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Teachers' Perspectives on Project-Based Learning in Supporting the Activation of Students' Self-Regulated Learning Skills: A Case Study

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Abstract

Background/purpose. Despite growing evidence that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) fosters students' Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) skills, the perspectives of those who design and deliver these experiences — teachers —are largely absent from the conversation. Existing studies overwhelmingly focus on students' outcomes, leaving a critical gap in understanding how in-service English teachers perceive and enact PjBL to enhance SRL skills in real classroom contexts. Therefore, this study aimed to explore in-service English teachers' perspectives on PjBL as an approach to support the activation of students' SRL skills.

Materials/Methods. A case study was employed to deeply examine that phenomenon. Data were gathered through structured interviews with two teachers selected for their experience with PjBL and analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results. The results showed that teachers viewed PjBL as effective in enhancing students' SRL skills by fostering motivation, metacognition, self-efficacy, and behavior. They implemented strategies such as checklists, peer collaboration, and specific project planning to support student autonomy. However, challenges arose due to differences in students' abilities, interpersonal conflicts, and absenteeism, prompting teachers to use mixed-ability grouping and quality control to ensure equitable learning outcomes.

Conclusion. This research contributes to the practice of English Language Teaching (ELT) by providing insights into how instructional practice is grounded in PjBL, thereby activating SRL skills in diverse linguistic classrooms. It is recommended that continuous professional development be provided to help teachers, curriculum designers, and classroom practitioners to integrate SRL-oriented practices into ELT classrooms through PjBL.

1. Introduction

In the current era of globalization and rapid technological development, English language learners are expected to acquire 21st-century skills such as independent project management, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving (Zarouk et al., 2020). To meet these demands, recent educational reforms have emphasized inquiry-based learning, inclusivity, and innovative assessment methods (Brenner, 2022). In Indonesia, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology introduced the Kurikulum Merdeka, or Emancipated Curriculum, which allows students to choose subjects and learning levels based on their interests. The curriculum encourages self-assessment practices that promote active participation, accountability, and reflection on personal strengths and weaknesses (Yan et al., 2023). By highlighting empowerment, personalized learning, and metacognitive development, the Emancipated Curriculum aims to align education with students' aspirations and career goals, ensuring relevant and meaningful learning (Vargheese & Seraj, 2023). Such a student-centered orientation prepares learners for increasingly complex challenges in the global arena (Irawati et al., 2022; Nugrohadi et al., 2022; Nursaputri & Sabat, 2023; Supartinah et al., 2023).

At the core of this curriculum is the development of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL), which enables students to take ownership of their learning. SRL refers to learners' ability to manage their cognition, motivation, and behavior during the learning process (Zimmerman, 2002). Through SRL, students set goals, monitor their progress, sustain motivation, and evaluate outcomes (Stoeger et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2011). Research consistently demonstrates the benefits of SRL in strengthening English language skills, including vocabulary (Truong & Wang, 2019), reading comprehension (Pratama et al., 2023), speaking (Menggo et al., 2022), listening (Goh & Hu, 2014), and writing (Teng & Zhang, 2024). Because of its central role in fostering lifelong learning (Teng & Zhang, 2024), educators are called to design learning environments that cultivate autonomy, inquiry, and collaboration.

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) aligns closely with the goals of SRL. PjBL situates students in authentic, goal-directed tasks that require planning, teamwork, and reflection (Bell, 2010; Guo et al., 2020; Hoidn, 2016; Ifenthaler, 2012; Kokotsaki et al., 2016). By engaging in real-world problem solving, students learn to generate questions, design action plans, and organize activities while constructing knowledge collaboratively. PjBL has been widely adopted in various disciplines, including science and language education, because of its potential to foster both content mastery and learner autonomy (Guo et al., 2020). In English Language Teaching (ELT), PjBL is characterized by its dual focus on process and product, extended time frames, natural integration of language and content, collaboration, role definition, and reflective activities (Stoller & Myers, 2019). Beyond language development, PjBL has been shown to increase motivation and professional communication by creating opportunities for interaction in authentic and international contexts (Borisova & Letkina, 2019; Stoller, 2012).

A growing body of research highlights the effectiveness of PjBL in enhancing SRL. Zarouk et al. (2020) reported that a flipped PjBL model improved students' motivational beliefs, metacognitive strategies, and collaboration. Similarly, Alkandari and Alabdulhadi (2023) found that pre-service teachers developed SRL skills through flipped PjBL strategies. Wu (2024) further examined SRL trajectories in PjBL-based language learning using Latent Profile Analysis and Epistemic Network Analysis, providing insights into engagement patterns. Collectively, these studies affirm PjBL's role in promoting SRL.

Despite this evidence, most research has focused primarily on students' outcomes, with limited attention to teachers' perspectives. This gap is significant because teachers' beliefs and understandings shape how PjBL is implemented and how effectively it supports SRL in classroom practice. Without considering teachers' viewpoints, our understanding of PjBL's potential as a catalyst

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for SRL remains incomplete. This study is therefore necessary to address this gap by shifting the focus from students to teachers, whose perspectives are crucial for the effective implementation of PjBL in promoting SRL.

