

## Abstract

The dissertation examines the effects of teaching English to elementary school students with the Project-Based Approach (PBA) in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL). In other words, it focuses on foreign language learning among fifth- and sixth-grade students in a Japanese public elementary school that uses the PBA curriculum for four years (2012-2015). The PBA allows students to develop their self-confidence in a second or foreign language (L2/FL), teaches them autonomy, and promotes collaborative learning as well as their L2/FL competency (Fried-Booth, 1986, 2002). In particular, the PBA offers four characteristics: (1) the appropriate balance between teachers' guidance and students' autonomy, (2) purposeful language use, (3) multi-skill tasks, and (4) recycling known language. To investigate the effects of the PBA discussed in the literature on EFL students in Japanese public elementary schools, the four research questions (RQs) were posed. RQ-1: Does the PBA increase EFL elementary school students' listening abilities in English? RQ-2: Does the PBA develop EFL elementary school students' speaking performance in English? RQ-3: Does the PBA develop EFL elementary school students' *L2 self-confidence*? RQ-4: How do EFL elementary school students' attitudes toward English lessons and L2 self-confidence qualitatively change through the PBA?

In order to respond to these research questions, this study applied a mixed methods approach with over 480 participants. Quantitative analysis included listening tests (LTs), assessments of students' speaking performance during the presentation based on the rubric (ASPs), and questionnaires for students'

self-assessment of self-confidence (QSSs). Qualitative analysis used students' open-ended questionnaires (SOQs) and homeroom teachers' (HRTs') open-ended questionnaires (HOQs), and the researcher's observation journal (ROJ).

As a result, RQ-1, RQ-2, and RQ-3 were answered positively. That is to say, the findings indicated that the PBA helped develop the participants' English listening abilities, English speaking performance, and both *stable* and *state L2 self-confidence*. RQ-4, as a result of qualitative analysis, was answered as follows. From qualitative points of view, L2 self-confidence of the participants increased in six essential areas: developing the participants' English abilities; promoting their collaboration; heightening their self-involvement; keeping the appropriate balance between teachers' guidance and students' autonomy; enhancing their sense of achievement; and obtaining their positive feedback from others. Additionally, their positive attitudes toward English lessons were enhanced through three different kinds of attitudes (i.e., affective, behavioral, and cognitive), particularly affective attitudes.

These findings demonstrate that the PBA is an effective means of EFL instructions for Japanese elementary school students. Therefore, the PBA can be considered to be one of the appropriate approaches for the main objective that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) (2008a) has set, i.e., fostering the foundation of students' communication abilities. Moreover, this study will provide a few pedagogical implications for incorporating the PBA into the new government guidelines (MEXT, 2017a).

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## List of Abbreviations

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
ALT	assistant language teacher
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
ASP	Assessment of Speaking Performance
BNC	British National Curriculum
CBI	Content-Based Instruction
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English as a foreign language
ESL	English as a second language
HOQ	HRT's Open-ended Questionnaire
HRT	homeroom teacher
IS	international student
JTE	Japanese teacher of English
L1	the first language
L2	the second language
LT	Listening Test
MEXT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology
MI theory	the theory of multiple intelligences
Ms	means
PBA	Project-Based Approach
PBC	Project-Based Curriculum
QSS	Questionnaire for Self-assessment of Self-confidence

ROJ	Researcher's Observation Journal
SD	standard deviation
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
SOQ	Students' Open-ended Questionnaire
TBLT	Task-Based Language Teaching
TPR	Total Physical Response
ZPD	the zone of proximal development