



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52714/dthu.15.3.2026.1786>

## THE IMPACT OF JOB-RELATED PROJECTS ON STUDENTS' ENGLISH-SPEAKING SKILLS AT AN GIANG VOCATIONAL COLLEGE

Do Minh Hung<sup>1\*</sup> and Le Viet Phu<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Foreign Languages Faculty, Dong Thap University, Cao Lanh 870000, Vietnam

<sup>2</sup>Postgraduate, Dong Thap University, Cao Lanh 870000, Vietnam

\*Corresponding author, Email: [dnhung@dthu.edu.vn](mailto:dnhung@dthu.edu.vn)

### Article history

Received: 18/8/2025; Received in revised form: 19/9/2025; Accepted: 03/10/2025

### Abstract

*This study investigates the impact of job-related projects on the English-speaking skills among students at An Giang Vocational College. Action research was applied in this study. Participants were 70 freshmen from this vocational college. Data were primarily collected through a pre-test and a post-test on English-speaking skills. Additionally, a survey questionnaire was conducted to investigate participants' perceptions about the implemented approach. The results showed that participants' English-speaking skills significantly improved, with the mean score increasing from 6.57 points in the pre-test to 7.73 points in the post-test. A t-test analysis (SPSS) revealed a statistically significant difference between the test mean scores. Additionally, the survey questionnaire indicated that participants highly valued the implemented approach in providing opportunities to use English in job-based situations and cultivate other skills essential for career environments. However, for better impacts on English-speaking performance and learning engagement among participants from vocational schools, the study offers recommendations for future research within the Vietnamese context and in other countries.*

**Keywords:** Action intervention, benefit, English-speaking skills, impact, job-based projects.

---

Cite: Do, M. H., & Le, V. P. (2026). The impact of job-related projects on students' English-speaking skills at An Giang Vocational College. *Dong Thap University Journal of Science*, 15(3), 73-90. <https://doi.org/10.52714/dthu.15.3.2026.1786>

Copyright © 2026 The author(s). This work is licensed under a CC BY-NC 4.0 License.

## TÁC ĐỘNG CỦA DỰ ÁN NGHỀ NGHIỆP ĐẾN KỸ NĂNG NÓI TIẾNG ANH CỦA SINH VIÊN TRƯỜNG CAO ĐẲNG NGHỀ, TỈNH AN GIANG

Đỗ Minh Hùng<sup>1</sup> và Lê Viết Phú<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Khoa Ngoại ngữ, Trường Đại học Đồng Tháp, Việt Nam

<sup>2</sup>Học viên cao học, Trường Đại học Đồng Tháp, Việt Nam

\*Tác giả liên hệ, Email: dmhung@dthu.edu.vn

### Lịch sử bài báo

Ngày nhận: 18/8/2025; Ngày nhận chỉnh sửa: 19/9/2025; Ngày duyệt đăng: 03/10/2025

### Tóm tắt

Nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu tác động của các dự án việc làm đến kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh của sinh viên tại Trường Cao đẳng Nghề An Giang. Mô hình nghiên cứu hành động được áp dụng. Thành phần tham gia thực nghiệm là 70 sinh viên năm nhất từ Trường Cao đẳng Nghề nói trên. Dữ liệu chủ yếu được thu thập thông qua bài kiểm tra trước và sau về kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh. Ngoài ra, một bảng câu hỏi khảo sát được thực hiện về nhận thức của những người tham gia về mô hình dạy học theo dự án việc làm được áp dụng. Kết quả cho thấy kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh của sinh viên tham gia được cải thiện đáng kể, với điểm trung bình tăng từ 6,57 điểm trong bài kiểm tra trước lên 7,73 điểm trong bài kiểm tra sau. Phân tích kiểm định t-test (SPSS) cho thấy có sự khác biệt với ý nghĩa thống kê giữa điểm trung bình của các bài kiểm tra. Ngoài ra, bảng câu hỏi khảo sát chỉ ra rằng sinh viên đánh giá cao mô hình được triển khai về việc tạo điều kiện sử dụng tiếng Anh trong các tình huống công việc và trau dồi các kỹ năng khác cần thiết cho môi trường nghề nghiệp. Tuy nhiên, để có tác động tốt hơn đến kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh và hoạt động học tập của sinh viên ở các trường nghề, nghiên cứu đưa ra các khuyến nghị cho các nghiên cứu trong tương lai trong bối cảnh của Việt Nam và các quốc gia khác.

**Từ khóa:** Chương trình hành động, dự án việc làm, kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh, lợi ích, tác động.

## **1. Introduction**

In the context of communicative globalization and digitalization, the English language generally plays a vital role in multiple employment sectors with an increasing number of speakers and learners worldwide (News, 2025). However, most non-English major students at An Giang Vocational College face challenges speaking English, although this required competence has been long set by Vietnam's Government (MOET, 2008; PM, 2017). The employment market in the Vietnamese context for the coming years is expected to involve English communication (especially among businesses), which is driven by an increase in foreign investors across various domains (PwC, 2024). With that in mind, the present study implemented the job-related project model in English classes at An Giang Vocational College. This instructional model is based on project-based learning (PBL), which has been proven effective globally in language learning and teaching (Avshenniuk et al., 2023; Hao & Razak, 2024). Yet, when it comes to PBL applied in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) within the current Vietnamese context, pertinent research conducted among vocational college students, like those from An Giang Vocational College, is still underexplored in general. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by seeking the answer to two guiding questions: (1) *How does the job-related project model implemented impact participants' English-speaking skills?* (2) *How do participants perceive the impact of the implemented model on English speaking skills and other benefits?*