Therefore, the present study explores English teachers' perspectives on PjBL as a strategy for fostering SRL. Using a case study approach, it investigates how teachers conceptualize, implement, and evaluate PjBL to promote autonomy, goal setting, strategic learning, and reflection. The central research question guiding this inquiry is: "What are English teachers' perspectives on Project-Based Learning in supporting the activation of students' Self-Regulated Learning skills?" Specifically, the study addresses the following sub-questions:

1. How do English teachers conceptualize their understanding of PjBL and SRL?
2. In what ways do teachers implement PjBL in an English class to support SRL?
3. How do teachers assess students' SRL skills within the PjBL context?
4. What challenges do teachers encounter when implementing PjBL in promoting SRL?

By foregrounding teachers' voices, this study aims to make theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it enriches discussions on the intersection of PjBL, SRL, and English language pedagogy. Practically, it offers insights for teachers, curriculum planners, and policymakers on designing instructional strategies that integrate SRL into English Language Teaching through PjBL.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Project-Based Learning (PjBL)

PjBL is an instructional strategy that focuses on learners and is in accordance with contextual learning principles. Stoller (2012) stated that PjBL is an effective method for promoting meaningful language and content acquisition. Learners involve themselves actively in the learning process to reach their goals through social interaction and knowledge (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). In this context, collaboration is empowered to solve existing problems, and teachers act as facilitators and companions. The project-based learning approach has been proven a valuable teaching methodology that supports teachers with diverse and essential teaching experience, which is also positively related to their professional and personal growth (Tsybulsky & Muchnik-Rozanov, 2019). Stoller (2012) proposes seven steps of PjBL as a modification of her and her colleagues' previous works, which span 8 to 10 steps of PjBL. These seven steps are grouped into three primary stages:

Preliminary Stages (Step 1-3)

Before starting a project, the teacher and students need to agree on the project's theme (Step 1), determine the concrete outcomes (Step 2), and organize the project to guide students from the beginning to the end (Step 3). The roles of the teacher and students during the preliminary stages, and the class time allocated to them, differ depending on how structured the project is planned to be.

Information Gathering, Compiling and Analyzing, and Reporting (Step 4-6)

Continuing the preliminary stage, Step 4 includes an iterative cycle of collecting information and language instruction, with the latter geared towards specific language demands and the strategy for information-gathering tasks. After collecting information for their project, students are ready to compile and analyze it in accordance with the project's goals. Step 5 includes an iterative cycle of compiling and analyzing information, supported by explicit instruction and focused on the demands of language and the strategies of related tasks. At Step 6, after students have decided on the information that has value for their project, what information they will discard, how the information will be synthesized, and what information is missing, they are ready to integrate the gathered information to prepare the project for completion.

Evaluating the Project (Step 7)

Many ELT professionals consider a project complete when tangible outcomes are identified early, such as presenting a written proposal to the school principal, a poster at a poster fair, or a PowerPoint presentation. However, Stoller (2012) stated that a lot is lost when the project is considered done at this point. There must be one last step to add. At the final step, students must be able to evaluate the language they learned (e.g., vocabulary and grammatical structures), the skill that improved (e.g., reading, writing, speaking and listening), the strategies they acquired (e.g., notetaking, previewing, establishing a purpose for reading, rereading for a new purpose and knowing how to ask for clarification), the information content that they learned and the project itself (from the process and the product perspectives). By doing so, step 7 of the project evaluation will improve students' motivation, self-esteem, and self-concept.

2.2. Self-Regulated Learning (SRL)

Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) is the main conceptual framework for understanding the cognitive, motivational, and emotional aspects of learning. Zimmerman (1989) stated that SRL is a concept where learners are meta-cognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their own process of learning. Boekaerts et al. (1999) claimed that SRL is the process by which students regulate their learning to improve knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The main characteristics of SRL are setting goals, considering what they know, developing knowledge and skills, and transferring skills (Boekaerts et al., 1999). SRL is considered a factor that enhances learning success. SRL is also defined as a term that describes students as an active part in managing their own learning by monitoring and maximizing the use of meta-cognitive strategies (Winne & Hadwin, 1998). Meanwhile, Pintrich (2000) stated that SRL consists of four phases: (1) Forethought, planning, and activation; (2) Monitoring; (3) Control; and (4) Reaction and reflection. He worked and contributed to the field by clarifying the empirical relationship between SRL and motivation.

Among the SRL models developed by researchers, Zimmerman's Cyclical Model is selected as the one to base this research on, as it promotes a foundational framework to understand the dynamic nature of self-regulation (Zimmerman, 2002). This model identified three phases: the forethought phase (students set goals, assess their motivation and capabilities, and plan their engagement with tasks), the performance phase (students carry out the task, focus their attention, apply strategies, and monitor their progress), and the self-reflection phase (students evaluate their performance and the task itself by engaging in self-assessment and reflection). Figure 1 shows the SRL model that was developed by Zimmerman and Moylan (2009). In addition to promoting a foundational framework, this model has also been widely accepted by the broader academic community.

