Enhancing French Reading Comprehension by Implementing a Project Based-Learning

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Abstract: This study aims to determine and describe the comparison before and after the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) on the French reading comprehension abilities of students in the French Education Study Program, measured by reading level indicators equivalent to the B2 level in the CEFR. The method used is quantitative, with a quasi-experimental research design. The population consisted of all students in this study program, totaling 186 students in the odd semester of the 2023/2024 Academic Year. The sample was selected through purposive sampling, comprising 20 students at the B2 level. The highest score obtained during the pretest was 77.5, while the highest posttest score was 75. The average student score during the pretest was 54, but it dropped to 50 in the posttest. The t-test results showed a 2-tailed significance value of more than 0.05, indicating no significant influence on the ability to understand French text after implementing PjBL. Based on the questionnaire, students reported increased motivation to read French texts, better understanding of sentences, and improved ability to find the main idea. They also noted enhancements in teamwork, creativity, and critical thinking, although they still required guidance from lecturers. Despite the positive reception and impact of the PjBL model on learning, there was no significant effect on students' French reading comprehension abilities after its implementation. Further research should investigate the factors that influence students' reading comprehension results.

INTRODUCTION
Many experts define reading as the process of connecting readers with and communicating ideas. Reading aims to obtain information and understand the meaning contained in writing. Harianto (2020) states that reading is a thinking process that includes understanding, interpreting, and explaining the meaning of written symbols by involving sight, eye movements, inner speech, and memory. Furthermore, Suparlan (2021) divides reading into two types: reading aloud, which involves reading with sound, and reading silently, which is reading without sound. Sarika et al. (2021) added that reading aloud is divided into extensive reading and intensive reading. Extensive reading is a fast reading activity aimed at quickly finding or understanding the core problems stated in the text. In contrast, intensive reading, referred to as reading comprehension, involves understanding the content of the text by reading it
thoroughly. Reading comprehension is one of the most complex activities that students engage in, involving the ability to understand word meanings, sentence meanings, main ideas of paragraphs, and overall content (Catts, 2022; Duke et al., 2021; Elleman & Oslund, 2019; Kendeou et al., 2016).

French language learning at universities refers to the CECRL (Cadre Européen Commun de Référence pour les Langues), known as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. CECRL focuses on organizing learning, teaching, and evaluation with respect to European languages (Kherra, 2011). The French language skill level of students in Indonesia is benchmarked at the B2 (avancé) level in the CECRL to assess students' French communication skills. In reading skills, students are expected to understand the main content of concrete or abstract themes in complex texts.

However, field data shows different results than expected. New students generally cannot read aloud properly and correctly, while students in their fourth semester start to read aloud correctly but only about 50%. Sixth-semester students, expected to be at the B2 level equivalent to CECRL, struggle to identify the main sentence in a text and have difficulty grasping the message. Another obstacle is the lack of vocabulary mastery, affecting their comprehension of French texts. Implementing an appropriate learning model is also a factor influencing student understanding. According to Rosita (Rosita & Rini, 2021), Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is a model considered capable of increasing students' competence in learning French. This model involves project or activity-based learning designed as a learning medium. To achieve their learning objectives, students engage in exploration, assessment, interpretation, synthesis, and information tracing to produce products or learning outcomes (Guo et al., 2020; Nurhidayah et al., 2021; Rosita, 2022).

The use of the PjBL model is expected to provide real activities and experiences for students, enabling them to integrate their knowledge into reading comprehension in French. This research is needed to determine how the PjBL model influences students' understanding of French, particularly in the Comprehension Écrite (reading) course. This study aims to compare and describe the French reading comprehension ability of French Language Education Study Program students before and after implementing the PjBL model, as measured by predetermined French reading comprehension indicators.

THEORETICAL SUPPORT

In learning reading skills, the competency achieved by a learner extends beyond merely exploring and understanding text information; it also involves constructing meaning from the information contained in the text. Text reading skills should foster an understanding of knowledge that encourages student involvement, thereby enhancing their ability to think critically and analytically (Widyastuti et al., 2022).

Learning French for Indonesian students presents significant challenges (Tobing & Pranowo, 2020). Differences in spelling methods in reading aloud classes often pose substantial obstacles at the beginning of reading instruction (Rosita, 2022). Several factors contribute to the difficulties learners face in reading a foreign language, including below-average academic ability, inadequate first language skills, socio-economic background, and the status of the language as a minority language (Genesee & Jared, 2008; Zhou et al., 2012).

According to Hanafiah & Suhana (2012), the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model is a learning approach that allows students to work independently in constructing their learning and realizing it
in real products. PjBL is an innovative learning model that emphasizes contextual learning through complex activities (Blumenfeld, 1991; Almulla, 2020). Rosita (Rosita & Rini, 2021) supports this view, stating that PjBL is one of several learning models that proceed by solving problems. Efforts to solve problems in learning depend significantly on students' abilities to think creatively, think critically, and make decisions.