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Speaking skills in English as a foreign language**

Scholars have proposed several definitions, reflecting the communicative, linguistic, and professional aspects of EFL speaking skills. According to Bygate (2001), speaking skills are the process of producing speech to perform specific communicative functions, requiring learners to simultaneously combine knowledge of grammatical accuracy, lexical resources, and the ability to process information in real time. Similarly, Brown (2007) views speaking as an interactive two-way nature and cooperation between speakers and listeners in constructing and sharing information. From an EFL perspective, Thornbury (2005) argues that speaking skills is a highly interactive skill where English learners must simultaneously control pronunciation, content coherence, lexical items, grammatical accuracy, and conversational elements under time pressure. Harmer (2015) expands on this view by pointing out that speaking involves not only the production of sounds but also the precise use of intonation, stress, and rhythm to convey meaning appropriately. In addition, intercultural communication skills are also an important component because understanding social rules and cultural norms helps learners adjust their expressions, avoid misunderstandings and increase communication effectiveness (Byram, 2020). Those above-mentioned aspects show that EFL speaking skills involve not only English linguistic competences but also the ability to regulate non-linguistic variables, helping learners maintain accuracy, fluency, coherence, and natural flow in practical communication.

It is, therefore, essential to create opportunity for students to extensively practice English-speaking skills frequently. Long (1996) argued that opportunities to interact directly with native speakers or classmates are key as this process allows learners to receive feedback, adjust their speech, and practice their language processing skills in real time. On that basis, practical speaking activities such as role-play or PBL provide learners with opportunities to use English in real-life contexts with career relevance, which will help improve learning engagement, speech fluency, and confidence (Ahmad et al., 2023; Avsheniuk et al., 2023; Byram, 2020; Gardner, 1995).

## **2.2. Project-based learning**

According to Thomas (2000), PBL is defined as a model that organizes learning around projects with complex tasks based on challenging questions or problems. Thereby, it will substantially engage students in designing, problem-solving, decision making, or investigative activities to culminate in realistic products or presentations. The PBL model emphasizes active, hands-on learning experiences that empower students to tackle real-world problems, collaborate with peers, think critically, and develop 21st-century skills (Rehman et al., 2023).

Project-based learning is a well-established instructional model, where knowledge is actively and collaboratively created by learners themselves (Beckett & Slater, 2005; Fried-Booth, 1986; Gardner, 1995; Stoller & Robinson, 2020). Thus, as a learner-centered approach, PBL encourages students to proactively conduct learning research, integrate learnt theories with practice, and apply relevant skills to find a solution to a specific problem (Savery, 2006). It is mostly acknowledged that active participation in doing learning projects benefits learners in three key dimensions. First, it promotes motivation, engagement, confidence, and academic performance (Grant, 2017; Zhang & Ma, 2023). Secondly, it provides an opportunity for language learners to practice the target language in authentic situations, making the learning meaningful (Avshenniuk et al., 2023; Stoller & Robinson, 2020). Thereby, English-speaking skills are positively leveraged (Hao & Razak, 2024; Putri & Afrianto, 2025). And thirdly, learners would likely develop essential life skills to self-regulate consciously, collaborate with peers constructively, and think creatively (Johnson & Johnson, 2019; Petersen & Nassaji, 2016; Rehman et al., 2023; Tran et al., 2024).

The PBL integration into language learning, however, also presents some challenges, including time constraints, non-standardized assessment criteria, and differences in student levels of interest, satisfaction, motivation, and English proficiency (Ho & Nguyen, 2022; Jaleniauskiene & Venckiene, 2025). Thus, for PBL to be productive, specific English learning conditions and learners' needs should be taken into careful consideration (Tuyen & Tien, 2021). This is why the present study implemented job-based projects containing work related to participants' future jobs.

## **2.3. Job-related projects**

A job-related project model, applied in the present study, is defined as one that involves real-life tasks that reflect what students may encounter in their future jobs or employment (Thomas, 2000; Zhang & Ma, 2023). In other words, instead of general projects, the learning components of job-related projects must contain some kind of students' job-related tasks in the future. This approach is supposed to help learners develop English language skills, especially speaking skills via doing simulated tasks in authentic employment contexts.

This approach is especially well-suited for vocational education, where the primary goal is not just theoretical knowledge but also the practical application of skills in a specific work environment. When vocational students engage in such real-life projects as searching for pertinent jobs, preparing for relevant job-recruitment interviews, organizing product advertisements, surveying target customer needs, simulating customer service scenarios, and so on, their English language skills are used in authentic situations; additionally, they also cultivate other essential work-related skills in speaking, problem-solving, critical thinking, time management, self-discipline, and teamwork collaboration (Ahmad et al., 2023; Putri & Afrianto, 2025). These benefits are obtained because students can see the direct relevance between what they are learning in the classroom and their future career needs (Reyes, 2024). This is crucial for improving the quality of English training in vocational institutions,

especially in today's globalized world, where communication, especially speaking skills, in English is important (News, 2025; Tuyen & Tien, 2021).