2.3. PjBL Fosters Students' SRL Skills

The steps of PjBL implementation support the development of SRL skills at each phase. PjBL is a constructive teaching strategy that fosters students' motivation to achieve better through a collaborative project arrangement. The idea is supported by Shin (2018) who found that collaboration between students within a project successfully promotes students' motivation and cooperation skills. Specifically in an English classroom, the implementation of PjBL that incorporates technology contributes positively to the level improvement of students' SRL skills as well as the language proficiency (Arabloo et al., 2021).

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2.4. The Impact of SRL Skills on ELT

SRL has stimulated growing attention to be deeply explored by researchers from various educational fields due to its positive effect on students' achievements. Particularly, SRL is reported to be effective in improving the students' language proficiency. Seker (2016) stated that SRL plays an important role in predicting success in language learning, and it may indicate the necessity to consider SRL and its role in language achievement. Furthermore, Seker (2016) claimed that, for foreign language learners with moderate to low levels of SRL use, it remained the best predictor of foreign language achievement. When the strategy of self-regulation used effectively, it could facilitate the language learning (Oxford, 2016) by leading to deeper learning and better performance on language skills such as speaking use (Alvandi et al., 2025), reading comprehension (Pratama et al., 2023), writing (Teng, 2022), listening (Goh & Hu, 2014), and vocabulary (Truong & Wang, 2019).

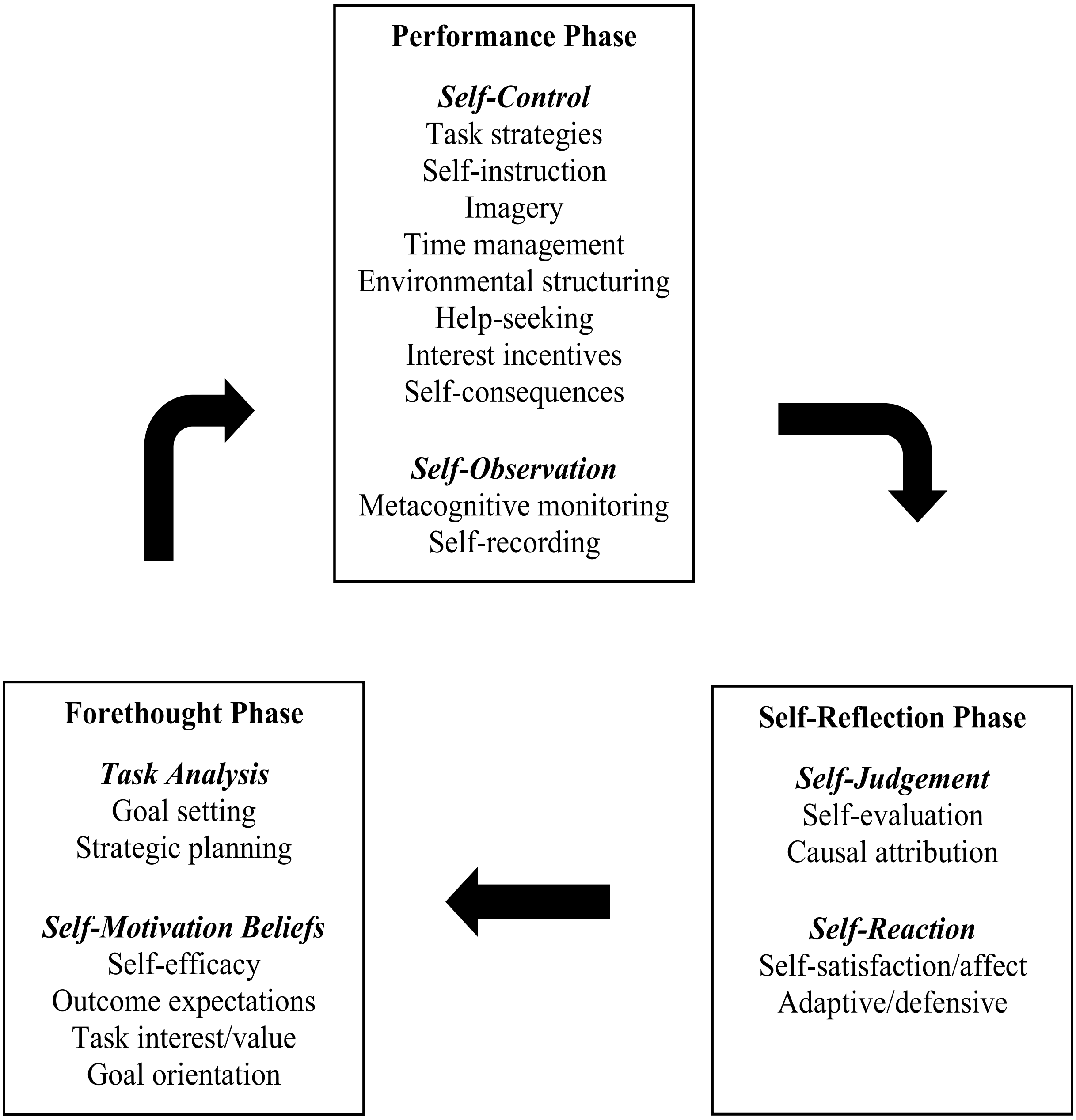

Figure 1. Adapted Version of the Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) Model (Source: Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009)

