



# The Effects of Problem-based Learning Approach on Junior High School Chinese Students' English Speaking Skill

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## Abstract

This study aimed to explore the impact of using Problem-Based Learning (PBL) on improving the English-speaking skills of eighth-grade students in Chinese public schools and to investigate students' satisfaction with the application of this teaching method in English classes. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining both quantitative and qualitative data analysis: 1) Pre-test and post-test measurements were used to collect quantitative data; 2) Questionnaires; 3) Classroom observation. Statistical methods such as paired sample t-tests and descriptive analysis were utilized to compare means, standard deviations, and percentages. The findings indicated that students' post-test scores improved after engaging in English speaking activities through PBL, with mean scores increasing from 45.25 to 64.30. The t-test result was -31.74, and the p-value (Sig. one-tailed) was below 0.005. The questionnaire results showed that students were most satisfied with "Course structure and content" ( $\bar{x} = 4.74$ ), followed by "Teaching methods and interaction" ( $\bar{x} = 4.66$ ) and "Learning environment and resources" ( $\bar{x} = 4.33$ ). Overall, students expressed satisfaction with the use of PBL in English classes. Classroom observation forms indicated high satisfaction in five areas: teaching, teacher personality, learning environment, teaching materials, and facilities. Based on these results, this study recommends the broad implementation of PBL as an effective teaching strategy to enhance English-speaking skills in English language education.

**Keywords:** Problem based learning, Chinese Students, English Speaking Skills

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English is a vital communication language globally, widely used across various populations. Research by Einar H. Dyvik (2023) shows that over 1.5 billion people globally use English as their native or second language, making it one of the most widely used and

studied languages. English serves as the main or official language in 75 regions worldwide (Watterson, 2011).

As globalization accelerates, English's role as an international language gains prominence, especially in Chinese junior high schools, where its teaching is increasingly emphasized (China-CEE Institute, 2020). Chinese students encounter diverse challenges in learning English. Zhou (2004) observes that although they excel in reading and writing, their speaking skills lag behind. This issue partly arises from a misconception: many students equate high scores on standardized tests like TOEFL, GRE, or GEMT with strong English proficiency (Bulman, 2020). However, these students often find their English inadequate for effective communication upon arriving in English-speaking countries. Dunsmore (2018) emphasizes that it is inaccurate to attribute learning achievements solely to personal efforts, as it overlooks the critical roles of teachers and the teaching environment. Successful language learning relies on both students' efforts and teachers' abilities to meet their needs through effective teaching techniques and methods.

The overarching goal of English courses in China's secondary education is to enhance students' comprehensive language skills, boost English proficiency, promote intellectual growth, and improve literacy (British Council, 2022). Researchers assert that effective development of students' English-speaking skills depends on English subject teaching (Smith, 2016). Junior high school English education in China currently struggles to foster students' autonomous learning skills (Nugroho et al., 2021). In junior high English teaching, the dominant role of teachers hampers students' ability to learn independently and acquire knowledge (Suprianti, 2020). A lack of initiative and opportunities to use English hampers students' understanding and results in weak language skills (Smith, 2016).

China is undergoing significant basic education reforms aimed at cultivating diverse talents with global competencies (Suprianti, 2020). In English education, foundational literacy is no longer the sole focus; instead, the new goal emphasizes comprehensive language skills, learning ability, cultural awareness, and critical thinking (Nugroho et al., 2021).

In summary, despite the crucial role of English language learning, current junior high school teaching methods in China suffer from a lack of diversity and numerous issues like low student motivation. Incorporating a problem-oriented approach to actively engage students in learning is essential.

## 2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

2.1 To examine the effects of Problem-Based Learning Approach on improving Junior High School Chinese Students' English-speaking skill.

2.2 To investigate Junior High School Chinese Students' learning satisfaction towards using Problem-Based.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduced in 1969 by Howard Barrows, an American neurology professor, Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is rooted in constructivist and humanist theories (Servant-Miklos et al., 2023). Originally implemented in medical education at McMaster University in Canada (Guragain, n.d.; Servant-Miklos et al., 2023), PBL has since been adopted in various

disciplines. Since the 1990s, PBL has been applied to English language teaching in the UK and the US, earning widespread acclaim from teachers and students alike. Demonstrating its effectiveness, PBL has expanded into fields like law, business, architecture, and engineering.