#### **2.4. Previous relevant studies**

Benefits from implementing PBL into English classes have been documented by research conducted from different countries. For instance, a questionnaire-interview survey participated by 88 students and 30 teachers from three schools in Canada (Petersen & Nassaji, 2016) found that both teachers and students expressed positive attitudes towards PBL implemented in English courses because it facilitated English learning, communication, and collaborative skills. Meanwhile, with 16 university students from China, the case study by Grant (2017) showed that PBL in an English course promoted participants' meaningful interactive language use, motivation, and autonomy. In Ukraine, the survey study by Avsheniuk et al. (2023), which involved seven university teachers and 59 students in English classes from different cultural backgrounds and faculties, reported that PBL boosted participants' improvement in English communicative skills, confidence in language acquisition, and learning autonomy. Then, the study by Reyes (2024) in Spain also showed an improvement in first-year students' English fluency, motivation, and confidence. From Indonesia, semi-structured interviews among English instructors (Putri & Afrianto, 2025) revealed that PBL increased students' English-speaking skills and learning engagement in job-related settings. These benefits via incorporating PBL into the English classroom are mostly confirmed by pertinent review studies worldwide by Hao and Razak (2024), Jaleniauskiene and Venckiene (2025), and Zhang and Ma (2023).

In the Vietnamese context, the PBL study by Tien and Tuyen (2021) surveying 64 fourth-year students learning English business showed that the students improved language knowledge, workplace-related skills, self-responsibility, and motivation. Similarly, Chi (2023) applied PBL related to different business topics, including product brands, travel, organization, change, and money. This qualitative study among 30 students indicated that the PBL approach benefited the participants on three significant aspects: personal, professional, and social development. Likewise, a job-based project model (Tran et al., 2024) spanning six weeks was applied for non-English majored second-year students. This study showed that the students enhanced their English communication skills and soft skills, including critical thinking, collaboration, and socio-emotional regulation. Positive results, especially oral English presentation skills, were also reported by Ngo and Tran (2025) in an experimental study involving 81 third-year students. However, challenges to teachers implementing PBL are also recorded by Ho and Nguyen (2022), especially among schoolteachers. The challenges are mostly due to time constraints, mixed English proficiency among students, and a lack of specific outcome assessment.

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1. Research design and participants**

To obtain the target answers to the research questions addressed earlier, the present study was designed using the action research method. Action research is a systematic and iterative process of solving practical problems by combining action with research (Stringer, 2014). In education, this method helps teachers improve their teaching methods through cycles of designing, conducting classroom actions, monitoring, and evaluation for improvement (Ferrance, 2000).

The present study applied three phases: (i) A pretest was administered before the action intervention to measure baseline English speaking skills; (ii) Action intervention: Participants took part in an 8-week job-based project agenda (see below) serving as an independent

variable; (iii) Posttest: A test (similar to the pre-test in terms of format and content) was given after the action intervention to evaluate the impact of the intervention on participants' English-speaking skills (as a dependent variable).

Participants were 70 freshmen students enrolled in an English-speaking course in the second term of the 2024-2025 academic year at An Giang Vocational College. This course is compulsory for these students in their college training programs. These freshmen students came from two intact classes. They were chosen, based on three specific criteria: (i) easy access for the researcher, (ii) strong approval granted by the school authorities, and (iii) 100% voluntary participation of the students from two classes. The involved students included 53 males (76%) and 17 females (26%), aged 19 - 20, and majored in three different disciplines: (i) computer assembly and repair, (ii) computer network administration, and (iii) computer programming. Their general English level is approximately between A2 and B1 because all of them had learned English for seven years since their lower secondary school and had graduated from high school (MOET, 2008) before entering this college.

### **3.2. The action intervention**

As seen in Table 1, the action intervention involved eight learning sessions in the classroom. One learning session lasted 100 minutes (two periods) per week. In session 1, a job-related project was introduced by the teacher. Under the teacher's guidelines, students were required to form groups of four or five. Then, the group performed the initial work for the assigned project. These learning activities included outlining the contents of the project, seeking relevant information resources, assigning member roles, tasks, and so on. Over the week leading up to the following session, each group had to complete the project as expected.

Therefore, at the beginning of the following learning session, the two assigned groups took turns to present their work in oral English, while the other groups participated by playing the roles of simulated company shareholders and asking questions (in English) related to the projects. For instance, as seen in Session 1, the presenting groups had to deliver their tour itineraries to target destinations and marketing materials (in both Vietnamese and English). Meanwhile, the others played the role of potential customers/buyers. Alternatively, the group might role-play as a marketing department presenting to other departments, superiors, or shareholders. This cycle of presenting projects and role-playing with new themes continued the action intervention schedule, with the teacher providing feedback on the completed project and detailed guidance for the following project by the end of each classroom session.

The role-plays were simplified by students' asking questions in simulated positions such as a marketing manager, CFO (chief financial officer), CEO (chief executive officer), computer programmer expert, sales manager, auditor, company investors, or customers. These simulated positions within working companies and their partnership as well as their rivals were guided in detail by the teacher at each learning session so that students could raise meaningful questions in English while playing these roles.

Since the involved students were majoring in computer businesses (as mentioned earlier), they had learned one module (taught in Vietnamese) about general business administrative tasks, financial management and marketing strategies in their major training programs. Thus, the project themes chosen were based on what the students had studied about their future career. Furthermore, the themes were generally selected while specific subthemes were decided by each group under the teacher's suggestions. The teacher also provided explanations about how the selected themes were relevant to their future careers.