3. Methodology

3.1. Design of the Study

This research employed a case study approach to explore in-service English teachers' perspectives on PjBL and its influence on the activation of students' SRL skills. A case study promotes a deep examination of a single phenomenon within a real-world context (Yin, 2011). This design enables researchers to examine the phenomenon holistically, focusing not only on the implementation of PjBL but also on how teachers perceived its role in supporting SRL. The purpose of this design is to understand phenomena (Rukajat, 2018) and to present existing conditions or events as accurately as possible (Atmowardoyo, 2018). A case study was considered appropriate because it enabled researchers to capture teachers lived experiences and their interpretation in relation to the broader theoretical frameworks of PjBL and SRL. Therefore, employing the case study ensures the depth and contextual grounding to address the research questions and presents credible insight into how PjBL contributes to the activation of students' SRL skills.

3.2. The Participant of the Study

The participants in this research were two in-service English teachers at a private education foundation who had experienced implementing the PjBL approach in their teaching. They were purposefully selected based on specific criteria related to their experience of teaching. There were two teachers participating voluntarily in the research: one beginner teacher with less than five years of teaching experience and one experienced teacher with more than five years of teaching experience. Both participants differed in gender and were taught at different educational levels within the foundation. The experienced teacher (P1) was a male and taught English at the Junior Secondary Level (MTs XXX), while the beginner teacher (P2) was a female and taught English at the Senior Secondary Level (MA YYY). The variation in gender, teaching experience, and institutional level enabled comparative perspectives on the implementation of PjBL within an English classroom and its impact on activating students' SRL skills on various English tasks.

3.3. Research Instrument

The primary instrument used in this research was a semi-structured interview guide consisting of 10 core questions, followed by prompts and probes to elicit more depth and detail. To ensure that the development of interview items was theoretically grounded, all items were constructed based on the theory of SRL from Zimmerman and Moylan (2009), covering forethought, performance, and self-reflection phases, and the framework of PjBL from Stoller (2012), which covers authentic projects, collaboration, and evaluation. Altogether, the ten (10) open-ended questions explored teachers' understanding of PjBL-SRL, project integration in the classroom, students' learning behavior and development, challenges during implementation, and students' assessment of SRL processes (planning, monitoring, motivation) throughout a project.

3.4. Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data for this research were primarily collected through semi-structured interviews to explore English teachers' personal experiences in implementing PjBL and their professional perception of SRL activation during the project. The interview sessions were guided by a set of structured questions, followed by prompts and probes, developed by the researchers based on established Zimmerman and Moylan's theory on SRL and Stoller's framework of PjBL, ensuring alignment with the key constructs being investigated. Interviews lasted 35-60 minutes each and were audio-recorded. The recorded audios were transcribed verbatim by researchers to obtain reliable and accurate data. To strengthen trustworthiness, interview transcripts were returned to participants for verification, and an audit trail of data collection procedures was maintained.

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The collected data were analyzed by using a thematic analysis approach. This approach was chosen for its flexibility in identifying, analyzing, and presenting patterns in qualitative data. The interviews were recorded and transcribed carefully for analysis. The data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. First, the recorded interviews were transcribed carefully and read repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. Second, relevant segments were manually coded with descriptive labels. Third, these codes were grouped into broader categories that reflected potential themes. Fourth, the emerging themes were reviewed to ensure internal coherence and distinctiveness. Fifth, the final themes were defined and named, with illustrative quotations selected to support them. Finally, in the sixth phase, the themes were contextualized and interpreted in relation to the relevant literature. To ensure trustworthiness, the preliminary themes were returned to participants for member checking, and an audit trail of analytic decisions was maintained. All quotations cited in the report were pseudonymized, and informed consent for their inclusion was obtained.

4. Results

4.1. Teachers' Conceptual Understanding of PjBL and SRL

Both English teachers, P1 (an experienced teacher) and P2 (a beginner teacher), highlighted differing levels of depth and emphasis in their conceptualizations of PjBL and SRL, shaped by their teaching experiences, pedagogical beliefs, and classroom practice. P1 articulated a comprehensive, process-oriented, and student-centered interpretation of PjBL. This approach was viewed as fundamentally experiential, with PjBL described as "The Project-Based Learning is when students learn through direct, experiential engagement." P1 emphasized that the method moved beyond passive learning, citing the idea "I listen, I know; I see, I get it; but when I do it, I understand." This illustrated the power of active participation. Learning, according to P1, should not only be textual but also practical, so students can practice what they have learned. This connection to authentic learning experiences allowed students to internalize content more deeply. P1 remarked that "… this kind of learning is actually related to their own daily lives." The teacher also highlighted the development of soft skills as an integral part of PjBL. Through this approach, students learned how to manage their own learning, manage their time, be disciplined, and be creative. In group settings, they also learned how to lead the team, understand each other, collaborate, cooperate, and put away their egoism.