Recently, the unique pedagogical approach of PBL has attracted significant attention in English teaching, leading to its evolution in both research and application. PBL enhances students' problem-solving skills by encouraging them to link real-world problems with learning scenarios, facilitating new knowledge acquisition. In PBL, teachers facilitate the process, helping students to identify, analyze, and solve problems. Overall, PBL places students in real problem scenarios, promotes self-directed learning, and enhances critical thinking and problem-solving skills through comprehensive knowledge application.

### **3.1 Definitions of Problem based learning**

Introduced in 1969 by Howard Barrows, an American neurology professor, Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is rooted in constructivist and humanist theories. Initially implemented in medical education at McMaster University, PBL has since been adopted across various disciplines. Since the 1990s, PBL has been applied to English language teaching in the UK and the US, earning widespread acclaim from both teachers and students. Demonstrating its effectiveness, PBL has expanded into fields like law, business, architecture, and engineering.

The unique pedagogical approach of PBL has recently attracted significant attention in the field of English teaching, evolving in both research and application. PBL enhances students' problem-solving skills by encouraging them to link real-world problems with learning scenarios, thereby facilitating new knowledge acquisition. In this approach, teachers act as facilitators, helping students to identify, analyze, and solve complex problems, which enhances their skills. Researchers at the American Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy describe PBL as a student-centered, inquiry-based method that utilizes complex, real-world problems to explore specific content areas. Under the guidance of teachers and with peer collaboration, learners discover the most effective solutions, thus fostering critical thinking, problem-solving capabilities, and collaborative skills.

Alexandra K. Johnson and Eobina S. Tinning believe that PBL places greater emphasis on spontaneous learning, encourages open thinking, and focuses on developing critical and active learning skills, making it more of a learning method than a teaching technique.

Howard Barrow and colleagues, including Dr. Ann Kelson, emphasize that PBL is both a curriculum and a process. As a curriculum, it consists of carefully selected problems designed to foster students' critical thinking, proficient problem-solving, spontaneous learning, and comprehension skills. As a process, it enhances students' problem-solving abilities and experience through participatory practical activities.

In summary, despite varying definitions, PBL consistently provides students with real, meaningful problems that help them grasp the core issues. Students collaboratively solve these problems, thereby mastering theoretical knowledge and gaining practical experience. Consequently, PBL effectively improves students' abilities to identify, summarize, and solve problems, as well as to think critically, and fosters skills in collaborative and independent learning.

### **3.2 Process of Problem Based Learning model**

In 1993, Schmidt introduced a classic model for implementing PBL. At McMaster University School of Medicine, the PBL curriculum presents problems as cases, focusing student learning on these problems instead of traditional disciplinary knowledge. Students discuss in tutorial groups, each consisting of one tutor and 8-12 students, to identify content

for self-study. Each student must complete their assigned independent study tasks before the next group discussion. The group integrates the new information from self-study. Finally, the students collaborate to establish the case's explanation, diagnostic basis, and treatment plan.

Schmidt summarized this PBL approach as the "Seven Jump." According to the Erasmus model, group Problem-Based Learning involves seven steps: Steps 1-5 occur over a period, Step 6 is completed outside the classroom, and Step 7 involves returning to the classroom for reporting.

**Table 1: A Classic Problem-Based Learning Implementation Model by Erasmus**

Step	Specific information	Skills
1	Clarifying unfamiliar terms	Skill 1: Activate existing knowledge, cooperation, information construction or reconstruction, organize information, internal motivation.
2	Problem definition	
3	Brainstorm	
4	Analysing the problem	
5	Formulating learning issues	Skill 2: Construction and reconstruction, application, problem solving.
6	Self-study	
7	Reporting	

Agustise, P. (2022) aimed to assess the effectiveness of the PBL method in improving the speaking skills of ninth-grade students. Conducted in the 2021-2022 academic year at SMPN 3 Tungkal Jaya school in Musi Banyuasin Regency, Indonesia, the sample included 20 ninth-grade students. Through quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis over three cycles, the study found that the PBL method significantly improved students' speaking skills, with average scores increasing from 50% in the first round of tests to 85% in the third round.

Fahmi, R., Muslem, A., & Usman, B. (2021) investigated the impact of the PBL method on improving students' speaking skills. Conducted at Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, the sample included second-year students. Quantitative methods were used to analyze pre- and post-test data, showing that the experimental group's speaking skills significantly improved, with average scores increasing from 51.64 in the pre-test to 63.64 in the post-test, demonstrating the PBL method's effectiveness in enhancing students' speaking skills.

