, with scores measured using the TOEIC band system. Face and content validity were established through review by experienced English instructors. Parallel forms of the tests were used. Feedback, including self-reflection, peer feedback, and teacher evaluation, was integrated into the PBL process, indirectly assessing receptive skills through evaluating comprehension and synthesis of English source materials. Student attitudes were collected via a 21-item Likert scale questionnaire based on Rosenberg and Hovland's (1960) three-component theory (cognitive, affective, behavioral). Face validity was reviewed by teachers experienced in PBL, and internal consistency reliability was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha=0.935$).

3.5. Data Collection and Analysis

Pre-tests were administered to both groups at the course outset. Post-tests were administered after 15 weeks. Quantitative data from the tests were analyzed using SPSS 27.0 to determine PBL effect on receptive skills. Following the post-test, the attitude questionnaire was administered to the experimental group. The attitudinal data were analyzed within Rosenberg and Hovland's (1960) tripartite framework, which conceptualizes attitude as consisting of cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. Meanwhile, the receptive skill outcomes were assessed through TOEIC-based test scores, which were interpreted and analyzed according to the proficiency bands recommended by the TOEIC framework. The receptive test results were entered into SPSS 27.0 for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics (mean scores, standard deviations) were first calculated to provide an overview of students' performance in both the control and experimental groups. To test the equivalence of the two groups prior to the intervention, independent-samples t-tests were conducted on the pre-test scores. After the intervention, paired-samples t-tests were used to compare pre- and post-test scores within each group, while independent-samples t-tests were employed to compare post-test outcomes between groups.

4. Results

4.1. Project-based learning's effect on students' receptive skill outcomes

Table 2. Pre-test Receptive Skills Scores for Experimental and Control Groups

	Group	N	Mean	SD	SD. Error Mean
Pre listening test	Control group	32	212.34	65.142	11.516
	Experimental group	40	211.50	70.066	11.078
Pre reading test	Control group	32	88.44	43.988	7.776

Group	N	Mean	SD	SD. Error Mean
Experimental group	40	85.20	43.988	6.955

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the pre-test scores of the control and experimental groups. Levene’s test for equality of variances indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met, $F(1,70) = 0.404, p = .527$. The results showed that there was no statistically significant difference in pre-test scores between the two groups, $t(70) = 0.225, p = .822$, with a mean difference of 4.18. These findings suggest that the control and experimental groups were comparable in terms of their pre-test performance prior to the treatment.

Table 4. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Receptive Skills Scores for the Control Group

	N	Mean	SD	SD error mean
Pair 1 Pre listening test	32	212.34	65.142	11.516
Post listening test	32	212.97	63.784	11.270
Pair 2 Pre reading test	32	88.44	43.988	7.776
Post reading test	32	90.78	36.458	6.445

The control group demonstrated minimal improvement over the course. Their total score increased only slightly, from 300.78 to 303.75, indicating limited effectiveness of traditional teaching methods. In particular, listening scores showed a negligible mean increase of 0.63 points, while reading scores improved by a mean of 2.34 points. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare listening scores before and after the course. The results showed that post-test scores ($M = 212.97, SD = 63.75$) were not significantly higher than pre-test scores ($M = 212.34, SD = 65.14$), $t(31) = -0.73, p = .474, 95\% CI [-2.38, 1.13]$. This indicates that the course did not produce a statistically significant improvement in students’ listening performance. In contrast, a paired-samples t-test conducted for reading scores revealed that post-test scores ($M = 90.78, SD = 36.46$) were significantly higher than pre-test scores ($M = 88.44, SD = 37.45$), $t(31) = -2.90, p = .007, 95\% CI [-3.99, -0.69]$. These findings suggest that although the improvement was small, the course led to a statistically significant gain in students’ reading performance.

Table 5. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Receptive Skills Scores for the Experimental Group

	N	Mean	SD	SD error mean
Pair 1 Pre listening test	40	211.50	70.066	11.078
Post listening test	40	266.75	70.584	11.160
Pair 2 Pre reading test	40	85.20	43.988	6.955
Post reading test	40	310.13	78.964	12.485

The table presents the comparison of pre-test and post-test receptive skills scores for the experimental group. Paired-samples t-tests confirmed that the experimental group made statistically significant improvements across all measures. For listening skills, the mean score increased by 55.25 points, from the pre-test ($M = 211.50, SD = 70.07$) to the post-test ($M = 266.75, SD = 70.58$), $t(39) = -5.85, p < .001$, reflecting a large effect size (Cohen’s $d = 0.93$).

Similarly, reading scores improved dramatically by 224.93 points, rising from the pre-test ($M = 85.20$, $SD = 43.99$) to the post-test ($M = 310.13$, $SD = 78.96$), $t(39) = -14.13$, $p < .001$, indicating a very large effect size (Cohen's $d = 2.23$). Consequently, the total score increased significantly by 280.18 points, from the pre-test ($M = 296.70$, $SD = 80.93$) to the post-test ($M = 576.88$, $SD = 90.02$), $t(39) = -16.32$, $p < .001$, which also demonstrated a very large effect size (Cohen's $d = 2.58$).