Research by Widyastuti & Andika (2021) shows that implementing PjBL significantly influences students' critical thinking skills and activeness. In this research, students were also asked for their opinions on the implementation of PjBL. They responded that PjBL learning is enjoyable, hone's critical and creative thinking skills, provides opportunities for active participation in learning, offers space for discussion, and integrates technology into learning. Therefore, it is recommended that French teachers use PjBL in teaching other French language skills, such as reading, listening, and speaking (Yuko, 2018).

**METHOD**

The method used in this research is quantitative, employing an experimental research type. The experimental research design utilized in this study is a quasi-experimental design. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), "Quasi-experiments include assignment, but not random assignment of participants to groups. This is because the experimenter cannot artificially create groups for the experiment." Quasi-experimental designs are particularly applicable when randomization is not feasible due to natural criteria, such as administrative selection of class assignments or students’ self-selection (Jeno et al., 2017).

This research employed a quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design. This design was chosen due to the difficulties in finding equivalent control groups in quasi-experimental studies. In the one-group pretest-posttest design, a single group is measured or observed both before and after exposure to a treatment (Adhiarso et al., 2019). The research design scheme is presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>O₁</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O₂</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the research design, students were given a pretest before the learning phase, followed by approximately three weeks of instruction using project-based learning (PjBL). At the end of the course, students were given a posttest. Quantitative data was collected using an objective test in the form of multiple-choice questions for French texts at the B2 (avancé) level.

To reinforce the results, the researcher also used a questionnaire. The questionnaire was a closed type, requiring answers in the form of ticks (select) in the provided columns. A measurement scale (rating scale) was used to gauge respondents' characteristics and their assessment of each variable in the questionnaire. In this study, a Likert scale was employed. The variables to be measured were translated into indicator variables for the questionnaire, which included:

1. Determining the main idea in the French text.
2. Ease and difficulty of understanding the text using the PjBL model.
3. Enjoyment and motivation in learning with PjBL.
4. Learning with PjBL in a team.
5. Students’ initial knowledge and creativity in PjBL.
6. Student perceptions of PjBL.

These indicators were used as a basis for compiling instrument items in the form of statements or questions (Sugiyono, 2017). According to Setiyadi (2016), the answer to each instrument item using a Likert scale ranges from very positive to very negative, such as strongly...
disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree.

The population in this study consisted of all students of the French Language Education Study Program at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Lampung. The total population was 186 students in the odd semester of the 2023/2024 academic year. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Isaac, 2023), as the researcher aimed to select subjects at a reading level relevant to their experience, specifically level B2 in the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

The B2 level, or advanced level, indicates that students can understand general meanings, important information, complex main ideas, opinions, and attitudes expressed both implicitly and explicitly in complex texts on various themes of general, personal interest, or areas of specialization. Activities at the B2 level include understanding specific information in official, institutional, or corporate texts and comprehending journalistic texts, articles, and reports on current or specialized subjects with different points of view (Emaish, 2015).

Observation was the first step for researchers to familiarize themselves with the research subject. Observation is a data collection technique carried out through observing and recording the condition or behavior of the target object (Cotton et al., 2010). In this research, the researcher directly observed the object of study and identified the problems and obstacles faced by students in the Comprehension Écrite (reading skills) course.

After data collection, the researcher analyzed the data using SPSS Version 25 statistical software. The calculation formula used was the one-sample t-test, which tests whether a specific value (given as a comparison) is significantly different from the average of a sample (Kruschke, 2013). The hypotheses tested were \( H_0: \mu = \mu_0 \) versus \( H_1: \mu \neq \mu_0 \). \( H_0 \) is the null hypothesis, while \( H_1 \) is the alternative or working hypothesis. The research flowchart below outlines the steps taken by researchers to obtain the data.

![Flowchart of the research process](image)

**Figure 1.** Flow Diagram of the Research Process.
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research were obtained through t-test analysis using SPSS Version 25, supported by data from e-questionnaires distributed via Google Forms. The questionnaires were distributed to students enrolled in advanced French reading courses during the even semester of the 2022/2023 academic year. Respondent profiles were categorized based on gender and age. The gender distribution revealed that 80% of the respondents were female, while the remaining 20% were male. Regarding age distribution, the respondents were divided into four age groups: 20 years old (15% of total respondents), 21 years old (60%), 22 years old (15%), and 23 years old (10%).

The highest score obtained by students during the pretest was 77.5, while the highest score during the posttest was 75. The average student score during the pretest was 54, but this average decreased to 50 in the posttest, as illustrated in Figure 2.