Han, W. (2020) explored the effectiveness of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in vocational colleges, finding significant improvements in English-speaking skills. Utilizing pre- and post-tests, questionnaires, and interviews, the study showed that average test scores increased from 4.95 to 6.5. Feedback highlighted teaching professionalism (average rating 4.75), and interviews confirmed enhanced vocabulary, teamwork, critical thinking, and communication skills, indicating PBL's broad educational impact.

In summary, PBL has demonstrated significant effectiveness across different educational environments and student groups. PBL not only helps improve students' speaking skills but also enhances their cognitive and problem-solving abilities. These research findings provide valuable references for educators, indicating that PBL is an effective teaching strategy that can be widely applied in language teaching.

## 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Research Design

This study explores whether Problem-Based Learning (PBL) enhances the English-speaking skills of Chinese students and their satisfaction with these classes. This mixed-methods research incorporates both pre- and post-tests as well as surveys. Pre- and post-tests were designed to assess changes in students' scores and improvements in their English language abilities. The survey evaluated students' satisfaction with the PBL courses, including content, interactivity, teaching methods, and impacts on learning motivation and self-efficacy. The observation checklist documented factors influencing students' behavior and classroom experiences, analyzing their perceptions from the teachers' perspective.

### 4.2 Population and sample

This study was conducted at a public middle school in Shijiazhuang City, established in 1957, offering English courses as part of a comprehensive curriculum aimed at self-development. The school utilizes a flexible teaching model, with bilingual English instructors, to optimize student learning in classes lasting 45 minutes.

The study sampled 40 second-grade junior high students from a Shijiazhuang middle school, randomly selecting one of ten classes grouped by English proficiency using a composite sampling technique. These students, aged 13-14 with balanced gender distribution, all possessed basic English skills, suitable for evaluating the efficacy of PBL in enhancing language abilities.

### 4.3 Research Instruments

#### 4.3.1 Lesson Plans

This seven-week English course aimed to improve students' English skills using Problem-Based Learning (PBL). Consisting of 12 sessions, each 45 minutes long, the course was carefully aligned with eighth-grade curriculum standards to ensure systematic and coherent instruction.

This study utilized Maastricht University's seven-step problem-solving method, addressing five problems over two weeks each. The process involved students clarifying unfamiliar terms, defining the problem, brainstorming, analyzing the problem, and formulating learning issues—all completed in the first week. Independent self-study followed as the sixth step. In the second week, students presented their learning outcomes, completing the sequence.

Course content was drawn from the first volume of the eighth-grade English textbook published by People's Education Press. A detailed teaching plan is outlined in the accompanying table.

**Table 2: Lesson Plans**

Lesson	Date	Activities
Lesson 1	3/Sep/2024	Pre-test
	6/Sep/2024	Introduce PBL steps Lecture 1: Introduce PBL 7 steps
Lesson 2	10/Sep/2024	PBL steps 1-5

		Problem 1:A Sunny Adventure in Penang
Lesson 3		PBL step 7 Reporting
	13/Sep/2024	Problem1:A Sunny Adventure in Penang Homework 1: Reflection
Lesson 4	16/Sep/2024	PBL steps 1-5 Problem 2:Healthy Life
Lesson 5	20/Sep/2024	PBL step 7 Reporting Problem2:Healthy Life Homework 2: Reflection
Lesson 6	23/Sep/2024	PBL steps 1-5 Problem 3:I'm more outgoing than my sister
Lesson7	27/Sep/2024	PBL step 7 Reporting Problem3:I'm more outgoing than my sister Homework 3: Reflection
Lesson 8	30/Sep/2024	PBL steps 1-5 Problem 4:Spotlight on Talent
Lesson 9	4/Oct/2024	PBL step 7 Reporting Reporting :Problem4:Spotlight on Talent Homework 4: Reflection
Lesson 10	4/Oct/2024	PBL steps 1-5 Problem 5: Mickey Mouse
Lesson 11	11/Oct/2024	PBL step 7 Reporting Reporting :Problem5: Mickey Mouse Homework 5: Reflection
Lesson 12	14/Oct/2024	Seminar on PBL Lecture 2: Summary & Reflection on PBL
	18/Oct/2024	Post-test

#### 4.3.2 Pre-test and Post-test

This study uses pre-tests and post-tests with identical question formats as primary assessment tools to ensure comparability. The pre-test and post-test content is divided into three sections:

**Situational Dialogue:** This section required students to engage in English conversations, responding to the teacher's questions. It assessed their use of appropriate language structures and vocabulary in real-life contexts.