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the post-test results of both groups in listening and reading. For listening, Levene's test indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not violated, $F(1,70) = 0.025$, $p = .874$, so the row "Equal variances assumed" was used. The results revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups, $t(70) = -3.35$, $p = .001$, with the experimental group scoring 53.78 points lower than the control group. The 95% confidence interval for the difference ranged from -85.78 to -21.79. For reading, however, Levene's test showed that the assumption of equal variances was violated, $F(1,70) = 30.52$, $p < .001$; therefore, the "Equal variances not assumed" results were reported. The independent-samples t-test confirmed a highly significant difference, $t(57.42) = -15.61$, $p < .001$, indicating that the experimental group scored 219.34 points lower than the control group. The 95% confidence interval ranged from -247.48 to -191.21, confirming the robustness of this result

4.2. Students' Attitudes Towards project-based learning

Table 6. Cronbach's Alpha for Attitudinal Questionnaire

Cronbach's alpha	N of items
.935	21

The internal consistency of the attitudinal questionnaire was excellent, with a Cronbach's alpha of .935 for the 21 items, as shown in Table 2. This high reliability indicates that the instrument consistently measured students' attitudes towards PBL.

Table 7. Students' Cognitive Attitudes towards project-based learning

	Mean	SD
1. PBL helps me improve my reading and listening scores.	3.59	1.041
2. I recognize my weaknesses in reading and listening and know how to improve.	3.77	0.985
3. I improve my critical thinking while working on projects.	3.39	1.104
4. PBL helps me connect knowledge from different disciplines.	3.39	1.125
5. Working on projects helps activate my background knowledge.	3.61	1.104
6. I am more conscious of learning new words.	3.86	1.133
7. I memorize new words better as I see and actively use them multiple times.	3.32	1.157
8. I improve my reading and listening speed.	3.32	1.116
9. I find my own ways to read and listen to English more effectively.	3.32	1.116

	Mean	SD
10. I am more aware of the contexts when listening to and reading English.	4.07	0.789
11. I have a longer concentration span when listening to English passages.	3.70	0.878

Students' cognitive attitudes towards PBL were generally positive. A key strength identified was that PBL helped students become "more aware of the contexts when listening to and reading English," which garnered the highest mean score in this category (M=4.07, SD=0.789). This suggests that the authentic tasks within PBL enhanced their contextual understanding. Furthermore, students agreed that PBL helped them to "be more conscious of learning new words" (M=3.86, SD=1.133) and to "recognize my weaknesses in reading and listening and know how to improve" (M=3.77, SD=0.985). There was also a notable perception that PBL "helps me improve my reading and listening scores" (M=3.59, SD=1.041). However, areas with slightly less strong agreement, indicating potential areas for further pedagogical focus, included "I memorize new words better as I see and actively use them multiple times" (M=3.32, SD=1.157) and "I find my own ways to read and listen to English more effectively" (M=3.32, SD=1.116).

Table 8. Students' Affective Attitudes towards project-based learning

	Mean	SD
1. I feel more comfortable when listening to audiovisual or reading English passages at my own pace.	3.39	0.993
2. I am more responsible when working in groups to finish the projects.	3.80	1.133
3. I am more engaged in learning English when doing projects.	3.36	1.080
4. I am interested in collaborative work in English class.	3.98	0.849
5. I enjoy reading and listening to English materials that I find for the projects.	3.30	1.091

On affective responses, students showed a strong positive inclination towards the collaborative aspects of PBL, with "I am interested in collaborative work in English class" receiving a high mean score (M=3.98, SD=0.849). This was closely followed by a heightened sense of responsibility: "I am more responsible when working in groups to finish the projects" (M=3.80, SD=1.133). Students also reported feeling "more comfortable when listening to audiovisual or reading English passages at my own pace" (M=3.39, SD=0.993) and being "more engaged in learning English when doing projects" (M=3.36, SD=1.080). The aspect with the least strong agreement, though still positive, was "I enjoy reading and listening to English materials that I find for the projects" (M=3.30, SD=1.091), suggesting that while they see the value, the independent search for materials might be less enjoyable for some.