**Table 1. Action intervention agenda**

<b>Session</b>	<b>Project theme</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
1	Job-related tours	Students design an itinerary for job-related tours	Travel brochures, marketing materials, and oral presentations in English
2	Employment interviews	Students conduct interviews between business employers and new employees	Simulated interviews in oral English
3	Job-related events	Students design a mini-conference or event, focusing on product advertisement	Event management portfolio and oral presentations in English
4	Customer behavior simulation	Students role-play different customer service scenarios	Various customer interactions are simulated in oral English
5	Sales reports simulation	Students design sales reports presenting strong and weak points	Analyzing the sales reports in English
6	Sales pitch projects simulation	Students develop sales pitches for a product or service: Create persuasive presentations and effective responses to peers' questions	English speaking skills in business interactions
7	New products, fairs/festivals	Students plan a business fair/festival, including vendor selection and marketing new products	Fair/festivals planning documents and promotional videos in English
8	Close-up	Students reflect on the intervention (the researcher provided prompts related to all the work students have done)	Students conveyed perceptions about the benefits of English learning activities and other job-related skills (thereby, the researcher took notes and gave feedback when needed)

### **3.3. Data collection instruments**

#### *3.3.1. Pre- and Post-tests*

To obtain the target answer to the first research question set above (i.e., the impact of the action intervention on participants' English-speaking skills), the study used a pre-test (before the action intervention) and a post-test (after the action intervention), adapted from the format of the VSTEP test (Studocu, 2015). This test format, including the scoring rubrics as seen below, was chosen because it has been applied for years at this college to assess students' English-speaking skills. Also, this format was not used to assess the quality of the assigned projects in the action intervention. (As addressed above, assessment feedback on the completed project was given by the teacher in the classroom on a one-by-one basis at the end

of each week's cycle). As a result, the pre-test and post-test were almost the same regarding the content and operational format. The test content was not specifically related to the action intervention. As such, the score results of the two tests could be comparable; thereby, a significant difference between them would indicate an impact of the intervention (as an independent variable) on the participants' English-speaking skills (as a dependent variable) (Hair et al., 2019).

The test consisted of three parts: (1) Introduction, (2) Topic Presentation, and (3) Topic Development. The English-speaking tests were conducted face-to-face, with each participant being assessed orally by two examiners to ensure objectivity. Each test lasted approximately 10 minutes. Part (1) was about participants' names, families, daily routines, and the like. Meanwhile, in part (2), each participant took a random topic and had to present that topic for 3 minutes, followed by part (3), where participants had to respond to the examiners' 3 or 4 questions related to the assigned topics. The same rubrics were used for both the pre- and post-tests to evaluate the participants' English-speaking performance.

**Table 2. Scoring rubrics for the English-speaking test**

Part	Points	Description
1. Introduction	1.0	- Introduction: 5.0 - Basic introduction; 1.0 – Good introduction
		1/ <i>Pronunciation</i> (0-1.0 point)
	1.0	<input type="checkbox"/> 0.5 - Understandable with some effort <input type="checkbox"/> 1 - Clear and easy to understand
		2/ <i>Fluency and coherence in content presentations</i> (0-1.0 point)
2. Topic Presentation	1.5	<input type="checkbox"/> 0.5 - Basic fluency and coherence <input type="checkbox"/> 1 - Good fluency and coherence <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 – Very good fluency and coherence
		3/ <i>Lexical resource</i> (0-1.0 point)
	1.0	<input type="checkbox"/> 0.5 - Appropriate vocabulary with few inaccuracies <input type="checkbox"/> 1 - Wide range of appropriate vocabulary
		4/ <i>Grammatical accuracy</i> (0-1.0 point)
3. Topic Development	1.0	<input type="checkbox"/> 0.5 - Moderate grammatical range, few inaccuracies <input type="checkbox"/> 1 - Good grammatical range, accurate
		1/ <i>Pronunciation</i> (0-1.0 point)
	1.0	<input type="checkbox"/> 0.5 - Understandable with some effort <input type="checkbox"/> 1 - Clear and easy to understand
		2/ <i>Fluency and coherence in content presentations</i> (0-1.0 point)
	1.5	<input type="checkbox"/> 0.5 - Basic fluency and coherence <input type="checkbox"/> 1 - Good fluency and coherence <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 – Very good fluency and coherence

Part	Points	Description
		3/ <i>Lexical resource</i> (0-1.0 point)
	1.0	<input type="checkbox"/> 0.5 - Appropriate vocabulary with few inaccuracies <input type="checkbox"/> 1 - Wide range of appropriate vocabulary
		4/ <i>Grammatical accuracy</i> (0-1.0 point)
	1.0	<input type="checkbox"/> 0.5 - Moderate grammatical range, few inaccuracies <input type="checkbox"/> 1 - Good grammatical range, accurate

### 3.3.2. Survey questionnaire

For the answer to the second research question, a questionnaire was used to survey participants' perceptions about the action intervention implemented. This survey questionnaire was used because it could collect data from a large sample and use statistical values to convey common trends or patterns across the target population (Creswell & Creswell, 2025; Hair et al., 2019).