In contrast, P2 provided a more outcome-oriented and procedural understanding of PjBL. It was described as a method where she stated, "… but Project-Based Learning means that we arrange the project for the students and then they will do it by themselves, and also they will present it." This conceptualization remained focused on task execution and deliverables. While student autonomy was acknowledged, there was limited reference to reflective learning processes or skill development. PjBL was viewed more as a teaching strategy for achieving concrete results than as a transformative learning experience. This contrast highlighted a progression in pedagogical understanding. P1 framed PjBL as a holistic, constructivist approach emphasizing experiential learning, life relevance, and soft skill acquisition. P2, on the other hand, demonstrated a developing understanding that prioritized project implementation and output.

P1 also offered a substantive perspective on SRL, defining it as autodidactic learning, in which learners take full ownership of their academic responsibilities. The teacher explained that students had to understand the need to study, motivate themselves, and be autonomous in their learning. Moreover, P1 conceptualized SRL as a foundational element of PjBL, stating, "Self-Regulated Learning is a foundational skill that contributes more to Project-Based Learning." The teacher confirmed that the two elements were connected and influenced each other. SRL, in this view, enabled learners to succeed in PjBL by developing the necessary autonomy and internal regulation.

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In comparison, P2 defined SRL as the skill that could emerge in the learning process when a specific approach was implemented, explaining that it was "…the skill that is the student's skill that can be improved by the approach that we used in the learning process." SRL encompasses students' motivation and behavior in the teaching and learning process. P2 affirmed that positive motivations, self-efficacy, and positive behavior could be classified under SRL. She also highlighted the influence of PjBL on the development of SRL, noting that "When we take an approach like Project-Based Learning, it can enhance their SRL, specifically students' self-motivation, because when they are doing a project, they are motivated to finish the project together, and they can collaborate with their friends."

P2 further agreed that PjBL supported the enhancement of self-efficacy and metacognition, ultimately concluding that it could be a highly effective vehicle for SRL. Here, P1's understanding of SRL was characterized by a focus on internal cognitive processes, discipline, and strategic learning management. SRL was viewed as essential not only for success in PjBL but also for lifelong learning. In contrast, P2 emphasized more observable behaviors such as motivation, metacognition, and collaboration.

4.2. Classroom Implementation of PjBL to Support SRL

The participants provided specific accounts of how they implemented PjBL in their classrooms and how it supported the development of SRL among English learners. Their practices reflected distinct levels of instructional depth, autonomy, and reflection, shaped by their respective teaching experiences.

First, P1 said that PjBL was a standard pedagogical strategy, particularly in the international class. For the experienced teacher, PjBL was not optional but embedded in the curriculum as a routine evaluation method. As P1 explained, "This PjBL is routine. Almost every material or chapter uses PjBL as an evaluation to find out if the student understands or not." The approach was strongly experiential, where students "learn by doing," aligning with the belief that "when I do it, I understand." By anchoring learning in real-life relevance, P1 aimed to make learning not only theoretical but also practical, helping students realize that this kind of learning was related and beneficial to their daily lives.

Projects were drawn from students' interests and real-world contexts, including creating TikTok vlogs, business plans, concert planning, and cooking in the context of procedural text. P1's implementation often spanned two to four class sessions, encompassing conceptual instruction, group planning, production, and presentation. Material was sourced from a mix of textbooks and student-driven adaptations. As P1 shared, "I follow the textbook and also make some adjustments to the interests of our students."

P1 assumed various instructional roles, from educator to guide, facilitator, and evaluator, depending on the project stage. This flexibility supported student autonomy, creativity, and responsibility. According to P1, "We do not really dictate (to) our students, giving them independence to be creative." This environment enabled students to manage their time, maintain discipline, and express their ideas, which are important components of SRL. Through individual projects, learners developed personal initiative, while group work fostered collaboration, empathy, and leadership. As P1 emphasized, "You will put away your egoism and work for the sake of people in your own team."

The experienced teacher also relied on real-time classroom supervision rather than homework to observe how students regulated their own teams and distributed tasks. P1 highlighted that "Students know they will be evaluated, so they have to regulate themselves to get a really good score in the end."

In contrast, P2 adopted a more structured and outcome-focused approach. Projects typically followed a fixed sequence: collaborative topic selection, group formation, task assignment, execution, and final presentation, usually across three class meetings. According to the beginner teacher, “We arrange the project for the students, and then they will do it by themselves, and also they will present it.” While P2 acted as a facilitator, they also maintained oversight to ensure progress. P2 explicitly believed that PjBL promoted SRL, stating, “It can enhance their SRL.”

