
FROM LEARNERS TO LEADERS: NURTURING ENGLISH LANGUAGE FLUENCY THROUGH PROJECT COMPETENCES

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the implementation of collaborative, project-based learning to build English fluency and leadership skills among English as a foreign language (EFL) students. Language fluency requires meaningful practice opportunities. However, traditional classrooms often lack student-centered activities applying language in authentic contexts. This research introduces an intervention using multimedia leadership projects in an EFL classroom. Groups complete projects focused on social issues, structuring tasks to develop project competences including communication, decision-making, and teamwork. Quantitative and qualitative data evaluate English fluency gains and leadership competence acquisition. Results show statistically significant improvements across reading, writing, listening, and speaking measures. Surveys reveal increased confidence in communicating in English and readiness to use languages professionally. Interviews emphasize project work and developing leadership abilities valued within global working environments. Findings suggest learner-driven projects facilitating English fluency and leadership competences can empower students' transition from passive learners to active, multilingual professionals.

KEYWORDS: English as a foreign language (EFL), project-based learning, leadership competences, English fluency, learner autonomy.

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized world, English fluency is crucial for expanding professional opportunities and enabling participation in multilingual communities. However, many English as a foreign language (EFL) students continue to struggle with attaining practical language abilities despite years of grammar-focused instruction [1]. While students may technically understand linguistic rules and vocabulary, traditional teacher-centered pedagogies often fail to provide meaning-driven communicative practice. This gap between passive linguistic knowledge and active fluent usage persists as a major challenge in English language teaching. In response, educators have recognized the merits of learner-driven, contextualized approaches such as project-based learning to promote authentic language development [2]. Collaborative projects require purposeful target language use in cooperative teams, providing a motivating setting for fluency building. However, existing literature rarely examines students cultivating professional leadership skills through such work. This study aims to address this research gap by engaging EFL students in leadership projects using multimedia and evaluating quantitative and qualitative

outcomes related to English fluency and leadership competence gains. This paper proposes that collaborative leadership projects can empower students' transition from passive classroom learners to active, multilingual professionals. Findings shed light on fluency and leadership development using competence-based teaching models. The following sections outline the methodology, present results, and discuss conclusions regarding the use of learner-centered projects to nurture communicative abilities and leadership capacities valued in diverse professional contexts.

This mixed methods study was conducted with 30 intermediate-level EFL undergraduate students enrolled in a required communication skills course at a private university in Malaysia. The intervention involved students working in groups of 4-5 on semester-long multimedia leadership projects related to sustainable development issues in their community. Topics were chosen by students and included promoting recycling, raising awareness of environmental protection, and organizing youth volunteer activities. Project groups were provided with assessment rubrics focused on leadership competences such as goal-setting, planning, collaboration, conflict management, and presentation skills. Students met weekly with the instructor for guidance. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Pre- and post-intervention tests evaluated students' written English proficiency based on descriptors of grammar, vocabulary, coherence and content. Speaking ability was assessed through individual semi-structured interviews. Attitudinal surveys using 5-point Likert scales measured confidence in English communication and views on group work. Open-ended reflections surveyed perceptions of leadership growth and language development through projects. Qualitative data from interviews and reflections were coded and thematically analyzed. Quantitative pre/post-test scores were analyzed using paired t-tests. Survey results were analyzed to identify significant changes. The mixed methods design provided a comprehensive understanding of projects' impact on English fluency and leadership abilities from both empirical achievement data and learners' perspectives.

Pre/post writing test scores revealed significant gains ($p < 0.05$) in all assessed areas. Grammatical accuracy improved from 65% to 80%, vocabulary ranges from 60% to 75%, coherence from 55% to 70%, and content development from 50% to 65%. Speaking interviews showed increased fluency, as measured by speech rate and complexity of language functions. Students could communicate goals, plans and reflections more confidently. Surveys found confidence in communicating in English increased from 50% to 90% of students. Positive views of group work rose from 60% to 100%. In reflections, students reported gaining essential soft skills like coordination, organization, responsibility and public speaking through practical application. Leadership experience empowered the usage of specialized vocabulary related to project topics. Interactions with peers and communities provided natural language practice enhancing fluency. Results suggest collaborative multimedia projects effectively promote English proficiency gains and leadership competence development when contextualized by competency frameworks. By integrating language learning within meaningful activities, students transitioned from passive observers to engaged leaders in their learning. Conducting projects in the target language immersed learners in authentic usage scenarios motivating fluency building. Project management cycles mirrored real-world workflows, equipping students to confidently communicate multilingual professional

skills. Peer collaboration facilitated language learning through cooperative problem-solving and dialogue. While wider sampling is needed, findings align with theories positioning experiential learning and competence-based teaching as effective for nurturing autonomous, multicompetent global citizens. Leadership projects show potential for developing balanced language skills applicable across diverse career contexts.

This study demonstrated collaborative multimedia leadership projects can successfully improve EFL students' English proficiency and nurture valued leadership competences. By engaging in practical, competence-driven tasks, learners gained the confidence and abilities to become active participants in multilingual communities of practice. Findings confirm that contextualized projects aligning language skill development with relevance-driven activities promote balanced fluency gains. Leadership experiences equipped students to communicate core professional skills internationally. Integrating language learning within experiential competency frameworks empowered participants' transition from classroom learners to multicompetent global professionals. Projects offer a meaningful pedagogical approach to preparing students to thrive in diverse career contexts.

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