**Picture Description:** After a 30-second preparation, students described a picture in English, assessing their vocabulary knowledge and fluency. Criteria included vocabulary accuracy, usage, and the clarity and organization of their descriptions.

**Topic-Based Narrative:** Following a 30-second preparation, students created a 5-6 sentence narrative on a given topic, assessing their fluency, coherence, and organization skills. This section evaluated their ability to articulate thoughts clearly and coherently in English, focusing on their understanding of the topic and logical structuring.

#### 4.3.3 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire assesses student satisfaction through three dimensions: course design, teaching professionalism, and classroom equipment. Responses are recorded on a Likert scale to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected. Items are presented bilingually in

Chinese and English to enhance comprehension among students. Each questionnaire item is rated on a five-point scale, from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 5 ("Strongly agree").

**Table 3.** The 5-point Likert Scale

Likert Scale Description	Liker Scale	Likert Scale Interval
Strongly disagree	1	1.00-1.80
Disagree	2	1.81-2.60
Neutral	3	2.61-3.40
Agree	4	3.41-4.20
Strongly agree	5	4.21-5.00

#### 4.3.4 Observation Checklist

In this study, teacher observers monitored the classroom and recorded various events. The observation checklist for this study encompasses multiple factors influencing student satisfaction, derived from extensive research and practical activities. The checklist addressed five key themes: teacher behavior, student performance and emotions, teaching materials, environment, and facilities. These themes assessed student satisfaction with Problem-Based Learning in English courses.

**Table 4.** Observation Checklist

Observation Object	Record Examples	Observations
Teachers (teaching, behavior)	Teachers give students verbal encouragement to motivate them to speak in class	
	The teacher guides students to answer questions and explains them carefully.	
Students (performance, emotions)	Students think about problems and participate in collaborative learning	
	Students actively speak and reflect	
Teaching materials	Students can understand words and sentences	
	Teaching materials are diverse, with pictures and text	
Environment	No one is doing anything else, everyone is participating in the English class	
	The classroom is clean and tidy, in line with the teaching design	
Facilities	This class has whiteboards,	

	markers, multimedia, etc.	
	There is Internet for learning and teaching	

#### 4.4 Validity and Reliability

The research instruments, including questionnaires, were validated using the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) by three experts to ensure they met the required standards. The evaluation of questionnaires, pre- and post-tests, and classroom observation forms used a scoring system of +1, 0, and -1. A pilot test of the questionnaires was conducted prior to distribution. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.865. The study received ethical approval from the Rangsit University Research Ethics Review Committee prior to data collection. All data collection was conducted ethically, adhering to strict protocols to ensure participants' well-being.

#### 4.5 Data Analysis

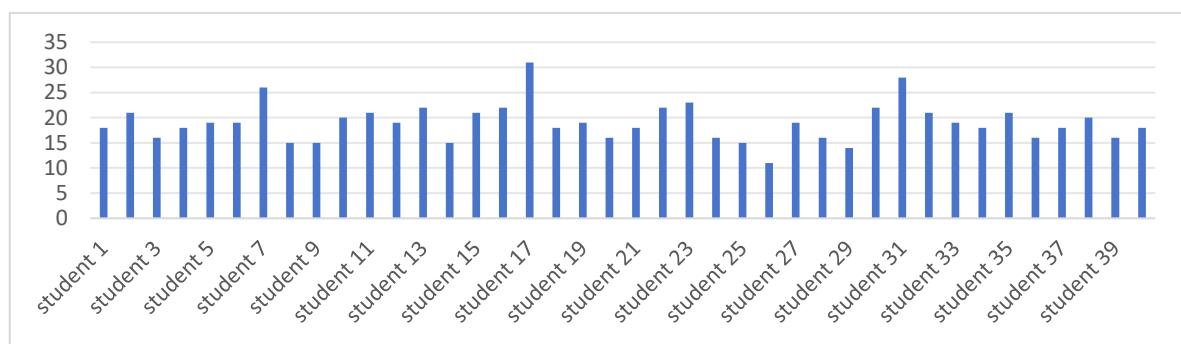
This section describes the analysis of three data types. Descriptive statistics, including percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to analyze both pre- and post-test scores and questionnaire responses. Qualitative data from classroom observations were subjected to content analysis, which entails coding, categorizing, and conceptualizing as per Lichtman (2013). This analytical framework enables the extraction, organization, and interpretation of data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon.

### 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, we analyze data collected from 40 Chinese students to address two research questions: whether the problem-based learning approach enhances students' speaking abilities and whether students are satisfied with their English instruction.