Elements such as self-motivation, self-efficacy, and metacognition were fostered as students divided topics, assigned responsibilities, and managed project development. One example was the magician project, in which students collaborated in pairs and assigned clear roles. P2 observed that they became more responsible through this process. Autonomy was further supported by clear instructions and goal-setting mechanisms, such as to-do lists and performance criteria. P2 gave students specific tasks, like creating an advertisement and presenting it in the end. Hence, the practices of P1 and P2 demonstrated how PjBL could serve as a platform for developing SRL within an English classroom, albeit through different pedagogical lenses. P1’s experienced, process-oriented approach integrated SRL deeply into the structure, assessment, and objectives of PjBL, while P2’s early-career implementation showed promise in fostering autonomy and motivation through clear task design and formative feedback.

4.3. Assessment of Students’ SRL Skills within the PjBL Context

Both P1 and P2 employed assessment strategies that went beyond content mastery to evaluate students’ development of SRL skills within an English classroom under the PjBL framework. P1 incorporated both formative and summative assessment methods in classroom practice during the implementation of PjBL. Formative assessment was used throughout the project cycle, as P1 explained, “I always monitor their own learning during the instruction, like giving them feedback or the way that I can assess in the process.”

Summative assessments, on the other hand, were implemented at the conclusion of the project and included quizzes or follow-up individual tasks. These tools measured not only the final product but also the learning journey students undertook. P1 emphasized that assessment played a key role in developing SRL by fostering student independence and motivation, stating, “Students know that there will be an assessment, so they have to regulate themselves to get a really good score in the end.” P1 also placed importance on evaluating the learning process itself, particularly by observing how students managed team dynamics, such as regulating and distributing responsibilities within the group and responding to tasks assigned by their group leader. These observational strategies enabled the teacher to assess whether students were actively monitoring both their own progress and that of their peers, which was a fundamental aspect of SRL.

Soft skills such as creativity, independence, and leadership were also considered in the evaluation, though P1 acknowledged the absence of a formal rubric for these aspects. Instead, such traits were reflected in the students' attitude scores. For academic competencies like speaking, reading, and writing, P1 reported using international rubrics. Reflection was also integral to P1's approach; students and their peers were encouraged to give comments and suggestions to increase student motivation and identify areas for improvement.

P2 similarly used formative assessment to monitor SRL development throughout the project stages. A key tool the beginner teacher employed was a self-designed tracking system. She said, “I already use some kind of column. There is a table that shows how big their motivation is to do this project to measure the regulated threat.” This table helped visualize students’ engagement and regulation within group work. After each project presentation, P2 conducted a layered evaluation process, stating, “I will make a rubric, give them applause and an oral evaluation, then I will give them a score based on the column.” This sequence delivered immediate feedback and reinforced metacognitive reflection, allowing students to identify both strengths and areas for growth. P2 noted that sharing the assessment results with students positively influenced their motivation to perform better in the next project. Moreover, P2 emphasized that assessment was embedded throughout every stage of PjBL, utilizing a specialized rubric designed specifically for formative purposes.

In both cases, assessment was not viewed as an endpoint but a continuous, integrated process that actively shaped students' capacity to regulate their learning. While P1 adopted a reflective and process-based approach and P2 employed a structured monitoring system, both illustrated different yet complementary ways of evaluating SRL among English learners in a PjBL context.

4.4. Challenges in Implementing PjBL to Promote SRL

The two participants shared specific challenges they encountered in implementing PjBL to foster SRL, along with the strategies they employed to address these issues. One of the experienced teacher's key classroom challenges involved student conflicts and varying cognitive competencies within groups. A recurring difficulty arose when students who had existing personal conflicts were placed together, which sometimes led them to request a change of groups. As P1 explained, "Sometimes they don't cooperate because they are in one group with someone that they have a conflict with." Resolving such interpersonal issues was not always easy, yet the participant emphasized professionalism, reminding students to put aside personal matters and focus on completing the project. Another challenge is related to group dynamics and differences in cognitive ability. In mixed-ability groups, students with lower competencies often struggled to keep up, while high-performing students tended to dominate. As P1 noted, "Different cognitive capacities become one of the challenges in performing a group project."

In order to address this challenge, the teacher combined students of different cognitive levels and assigned them complementary roles within the group. Academically strong students were given the responsibility of guiding and supporting their peers, with the expectation that doing so would test and deepen their own understanding. At the same time, students with lower capabilities were encouraged to adopt a humble, open attitude toward learning from their peers. Through this arrangement, P1 observed that the stronger students became more modest and cooperative, while those with initially weaker skills showed significant improvements in their understanding. For P2, the most prominent challenge in implementing PjBL lay in student absenteeism. P2 described it as a big challenge when students did not attend class, disrupting the group's workflow. To address this, P2 adapted with flexibility by giving students extra time to complete the project.