The questionnaire applied in the present study was divided into two main sections. The first section collected demographic information from participants. The second section used a 5-point Likert scale. Accordingly, each item was attached with 5 options (*Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Neutral*, *Agree*, and *Strongly Agree*). Section two of the questionnaire (see Table 9 and 10 below) was designed to gather participants' perceptions about the impact of the action intervention on their English-speaking skills with 5 items and other benefits with 10 items (apart from English-speaking skills). These items were adapted from those found in previous studies by Tran et al. (2024), and Tuyen and Tien (2021). However, each item was carefully designed, based on specific instructional activities involved in the action intervention agenda (see Table 1 above). To ensure the quality of the questionnaire used in the present study, an initial version was reviewed by an EFL expert for content validity. Following this, the questionnaire was also piloted randomly among students from An Giang Vocational College to check its reliability. After some minor modification in wording and item ordering, the final questionnaire version was then used for the main study.

## 3.4. Data collection and analysis

### 3.4.1. English speaking tests

Both pre- and post-tests were administered by two examiners. The first examiner guided the student taking the test, asked questions, and managed the operational process. Meanwhile, the second examiner observed, took notes, and scored without participating in the question-answer issues to ensure objectivity. Following each student's test completion, with reference to the scoring rubrics presented above, the two examiners discussed the involved student's English-speaking performance, made relevant comments, compared their specific assessments in detail, and decided on a final score.

With the informed students' consent, all the testing processes were audio-recorded for authenticity and transparency, with recordings securely stored and identified by a unique code (i.e., real names were unidentified in the recordings). These recordings were used for the third independent examiner's double-checking.

The t-test via the SPSS software was used to determine whether the mean score difference before and after the action intervention was statistically significant (Cronk, 2018; Hair et al., 2019). Accordingly, the research hypothesis was set as follows:  $H_0$  - There was no

difference in the mean score before and after the action intervention. If the t-test produced a Sig. level  $<0.05$ , the study rejected the hypothesis  $H_0$ , meaning that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean score of participants before and after the intervention. Otherwise, the hypothesis  $H_0$  was accepted, meaning that the difference in the mean score before and after the action intervention was insignificant and not statistically significant.

### *3.4.2. Survey questionnaire*

An online survey questionnaire was administered one week after the post-test. A Google Form was used to collect participants' evaluations and attitudes towards the implemented approach in the present study. The survey link was distributed to participants through personal emails. Clear instructions were provided to ensure a high response rate. Before starting the survey, participants were informed about its objectives, their rights as participants, and the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The survey was optimized for an approximately 10-minute completion time to prevent fatigue, with data automatically saved to reduce errors. Once completed, the data was automatically stored and exported in Excel files for easy processing and analysis afterwards.

The data was analyzed using statistical SPSS software. This procedure included a descriptive statistical analysis providing an overview of the research sample, mean scores, and the distribution of related values on relevant aspects measured by the questionnaire scale (see Table 9 and 10 below). In addition, under a reliability test, the questionnaire scale demonstrated a sufficient level of reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.925 (Hair et al., 2019). All the statistical analysis was done carefully by the researcher himself. Then, it was double-checked by an English teacher. Then, it moved into detailed analysis and interpretation as presented in the following section.

## **4. Results and discussion**

### **4.1. Pre-test and post-test findings**

#### *4.1.1. Overall results*

The results of the English-speaking pre-test and post-test were comparatively analyzed as follows.

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics of pre-test and post-test**

<b>Score</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Pre-test	70	3.50	9.00	6.57	1.48
Post-test	70	5.00	9.00	7.73	0.92

The overall mean score shows an increase in mean scores from the pre-test (6.57 out of 10.0 points) to the post-test (7.73). This rise indicates a general improvement in the participants' English-speaking skills within the present study framework. The standard deviation for the overall score also decreases from 1.48 in the pre-test to 0.92 in the post-test, indicating that the scores become less widespread and more clustered around the mean score in the post-test result.

Next, a paired-sample T-test was run to determine if the difference between the mean score (6.57) of the pre-test and that (7.73) of the post-test is statistically significant (i.e., based on the  $H_0$  research hypothesis set above). The result is seen from Table 4 below.

**Table 4. Paired sample T-Test in overall scores**

Pair difference	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Sig. (2-tailed)
			Lower	Upper	
Pre-test & Post-test	-1.16	1.44	-1.51	-0.81	0.000

Table 4 shows that the difference between the pre-test mean score (6.57) and that of the post-test (7.73) is statistically significant with a Sig. level:  $0.00 < 0.05$  (i.e., 95% confidence interval of the difference with a narrow interval between -0.81 and -1.51). The test also shows an average increase of 1.16 points (Std.D=1.44) from the pre-test to the post-test. This result demonstrates that the implementation of the action intervention (the job-based projects) facilitated students to significantly improve their English-speaking skills. As a result, the  $H_0$  is rejected.

Following are the comparisons between the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test in 4 key aspects in English speaking skills as addressed in the scoring rubric, focused on part 2 and 3, Table 2. These are (1) pronunciation, (2) fluency and coherence, (4) lexical resource, and (4) grammatical accuracy.

*4.1.2. Results of pronunciation*

**Table 5. Paired sample T-Test in pronunciation**

Pair difference	Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper	
Pre-test	1.63					
Post-test	1.83					
Pre-test & Post-test		-0.20	0.43	-0.30	-0.09	0.000

The statistical results show that the mean score of English pronunciation among the involved students has increased from the pre-test  $M=1.63$  to  $M=1.83$  (out of 2 points, one point in part 2 and one point in part 3) in the post-test. The T-test results show that the difference  $-0.20$  (Std.D=0.43) between them is statistically significant with a Sig. level:  $0.00 < 0.05$  (95% confidence interval of the difference). This proves that students improved their pronunciation ability significantly.