![Figure 2. Pretest and Posttest Score.](image)

Furthermore, based on the results of the t-test comparing students' pretest and posttest scores after taking the reading course using the PjBL learning model, the 2-tailed significance value was greater than 0.05. This indicates that there was no significant influence on the ability to read and understand French after the implementation of PjBL. The figure below shows the t-test results processed by SPSS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Results of T-Test.</th>
<th>Std.</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean Deviation Mean Lower Upper t df Sig.(2 tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1 Pretest-Postest</td>
<td>-.45455</td>
<td>23.64968</td>
<td>5.04213 -10.94023 10.03114 -.090 21 .929</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Syntax of the PjBL Learning Model

According to Rais (2010), the implementation of the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model involves several steps, known as syntax. These steps include preparing important questions related to the topic (determining the problems to be discussed), designing the project plan, creating a schedule, monitoring the implementation of PjBL, carrying out assessments, and evaluating PjBL. In this research, the syntax was
modified by adding project design activities and schedules, and prioritizing results assessment in class presentations within groups. This modification aims to facilitate class discussions and increase student engagement in group activities.

The first step in PjBL is defining objectives, which involves making explicit connections between various activities and the main learning objectives, focusing students’ thinking, and breaking down big questions into smaller, manageable ones. This activity is referred to as "Driving Questions" (Jalinus et al., 2017). The lecturer guides students to identify problems in the reading comprehension material and helps them break these down into smaller problems to be addressed during the project. This approach helps students focus on their learning projects. The Driving Questions discussed include the type of text to be studied, grammar, and linguistic elements at the B2 CECRL level. Based on these discussions and the Semester Program Plan, the text themes for the B2 level were determined: profile d'apprentissage, vivre une aventure, and vivre en famille.

The second step is creating the project design (Jalinus et al., 2017). After determining the themes and text standards, the lecturer divides the students into six small groups, each consisting of four members. Each group discusses project texts, searches for relevant materials on the internet or in French textbooks, and selects their project texts, which are then submitted to the lecturer for input and approval. Four groups received approval to proceed, while two groups were asked to find more suitable texts. These groups resubmitted their texts and received approval.

Once the project instructions and worksheets were agreed upon, students began preparing project design activities and set a schedule for monitoring project progress (Jalinus et al., 2017). Students were given one week to work on their text projects according to the predetermined themes.

During the next meeting, the lecturer monitored each group's progress (Markula & Aksela, 2022). The lecturer checked each group's activities and progress over the past week. Students reported obstacles they faced, such as difficulty finding appropriate texts and analyzing grammar in their chosen texts. The lecturer provided feedback to students who showed significant progress and to those who faced challenges. This feedback aimed to help all groups improve their projects. Documentation of this monitoring stage is available (Madoyan, 2016; Nurhidayah et al., 2021).

After the monitoring, the lecturer gave students time to make improvements based on the feedback received (Rachmawati & Asmara, 2018). This ensured that the final projects presented and discussed by each group were of higher quality. The final stage of PjBL implementation involved evaluation, which included experience evaluation, reflection, and project improvement. Students submitted their final projects after incorporating feedback from the lecturer and peers (Nurhadiyati et al., 2020).

Students provided the following feedback on their experience with the PjBL learning model: (1) The learning model was enjoyable, exciting, and provided positive feedback; (2) It made learning fun, enjoyable, and easy to understand; (3) It allowed problem-solving through group discussions; (4) It was engaging and increased motivation and interest in French reading skills; (5) Students felt very satisfied when they successfully completed their projects; (6) Some students found the number of themes to be overwhelming and felt that the limited time hindered their ability to thoroughly analyze the grammar in the texts.
Weaknesses of the PjBL Learning Model

Wena (2018) identifies three weaknesses in implementing the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model: (a) it requires a significant amount of time to solve problems, (b) it necessitates a considerable amount of money, and (c) it demands the provision of substantial equipment. These findings are consistent with the experiences of students after implementing the PjBL learning model.

Based on the results of the questionnaire, almost 45% of students stated that PjBL required a lot of time to solve problems (Cintang et al., 2018). Another weakness is related to teamwork, with 30% of respondents indicating that poor teamwork becomes an obstacle in completing projects, especially when only one team member is contributing (Mihić & Završki, 2017). Additionally, 25% of respondents noted that a significant weakness of the PjBL learning model is the lack of control from lecturers (Amissah, 2019), leading to immature understanding of PjBL concepts and suboptimal project execution (Guo et al., 2020).