Moreover, group management was another recurring concern for P2, especially in ensuring equal participation. P2 mitigated this by assigning specific responsibilities within each group. As she explained, "I'll ask them how far their project has been done, and then I'll ask who the person in charge is." This practice helped maintain accountability. Additionally, P2 intentionally formed groups by mixing high-performing and average students so they could support one another. Through peer interaction and communication, students were encouraged to motivate themselves, and those who initially showed low motivation gradually adapted to the group learning environment. Furthermore, assigning specific roles, such as designating one student to oversee subtopics within the project, reinforced autonomy and ensured a clear division of labor within the group.

Therefore, while P1 and P2 faced common challenges such as conflict, unequal ability levels, and attendance issues, both teachers emphasized adaptability, collaboration, and emotional intelligence as key strategies. Their experiences suggested that the successful implementation of PjBL to support SRL involved not only instructional planning but also the active facilitation of student relationships, roles, and responsibilities.

5. Discussion

This study explored the perspectives of both beginner and experienced teachers on Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Self-Regulated Learning (SRL), their classroom practices, and the challenges they encountered. The results show that while both teachers share a common understanding of PjBL and SRL, their emphases differ. The beginner teacher views PjBL as a strategy in which students learn by completing real-life projects to achieve concrete grades, whereas the experienced teacher explains PjBL as a student-centered approach that enhances both understanding and soft skills, such as time management, discipline, creativity, and independent learning. In essence, both teachers highlight similar processes but differ in their focus: the beginner emphasizes grades, while the experienced teacher emphasizes soft skill development. These views are complementary and align with Stoller's (2012) definition of PjBL as a constructivist approach requiring students to actively participate in real-world problem-solving, thereby enhancing academic performance and personal growth.

Similarly, both teachers expressed their understanding of SRL. The experienced teacher defined SRL as students taking responsibility for their own learning by being aware, motivated, and independent. Meanwhile, the beginner teacher described SRL as a skill that emerges during the learning process, emphasizing motivation, self-efficacy, behavior, and metacognition. These perspectives are consistent with Zimmerman's (1986) theory that SRL involves students setting goals, monitoring progress, and reflecting on outcomes to gain independence in learning.

Building on these definitions, both teachers agreed that implementing PjBL positively influences SRL skills, particularly motivation, metacognition, behavior, and self-efficacy. This observation supports the findings of Zarouk et al. (2020), who reported that flipped PjBL enhances both cognitive and metacognitive functioning, and of Cao (2024), who identified motivation, metacognition, and behavior as SRL skills that improved in PjBL settings. However, Cao also noted that metacognitive skills may not improve significantly, with only motivation and behavior showing strong enhancement. This variation can be explained by contextual factors such as the learning environment (Tiejun et al., 2023), curriculum activities (Asadzandi et al., 2022), and personal attributes (Jumari et al., 2022). The present findings confirm that improvements in metacognition are not universal but depend on context, making variations across settings plausible.

An additional insight from the experienced teacher is the reciprocal relationship between PjBL and SRL. According to him, PjBL facilitates the growth of SRL skills, while SRL skills strengthen the success of PjBL. This aligns with Zimmerman's (2000) model of SRL phases like forethought, performance, and self-reflection, which correspond with the stages of PjBL. Together, these findings reinforce the idea that PjBL and SRL mutually support each other in a continuous cycle.

The teachers also shared concrete examples of PjBL implementation, such as business plans, TikTok vlogs, concert planning, advertisements, and cooking projects. These activities were designed to be relevant to real-life situations, reflecting John Dewey's philosophy of "learning by doing". The approach also resonates with the constructivist ideas of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner. Both teachers used individual and group projects, each with unique benefits. Individual projects strengthened personal initiative, self-motivation, self-efficacy, metacognition, and responsibility, while group projects built collaboration, empathy, and leadership. These findings are consistent with Simbolon (2016), who argued that integrating individual and group tasks fosters both independent and collective learning outcomes. However, Lin et al. (2021) cautioned that PjBL may sometimes lack real-world relevance, emphasizing the need for careful alignment. Teachers' roles as facilitators, guides, and evaluators, as described by Subiyantoro (2023), were also evident, as they supported students in selecting, developing, and completing projects.

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In terms of assessment, the beginner teacher relied mainly on formative assessment, while the experienced teacher used both formative and summative approaches. Both teachers used formative assessment to monitor SRL development throughout project stages, which they found effective for encouraging metacognitive reflection. This finding is consistent with Chanpet et al. (2020), who highlighted the value of continuous feedback in PjBL, and Vrioni et al. (2019), who emphasized the role of rubrics in ensuring alignment between outcomes and project goals. Summative assessments, such as quizzes and follow-up individual tasks, were used by the experienced teacher to evaluate learning outcomes and identify areas for improvement, and this is reflected in the study of Vijayalakshmi et al. (2022), and even the peer assessment, it is also reported by the experienced teacher, encouraged motivation and critical thinking, and this is consistent with the study of Badea and Popescu (2020).