*4.1.3. Results of fluency and coherence*

**Table 6. Paired sample T-Test in fluency and coherence**

Pair difference	Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper	
Pre-test	1.55					
Post-test	2.21					

Pair difference	Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper	
Pre-test & Post-test		-0.66	0.72	-0.83	-0.49	0.000

Table 6 shows that the mean score of fluency and coherence has increased from the pre-test M=1.55 to M=2.21 (out of 3 points) in the post-test. The difference -.66 (Std.D=0.72) between them is also statistically significant with a Sig. level:  $0.00 < 0.05$  (95% confidence interval of the difference). This proves that students improved their fluency and coherence in English speaking skills significantly.

4.1.4. Results of lexical resource

**Table 7. Paired sample T-Test in lexical resource**

Pair difference	Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper	
Pre-test	1.21					
Post-test	1.37					
Pre-test & Post-test		-0.15	0.37	-0.25	-0.07	0.000

As seen from Table 7, the mean score in lexical resource has increased from the pre-test M=1.21 to M=1.37 (out of 2 points) in the post-test. The T-test results show that the difference -.15 (Std.D=0.37) between them is statistically significant with a Sig. level:  $0.00 < 0.05$  (95% confidence interval of the difference). Thus, students have improved their lexical resource in English speaking skills significantly.

4.1.5. Results of grammatical accuracy

**Table 8. Paired sample T-Test in grammatical accuracy**

Pair difference	Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper	
Pre-test	1.19					
Post-test	1.55					
Pre-test & Post-test		-0.36	0.41	-0.45	-0.25	0.000

Like three other aspects of pronunciation, fluency-coherence, and lexical resource as seen above, the mean score in grammatical accuracy has increased from the pre-test M=1.19 to M=1.55 (out of 2 points) in the post-test. The T-test results show that the difference -0.36 (Std.D=0.47) between them is statistically significant with a Sig. level:  $0.00 < 0.05$  (95% confidence interval of the difference). Thus, students have improved their grammatical accuracy in English speaking skills significantly.

## 4.2. Questionnaire findings

The survey questionnaire tapped into participants' perceived impact of the job-related project approach on English speaking skills, and their perceptions about the impact of this approach on other benefits.

### 4.2.1. Participants' perceived impact of the action intervention on English speaking skills

**Table 9. Descriptive statistics of the impact on English speaking skills**

The action intervention has ....	N	Mean	SD
1. improved my English pronunciation	70	3.33	1.16
2. made me feel more confident in English speaking	70	3.50	1.13
3. provided me opportunities to speak English more often than before	70	3.66	1.05
4. improved my English-speaking fluency and coherence through group activities and collaboration	70	3.87	0.79
5. made me feel more confident about doing presentations in English	70	3.43	1.33

All five items gained a relatively high level. At the top, item 4, "The action intervention has improved my English fluency by group activities and collaboration," received the highest mean score of 3.87 with the smallest SD (0.79), indicating that most participants perceived positively the impact of the implemented approach on their English fluency, and that working in groups helped improve their English fluency. Similarly, item 3 "The action intervention has provided me opportunities to speak English more often than before" had a high mean score of 3.66 (SD=1.05), reflecting that the approach created ample opportunities for participants to speak English, i.e., they were exposed more to the English-speaking environments. As a result, participants also perceived a positive impact on their English pronunciation (M=3.33) and confidence in English speaking (M=3.50) as well as in doing presentations in English (3.43). These results appear to positively confirm the findings from the pre- and post-tests addressed earlier. That is the job-based projects that facilitated participants' improvement in English speaking skills.

### 4.2.2. Participants' perceptions about other benefits from action intervention

**Table 10. Descriptive statistics of other benefits**

The action intervention has ....	N	Mean	SD
6. increased my engagement in learning activities	70	3.84	0.87
7. sparked my interest in improving my English communication	70	3.13	1.15
8. activated my enthusiasm for participating in speaking activities	70	3.39	1.34
9. stimulated my motivation in teamwork activities	70	3.26	1.23
10. promoted my teamwork skills	70	3.16	1.27

The action intervention has ....	N	Mean	SD
11. helped me enhance collaboration skills	70	3.27	1.35
12. helped me enhance my information-searching skills	70	3.94	0.94
13. improved my problem-solving skills	70	3.06	1.32
14. improved my decision-making skills	70	3.30	1.26
15. developed my critical thinking skills	70	3.29	1.32

Table 10 shows that all items reached a relatively high level, with the mean scores ranging from 3.94 (item 12) to 3.13 (item 7). So, the implemented approach also generated other benefits apart from English-speaking skills. It appeared to have boosted participants' affective aspects (items 6, 7, 8, and 9) and cognitive skills, including problem-solving, decision-making, and critical thinking (items 13, 14, and 15, respectively). Similarly, teamwork and collaboration skills also received a positive response from participants. In particular, at the top of the list is item 12 with  $M=3.94$ , which is an essential skill in today's digitalization and globalization.

Overall, like the results of the English-speaking tests, the question responses reported a positive rating among the involved participants in the present study.