Table 3. Student’s Opinion about the Weakness of Implementation PjBL.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Number</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>PjBL requires a lot of time and money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The disadvantage of this learning model is that it requires a lot of time to solve problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The disadvantage of this learning model is that group work depends on the participation of all members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The downside is when you get a group that is not actively cooperating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lecturers are not directing and assisting students enough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>There is a lack of detailed explanation on how to work in project-based learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strengths of the PjBL Learning Model

According to Wena (2018), the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model offers several advantages: increased motivation, enhanced problem-solving abilities, improved collaboration, and better resource management skills. These findings align with the feedback from students who participated in the questionnaire. Students reported that PjBL made learning more engaging and...
enjoyable, leading to higher motivation. The model encouraged critical and creative thinking for problem-solving, fostered teamwork and communication skills through group work, and taught effective time and resource management. These strengths underscore the effectiveness of the PjBL model in enhancing the learning experience for students in the French Language Education Study Program.

The questionnaire distributed to students revealed that 30% of respondents believe that implementing the PjBL model can improve problem-solving abilities both independently and in groups (Wijayanti & Budi, 2023). Students expressed that studying and discussing together enhances their ability to solve project-related problems more efficiently. They noted that gaps in understanding grammar could be filled by other group members, and challenging text sentences could be collaboratively discussed. Another 30% of respondents stated that the PjBL model encourages critical and creative thinking (Chan, 2013; Thomas, 2000; Zhou et al., 2012). The diversity of critical thinking processes among group members led to higher levels of critical thinking and creativity, with some groups presenting project results that exceeded the lecturer's expectations by using clear, B2-standard-compliant sentences.

Additionally, 25% of respondents indicated that the PjBL model increased their motivation to read and analyze French texts. When projects aligned with students' interests, hobbies, or personal needs, their motivation for reading comprehension grew (Vygotsky, 1978). Students felt more responsible and motivated to complete projects well because they could choose texts related to their project themes and competency levels, sourced from the internet or textbooks. This increased their engagement and enthusiasm for learning. Lastly, 15% of respondents stated that the PjBL model fostered a collaborative attitude and good teamwork in producing projects (Bell, 2010; Sakulviriyakitkul et al., 2020). Here are some student opinions on the strengths of implementing PjBL.
Table 4. Student’s Opinion about the Strengths of Implementation PjBL.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Number</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Train learners to think critically and creatively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Make students able to think critically and have broad insights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Train students to work together in teams, and hone problem solving from the projects given.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Improve the ability to solve problems and foster a sense of teamwork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Increase students' motivation in learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Makes it easier for me to understand the text, as well as trained in classifying the French words.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Increasing students' critical thinking, creativity, and motivation in this research is a benchmark for the success of learning using the PjBL model (Nurhadiyati et al., 2020). These advantages are crucial because, in learning reading comprehension, a supportive community helps students become active learners/readers (Genc, 2015; Razak et al., 2020). Through material outlined in the B2 standard, students are encouraged to understand complex texts, and group discussions significantly aid their comprehension.

More than 90% of students agreed that after implementing the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model in the French reading course, they found it easier to understand French texts and grasp the meaning of sentences. Additionally, students found it easier to identify the main idea from the initial sentence in a paragraph when applying the PjBL model. Students highlighted several key differences in their reading comprehension abilities before and after using the PjBL model. They noted that learning to read texts using PjBL became more thorough and detailed, as it required analyzing the text through finding the 5W+1H and creating questions, whereas traditional reading lessons involved merely reading without deep analysis. The PjBL model increased their motivation to read French texts, making reading French no longer seem difficult.

Students also reported that before applying PjBL, they often made errors when reading and couldn't understand the meaning of sentences or passages. After PjBL, they could solve problems more effectively and improve their reading skills, which increased their interest and motivation. Learning reading comprehension became easier to understand, and previously difficult reading problems became solvable. They found that without applying the PjBL model, understanding the text in one reading was challenging, but with PjBL, they could analyze and understand the text better. There was significant progress in understanding the reading material with PjBL compared to traditional methods. The PjBL method allowed students to solve problems critically, creatively, and thoroughly because they had to identify problems first to solve them. Without PjBL, reading felt boring, but with PjBL, it became engaging and motivating. These responses highlight the significant positive impact of the PjBL model on students' reading comprehension abilities, fostering a more engaging and effective learning environment.

CONCLUSION

The application of the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model in advanced reading skills courses was well received by students of the French Language Education Study Program, enhancing their motivation to read French texts, understand sentences, and identify main ideas in paragraphs more easily. The PjBL model also provided opportunities for students to study and explore class topics, improving
teamwork, creative, and critical thinking skills. However, intensive assistance from lecturers was still necessary for students to complete their projects effectively. Despite these positive outcomes, t-test calculations comparing pretest and posttest scores showed a 2-tailed significance value greater than 0.05, indicating no significant effect on French reading comprehension ability after implementing PjBL. This research focused on comparing reading comprehension results before and after PjBL implementation. Future research should explore factors influencing changes in reading comprehension, considering the position of French as a foreign language in Indonesia.

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