Table 9. Students' Behavioral Attitudes towards project-based learning

	Mean	SD
1. I employ different listening and reading strategies when listening to or reading.	3.36	1.183
2. I actively replay the audio or re-read the passages to recognize and memorize the sounds and words.	3.64	0.967

	Mean	SD
3. I spend more time on practicing listening and reading beyond class.	3.11	1.104
4. I synthesize the main ideas from reading and listening materials and share them with my friends.	3.18	1.225
5. I look for reading and listening materials myself.	3.39	1.104

Regarding behavioral attitudes, students reported actively engaging with learning materials. The statement "I actively replay the audio or re-read the passages to recognize and memorize the sounds and words" had the highest mean ($M=3.64$, $SD=0.967$), indicating proactive learning strategies. Students also reported that they "employ different listening and reading strategies when listening to or reading" ($M=3.36$, $SD=1.183$) and "look for reading and listening materials myself" ($M=3.39$, $SD=1.104$). However, extending practice beyond classroom hours appeared to be a challenge, as "I spend more time on practicing listening and reading beyond class" received the lowest mean score in this category ($M=3.11$, $SD=1.104$). Similarly, "I synthesize the main ideas from reading and listening materials and share them with my friends" also showed room for improvement ($M=3.18$, $SD=1.225$).

5. Discussion

The findings from this study as presented above align with existing literature, confirming PBL's effectiveness in improving language skills and fostering positive attitudes. The significant improvement in the experimental group compared to the minimal gains in the control group underscores PBL's superiority over traditional methods. The enhanced receptive skills in the experimental group are attributed to the authentic tasks within PBL, which promoted active reading for main ideas, specific information, and inference, as well as critical listening for details and understanding intent in various English resources like articles, videos, and podcasts. This supports the idea that authentic engagement is more effective than rote learning (Hartani et al., 2022; Sultana & Musavi, 2022). This finding supports Simpson's (2011) argument that authentic assessments and iterative learning cycles in PBL are more effective than traditional rote memorization techniques.

PBL also positively impacted student attitudes. Students reported heightened interest, particularly in collaborative work ($M=3.98$) and group responsibility ($M=3.80$), consistent with research emphasizing teamwork and relevance in motivation stated by Helwa and Sabry (2021). The hands-on nature of PBL helps students see the practical applications of English, which can make learning more meaningful and enjoyable. Secondly, they felt more comfortable engaging with materials ($M=3.39$) and took more responsibility for their learning, aligning with findings on how collaborative PBL reduces anxiety and promotes self-expression (Greenier, 2020). Thirdly, the collaborative and creative aspects fostered positive emotional connections and intrinsic motivation. As reported by Almulla (2020), the authentic and student-centered nature of PBL tasks helps students develop a genuine interest in the language. Fourthly, through feedback and reflection, students in PBL settings gain a deeper understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement as feedback and reflection enhanced self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses ($M=3.77$) supporting a growth mindset. This finding aligns with Dawson (2023), who noted that PBL fosters a growth mindset by encouraging students to view challenges as opportunities for learning rather than obstacles. Finally, increased appreciation for teamwork was also evident because PBL encourage students to learn from and with each other, enhancing not only their language skills but also their interpersonal abilities (Bytyqi, 2022).

The study suggests a synergistic relationship between positive attitudes and improved receptive skills. Enhanced motivation from positive attitudes and engagement likely led to greater effort in comprehending English materials, contributing to skill gains (Wang, 2022). Conversely, improved skills and successful task completion likely boosted self-efficacy and reduced anxiety, further reinforcing positive attitudes and future learning willingness. This creates a positive cycle of skill development and motivation (Almulla, 2020).

5.1. Implications

While PBL showed overall positive impacts, the findings highlighted areas for further pedagogical focus, specifically students' lower enjoyment in independently finding English materials ($M=3.30$) and limited time spent practicing beyond class ($M=3.11$). This suggests a need for targeted support to facilitate the transition to autonomous learning. To address this, instructors can provide scaffolded guidance on information literacy and offer curated resources to support independent material searching. Integrating smaller, engaging out-of-class tasks and utilizing motivating technology tools can encourage practice beyond the classroom. Explicitly linking out-of-class efforts to project assessment can also reinforce their value.

5.2. Limitations

The study was conducted with couples of limitations. First, data collection was restricted to a quantitative approach, which clearly showed changes in scores but lacked objectivity in capturing students' attitudes. To enhance the reliability of the findings, future research should incorporate additional methodological approaches, such as in-depth interviews and observations, to triangulate the data. Secondly, the use of convenience sampling resulted in an uneven number of participants between the two groups. Additionally, there was a noticeable discrepancy in the initial scores and a statistically significant difference in the points of the two skills in the control group. This discrepancy suggests the need for further analysis to determine whether any external variables influenced their achievement. Lastly, a longitudinal design would be beneficial for understanding the long-term retention of positive attitudes toward PBL and its effectiveness in improving language skills at higher proficiency levels.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrated that PBL significantly improved English receptive skills (listening and reading) and fostered positive attitudes among non-English major students in Vietnam. The results showed substantial gains in test scores for the PBL group compared to the control group, highlighting PBL's effectiveness over traditional methods. Students also reported increased engagement and positive feelings towards collaborative learning. While some limitations exist, the findings suggest that PBL is a valuable approach for enhancing both language proficiency and learning attitudes in similar educational contexts.

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