### 4.3. Discussion

As seen above, the present study raised two research questions (1) *How does the job-related project model implemented impact participants' English-speaking skills?* (2) *How do participants perceive the impact of the implemented model on English speaking skills and other benefits?*

First, the job-based project approach implemented in the present study produced a good impact on participants' English-speaking skills. This is because the overall scores show a significant increase from the mean score in the pre-test ( $M=6.57$ ) to that of the post-test (7.73). Examining 4 key aspects (namely pronunciation, fluency and coherence, lexical resource, and grammatical accuracy) inherent in English speaking skills, it also indicates positive results from pre-test to post-test. All the post-test mean scores significantly increased from 1.63 to 1.83; 1.55 to 2.21; 1.21 to 1.37, and 1.19 to 1.55, respectively. This finding is also confirmed by the survey questionnaire results because all five items (from items 1 to 5, Table 9) on English speaking skills were rated at a relatively high level. This finding demonstrates that the implemented approach is feasible and potentially productive when it comes to English instruction at vocational colleges, especially to promote students' English-speaking skills via conducting job-related tasks. The finding also supports the results reported by previous studies in the line of PBL on EFL education (Avshenniuk et al., 2023; Grant, 2017; Stoller & Robinson, 2020; Tran et al., 2024). These positive results are generally accounted by the fact that students had to collaboratively work and interactively communicate with the shared project and target products in mind. In practice, as seen above from the action intervention agenda Table 1, group members had to jointly make decisions on outlining the contents of the assigned project, seeking relevant information resources, assigning member roles, tasks, and so on. Especially, the present study highlights English speaking skills substantively practiced by students when the project was completed, group members had to speak English presenting the relevant products in front of the class, followed by answering questions from other groups. This process, which was drawn on each week' cycle over the action intervention, appeared to

cultivate students' English-speaking skills. This also reflects the nature and usefulness of the action research method (Ferrance, 2020; Stringer, 2014) applied in the present study.

Secondly, apart from English-speaking skills, the questionnaire results reveal multiple benefits participants earned via participating in the hands-on learning activities for projects completed and presented in the classroom. As seen from Table 10, the operational process appeared to have promoted participants' learning engagement, interest, and motivation. These affective aspects are generally believed to play an important role in EFL learning (Chi, 2023; Grant, 2017; Tran et al., 2024; Tuyen & Tien, 2021; Zhang & Ma, 2023). It also facilitated the improvement of cognitive skills, including problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, teamwork, and collaboration. Few would deny that these skills are highly needed in most career environments. Thus, if project themes or the contents of the projects applied are navigated towards participants' needs and interests in career prospects, the learning outcomes would be positive. This is mostly because learners realize a close connection between what they are learning and their future careers (Reyes, 2024; Thomas, 2000; Tran et al., 2024).

Thirdly, at the final classroom session (see Table 1, the action intervention agenda), most participants remarked that the role-play activities in the projects were useful. It makes sense because the role-play applied in the intervention was job-based, and English-speaking skills were always used by almost all group members at this stage (i.e., presenting the relevant projects, asking and answering questions related to the presented products in the classroom). This point also makes the present study differ from most past studies on PBL among non-English major students (Tran et al., 2024; Jaleniauskiene & Venckiene, 2025), where role-playing was rarely seen. Meanwhile, other activities like debate, discussion, and oral presentation were rated useful by many of them. Thus, these activities greatly supported participants' learning outcomes.

## **5. Conclusion and recommendation**

This study has gained the answers to its research questions. Firstly, the implemented intervention generated a positive impact on participants' English-speaking skills. This is reflected by a significant increase in mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test (on overall mean scores as well as on 4 key aspects involved in English speaking skills). Secondly, the survey questionnaire also documented participants' positive perceptions of the intervention, which boosted their English-speaking skills. Finally, apart from English speaking skills, the findings revealed that participants valued the intervention for providing them with the opportunity to practice and improve multiple real-life and job-related skills, including problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, and collaboration.

Based on these findings, the study offers recommendations for better outcomes: (1) diversifying job-related activities (such as expanding businesses by calling for more investors, both domestic and foreign partners; solving legal issues while operating relevant work); and (2) increasing interactive elements like role-playing in multiple career-related situations; (3) teachers should ensure that there is a significant connection between chosen themes for project contents and participants' future career-related tasks; (4) teachers can allow students to choose the themes themselves but require them to explain why they do so; (5) English use, especially speaking skills, should be practiced as much as possible (such as while group members make decisions on the content, formats, and all other inherent tasks on the assigned projects), not just when students present their completed projects.

Although meeting its goals, this study has some limitations, including a small sample size from a single college, which affects the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the reliance on a self-assessment survey via a questionnaire format may have introduced response

bias. Also, it lacked qualitative data (like semi-structured interviews with open questions among participants) to triangulate collected data and fully understand the psychological and behavioral changes participants have experienced during conducting projects with group members. As a result, further investigations are needed to address these issues to gain more insight into the implementation of PBL, especially job-based projects at vocational schools in Vietnam and other countries.