Despite these benefits, challenges were also reported. Both teachers noted that students' varying cognitive abilities created difficulties, with weaker students struggling and stronger students dominating. To address this, they grouped high-performing students with average students to promote support and adaptability, confirming Badache's (2011) findings that mixed groups create supportive environments for sharing and active engagement. However, this solution also created new problems, such as group conflicts and attendance issues. Teachers attempted to resolve these through conventional strategies such as encouraging professionalism and providing extra time, though these were limited in effectiveness. Other researchers, including Hussein (2021) and Konrad et al. (2020), argue that structured project management and improved communication are stronger solutions to prevent or resolve such challenges.

Thus, both beginner and experienced teachers demonstrated positive perspectives on the role of PjBL in developing SRL among English learners. PjBL was shown to support motivation, self-efficacy, metacognition, time management, self-control, and self-reflection. In turn, SRL skills contributed to the successful implementation of PjBL. Together, these findings highlight the complementary relationship between PjBL and SRL. More importantly, this study adds nuance by showing that while PjBL consistently supports motivation and behavior, improvements in metacognition depend heavily on the educational context. This is the study's unique contribution, offering insights into how PjBL can be tailored to strengthen SRL skills while addressing classroom challenges.

6. Conclusion

Throughout the project, both experienced and novice teachers encountered unique findings, ranging from personal interests to group dynamics, on how students regulate themselves to perform better during learning. The study revealed that teachers hold positive perspectives on the role of PjBL in fostering English learners' SRL skills. Starting from factual understanding, precise execution in the implementation phase, the use of relevant assessments and feedback, and awareness of manageable challenges collectively lead to these positive perceptions. As PjBL requires students to independently plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning processes, making the activation of SRL skills crucial for meaningful engagement. PjBL benefits SRL, and a high level of SRL contributes significantly to the effectiveness of the English teaching and learning process. They reported that PjBL enhances student motivation, metacognition, behavior, self-efficacy, and engagement. To sustain this engagement, teachers employed specific strategies such as providing ideas and inspiration to help students set goals, reflect on their progress, and use checklists to stay organized. As part of the process, students were instructed to create business plans, TikTok vlogs, concert planning materials, advertisements, and cooking projects in the context of procedural texts, real-life projects that make learning more practical and foster independence. Despite its benefits, implementing PjBL also posed certain challenges. Students' varying levels of cognitive ability, interpersonal conflict, and absenteeism disrupt the workflow of the project. To address these issues, teachers intentionally grouped students with varying cognitive abilities, fostering peer support and collaborative problem-solving. This balanced collaboration not only supported task completion but also helped nurture intrinsic motivation among students. Instructing students to maintain professionalism and providing additional time also constitute part of the solution to solve the existing challenges.

Both formative and summative assessments were employed to monitor progress during the project. Formative assessment was employed during the learning process to evaluate project development. Summative assessment was employed at the end of the learning process to measure the final product and the effectiveness of the PjBL. Both assessments have benefits for metacognition ability by allowing students to recognize their strengths that should be maintained and weaknesses that should be improved. Students were also assigned to give comments and suggestions as part of the reflection process. This process required students to be learners and evaluators at the same time, and it successfully enhanced engagement, improved knowledge and critical thinking, and nurtured motivation. This research definitely affirms that PjBL is perceived by in-service English teachers as a valuable strategy for activating and enhancing English learners' SRL skills.

7. Limitations of the Study

The limitation of the study primarily lies in its small sample size, which consisted of only two in-service English teachers from a single private educational foundation. Although their perspectives provided meaningful comparative insights, the small number of participants restricts the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, the results of the research should be interpreted with caution because they may not fully reflect the broader population of English teachers that implement PjBL to support the activation of students' SRL skills.

8. Suggestion

The findings of the research highlighted the need for ongoing teacher support and professional development to strengthen SRL integration in an ELT context through PjBL. Teacher practices should focus not only on procedural aspects of project design but also on strategies for elevating students' motivation, metacognition, and self-efficacy. Such initiatives will reinforce the implementation of PjBL as a vehicle to cultivate students' autonomy and long-life learning skills in an ELT arrangement. Additionally, future research may explore how these perspectives translate into measurable changes in the learning process across different educational levels and subject areas.

Declarations

Author Contributions. L.I.: Conceptualization, design, and initial drafting of the manuscript. A.A.: Critical revision of content and refinement of language. J.R.O.P.: Interpretation of findings and co-drafting of the manuscript. R.R.: Editing of APA-style citations and references. S.F.: Preparation of discussion and conclusion. Y.S.: Data collection. R.H.: Preparation of abstract and keywords. S.S.: Data analysis and revise the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the published version of the article.

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Ethical Approval. The authors state that all respondents agreed to participate voluntarily in the low-risk research. Their identities were anonymized for ethical purposes. Therefore, ethical approval was not required.

Data Availability Statement. The data used in this research were sourced from English teachers and were confidential.

Generative AI Usage. During the preparation of this work, generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and SCISPACE were employed. ChatGPT was used to ensure clarity, readability, and quality of writing.

Meanwhile, SCISPACE was utilized to gain more related literature. The authors declare that they reviewed and edited the final output as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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