#### 5.1 Response to Research Question 1

A pre-test was conducted at the beginning of the study to collect baseline data on students' oral proficiency prior to the implementation of the PBL method. At the conclusion of the study, a post-test was administered to assess and determine whether, and to what extent, students' oral proficiency improved following PBL instruction. Figure 1 presents the students' scores from the two tests and the differences between them. The data show that most participants demonstrated significant improvement following the instructional intervention using the Problem-based Learning (PBL) approach. Specifically, students generally performed better in the post-test, with higher scores overall. The increase in scores ranged from a minimum of 11 points to a maximum of 31 points. This improvement not only indicates progress in students' oral proficiency but also reflects the effectiveness of the teaching method.



**Figure 1.** Individual Student's Test Scores in The Two Test.

This study investigated the effectiveness of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) approach in enhancing the English-speaking proficiency of junior high school students. The investigation analyzed student test scores before and after implementing the instructional intervention.

**Table 5.** Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test	45.25	40	11.96	1.89
	Post-test	64.30	40	9.07	1.44

**Table 6.** Paired Samples Test

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre test								
	-Post test	-19.05	3.80	0.60	-20.26	-17.84	-31.74	39	0.000

This study administered pre-tests and post-tests to 40 students, with results organized into two tables after SPSS analysis. Table 4 displays basic statistical data pre- and post-test, while Table 5 presents the t-test results and significance levels.

In the final assessment, the average post-test score was 64.30, marking a significant increase of 19.05 points from the pre-test average of 45.25. Additionally, the pre-test standard deviation was 11.96, higher than the post-test's 9.07, suggesting tighter clustering of post-test scores around the mean and reduced variability among students. These findings corroborate the efficacy of problem-based learning (PBL) in enhancing students' English-speaking skills.

The paired t-test yielded a  $T = -31.74$ ,  $df = 39$ ,  $sig = 0.000 < 0.001$ , demonstrating a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores. This indicates significant improvements in participants' English-speaking skills through PBL.

## 5.2 Responses to Research Question 2

The second objective of this study is to assess junior high students' satisfaction with problem-based learning, informed by data from a questionnaire and classroom observations.

A 12-item questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale was designed to measure students' satisfaction with the PBL approach in English classes. Ratings were categorized based on Best

(1981): Very Low (1.00-1.49), Low (1.50-2.49), Medium (2.50-3.49), High (3.50-4.49), Very High (4.50-5.00). This questionnaire specifically assessed students' levels of satisfaction.

**Table 7.** The Mean and the level of Students' Satisfaction toward PBL Approach

NO.	Question	MIN	MAX	Mean	S.D
A	<b>Course structure and content</b>	3	5		
1	The course is well-prepared and well-organized.	3	5	4.80	0.516
3	The course is easy to understand and helpful to me.	3	5	4.73	0.599
2	The course encourages open-ended questions and discussions.	3	5	4.70	0.564
<b>In total</b>				<b>4.74</b>	<b>0.450</b>
B	<b>Teaching methods and interaction</b>	3	5		
4	I think PBL teaching method makes English learning more interesting.	3	5	4.83	0.446
8	The teacher respects all students.	3	5	4.80	0.516
5	This teaching method helped me improve my English speaking skills.	3	5	4.80	0.464
9	I like the way of working in groups to solve problems.	3	5	4.60	0.591
7	Teachers use reasonable, useful and fair assessment methods.	3	5	4.58	0.594
6	I think I can better understand and use English by solving practical problems.	3	5	4.58	0.594
10	In class, I can actively participate in learning activities.	3	5	4.45	0.639
<b>In total</b>				<b>4.66</b>	<b>0.381</b>
C	<b>Learning environment and resources</b>	3	5		
12	I am satisfied with the physical environment of the classroom.	3	5	4.35	0.622
11	The classroom equipment is in good condition.	3	5	4.30	0.648
<b>In total</b>				<b>4.33</b>	<b>0.549</b>
<b>Questionnaire Average</b>				<b>4.63</b>	<b>0.37</b>

According to Table 6, students rated "Course structure and content" highly, with an average score of 4.74 (SD=0.450). The highest-rated statement was "The course is well-prepared and well-organized," followed by "The course is easy to understand and helpful to me" and "The course encourages open-ended questions and discussions." In the "Teaching methods and interaction" section, the average score was 4.66 (SD=0.381), with "I think the PBL teaching method makes English learning more interesting" scoring the highest at 4.83 (SD=0.446). The lowest score was for "In class, I can actively participate in learning activities," at 4.45 (SD=0.639). In the "Learning environment and resources" section, student satisfaction averaged 4.33 (SD=0.549). "I am satisfied with the physical environment of the

classroom" received the highest ratings, slightly above "The classroom equipment is in good condition."