### References

- Ahmad, S. T., Watrinhos, R., Samala, A. D., & Muskhir, M. (2023). Project-based learning in vocational education: A bibliometric approach. *International Journal of Modern Education and Computer Science*, 43-56.
- Avsheniuk, N., Lutsenko, O., Seminikhyna, N., & Svyrydiuk, T. (2023). Fostering intercultural communicative competence and student autonomy through project-based learning. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on Communication and Language in Virtual Spaces*, 130-143. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/comm1.10>
- Beckett, G. H., & Slater, T. (2005). The project framework: a tool for language, content, and skills integration. *ELT Journal*, 59(2), 108-116.
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching (5th Ed.)*. New York: Longman.
- Bygate, M. (2001). Speaking. In R. Carter, & D. Nunan, *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages* (pp. 14-20). Cambridge University Press.
- Byram, M. (2020). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence revisited*. Multilingual Matters.
- Chi, D. N. (2023). Benefits of implementing project-based learning in an English for Business course. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 10(3), 55-71. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/1549>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2025). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Cronk, B.C. (2018). *How to use SPSS®, A step-by-step guide to analysis and interpretation* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003450467>
- Ferrance, E. (2000). *Action research*. LAB Brown University.
- Fried-Booth, D. L. (1986). *Project work*. Oxford University Press.
- Gardner, D. (1995). Student-produced video documentary provides a real reason for using the target language. *Language Learning Journal*, 12, 54-56.
- Grant, S. (2017). Implementing project-based language teaching in an Asian context: a university EAP writing course case study from Macau. *Asian Journal of Second Foreign Language Education*, 2(4). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-017-0027-x>
- Hair, J.F., Black, W.C., Babin, B.J., & Anderson, R.E. (2019). *Multivariate data analysis* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Cengage.
- Hao, H., & Razak, R. B. A. (2024). Project-based approach and language learning motivation in higher education: A scoping review. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 24(2), 169 -183. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12738/jestp.2024.2.012>
- Harmer, J. (2015). *The practice of English language teaching*. Pearson.

- Ho, X. M., & Nguyen, H. T. (2022). An investigation of reality and challenges of project-based learning implementation. *European Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 6(4), 99-128. doi.org/10.46827/ejfl.v6i4.4609.
- Jaleniauskiene, E., & Venckiene, D. (2025). Project-based learning for language education in higher education: A scoping review. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning*, 19(1), 1–25.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2019). *Cooperative learning: The foundation for active Learning*. IntechOpen.
- Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. C. Ritchie, & T. K. Bhatia, *Handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 413-468). Academic Press.
- News, (2025). *70 statistics about the English language*. Accessed 14/2/2025 from <https://ecenglish.com/en/blog/news/70-statistics-about-the-english-language/>
- Ngo, T. N. H., & Tran, V. D. T. (2025). The application of project-based learning in English for a Basic Marketing class to enhance Oral presentation skills at Ho Chi Minh City University of Industry and Trade (HUIT). *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, 5(3), 160-181.
- Petersen, C., & Nassaji, H. (2016). Project-based learning through the eyes of teachers and students in adult EFL classrooms. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 72(1), 13–39. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.2096>
- MOET - Ministry of Education and Training (2008). *Decision No. 1400/QĐ-TTg: Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Education System, Period 2008 to 2020*, from <http://www.chinhphu.vn/portal/page/portal/chinhphu/hethongvanban?>
- PM - Prime Minister (2017). *Decision No. 2080/2017/TTg: Approving the modification of Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Education System, Period 2017-2025*. Hanoi, Vietnam, <https://datafiles.chinhphu.vn/cpp/files/vbpq/2017/12/2080>
- PwC, Vietnam (2024). *Doing business in Vietnam: A reference guide to entering the Vietnam market*. VCCI: Ha Noi.
- Putri, A., & Afrianto. (2025). Leveraging project-based learning: English teachers' views on enhancing speaking skills in vocational settings. *Indonesian Journal of Educational Development*, 519-531.
- Rehman, N., Zhang, W., Mahmood, A., Fareed, M., & Batoool, S. (2023). Fostering twenty-first-century skills among primary school students through math project-based learning. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 1-12.
- Reyes, M. A. (2024). Effectiveness of project-based learning model with English language in higher education: A practical case in the Degree of Tourism. *Language Value*, 17(1), 1-26. <https://www.doi.org/10.6035/languagev.7938>
- Savery, J. R. (2006). Overview of problem-based learning: Definitions and distinctions. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning*, 1(1), 9-20. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.7771/1541-5015.1002>
- Schweigert, W. A. (2024). *Research methods in psychology: A handbook* (4th ed.). Waveland Press.

- Stoller, F. L., & Robinson, M. S. (2020). *Project-based learning in second language acquisition: Building communities of practice*. Routledge.
- Stringer, E. T. (2014). *Action research: A handbook for practitioners* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Studocu (2015). *VSTEP - sample*. Can Tho University. Available from <https://www.studocu.vn/vn/document/truong-dai-hoc-can-tho/anh-van-can-ban/de-thi-mau-fdgvhbjnkml/81516462>
- Thomas, J. W. (2000). *A review of research on project-based learning*. Autodesk Foundation.
- Thornbury, S. (2005). *How to teach speaking*. Pearson Education.
- Tran, T. K. Q., Do, M. H., & Dinh, N. T. N. (2024). The effects of project-based learning on non-English major students' crucial soft skills development. *TNU Journal of Science and Technology*, 229(12), 171 - 177.
- Tuyen, L. V., & Tien, H. H. (2021). Integrating project-based learning into English for specific purposes classes at the tertiary level: perceived challenges and benefits. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, 37(4), 128-148.
- Zhang, L., & Ma, Y. (2023). A study of the impact of project-based learning on student learning effects: a meta-analysis study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1202728. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1202728