Overall, the questionnaire's three sections averaged a score of 4.63 (SD=0.37), indicating a high level of satisfaction. Junior high students showed a strong preference for the PBL approach in English classes, with all participants expressing satisfaction with the instruction, as reflected by the consistent mean score of 4.63 (SD=0.37).

The classroom observations supported the study's second objective, revealing five key teaching themes: teaching strategies, class atmosphere, teacher personality, teaching materials, and facilities. These observations noted how diverse teaching strategies employed by teachers enhanced students' active participation.

**Table 8.** Frequencies of the Five Key Categories in Each Lesson

Lesson	Class atmosphere	Teaching strategies	Teacher's personality	Teaching material	Facilities
<b>Lesson 1</b>	3	2	2	1	1
<b>Lesson 2</b>	4	3	2	2	1
<b>Lesson 3</b>	4	3	4	2	1
<b>Lesson 4</b>	5	4	2	2	1
<b>Lesson 5</b>	4	3	3	2	1
<b>Lesson 6</b>	5	3	2	2	1
<b>Lesson 7</b>	4	3	2	2	1
<b>Lesson 8</b>	3	4	2	2	1
<b>Lesson 9</b>	5	3	3	2	1
<b>Lesson 10</b>	5	3	2	1	1
<b>Lesson 11</b>	5	3	2	2	1
<b>Lesson 12</b>	2	2	1	1	1
<b>Total</b>	49	36	27	21	12

Classroom observations reveal that activity warm-ups and interactive methods like brainstorming and classroom reports effectively boost student participation and interest. Key teaching elements like previewing, self-study, and group cooperation foster a positive learning environment. Observation data indicate that students' attitudes shifted from initial silence to active participation and relaxation as classroom activities advanced. Particularly during the course's reporting sessions, students showed significant increases in confidence and participation. Animations and word cards significantly enhanced students' learning interest and comprehension, with students reporting high levels of satisfaction with these materials. Teachers' personalities, particularly their patience and positive feedback, play a crucial role in teaching success, significantly enhancing student engagement and comfort. Encouragement from teachers enables even shy students to actively participate in class activities.

In summary, students are satisfied with how problem-based learning methods in English classes enhance their speaking skills.

### 5.3 Discussion

The results align with prior research, demonstrating that problem-based learning (PBL) significantly enhances students' English-speaking skills. Post-test scores significantly exceeded pre-test scores, confirming PBL's effectiveness in enhancing oral expression.

Simbolon et al. (2019) also reported significant improvements in English speaking skills among Indonesian vocational high school students through PBL. Riswandi (2018) highlighted that PBL markedly improves students' fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and comprehension. Our 2020 study found that non-English major college students showed increased vocabulary usage and engagement through PBL. Wijnia et al. (2024) confirmed that PBL and other task-based learning methods significantly boost language learning by enhancing intrinsic motivation in academic settings.

Despite PBL's success in enhancing English speaking skills, its implementation in China encounters several challenges. Teachers often rely excessively on traditional textbooks, limiting the diversity and innovation of teaching strategies. Furthermore, students' limited background knowledge, low motivation, and negative attitudes pose obstacles to implementing PBL. Limited teaching resources, such as outdated materials and insufficient technical support, also hinder teaching quality improvement.

Considering current challenges, future efforts should focus on optimizing PBL's teaching design and enhancing teachers' adaptability through professional development. Research should also explore ways to boost students' motivation and engagement and utilize modern technology to diversify and enhance teaching resources. These measures can make PBL implementation more effective, unlocking its educational potential across broader contexts.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study confirms the effectiveness of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in improving English-speaking skills among junior high students. Teachers employing PBL should create a student-centered environment and integrate real-world problems to enhance engagement and interest. Tailoring learning groups to students' traits can further improve participation and effectiveness.

Given the observed benefits, extending PBL to various subjects and educational levels is recommended. Future research should expand PBL to diverse educational settings and refine the approach through long-term studies to ensure sustained positive impacts on student outcomes. Future studies should involve multiple schools and a larger, more diverse student body to enhance the findings' validity and applicability. This expansion will enable a more comprehensive assessment of PBL's impact across different educational contexts and demographics, enhancing evaluations of its effectiveness and scalability.

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