



The EFL Students' Attitudes Towards Using Project-Based Learning Strategy in Developing their Writing Skill at the English Department – Faculty of Education - Sana'a University

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Keywords

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|------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. EFL Students | 2. Attitude |
| 3. Project-Based Learning Strategy | 4. Writing Skill |
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Abstract:

This study aims to explore EFL students' attitudes towards Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a teaching method to develop writing skills. To achieve this goal, a study sample of 40 second-level EFL students at the Faculty of Education at Sana'a University were randomly selected after taking PBL writing classes for an entire semester. A descriptive quantitative approach was employed to analyze the data that were collected using a close-ended questionnaire. The responses were analyzed via the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), utilizing such descriptive statistics as means, standard deviation, and relative weight of interpretation. The findings revealed that students held highly positive attitudes towards the use of project-based learning as a method for developing writing skills. The study recommends further investigation into the effectiveness of this learning style in improving EFL students' other language skills as well as across various colleges.

اتجاهات طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية نحو استخدام استراتيجية التعلم القائم على المشروعات في تنمية مهارات الكتابة في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية – كلية التربية – جامعة صنعاء

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الكلمات المفتاحية

1. طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية
2. الاتجاهات
3. استراتيجية التعلم القائم على المشروعات
4. مهارة الكتابة

الملخص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تقصي اتجاهات طلبة قسم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بشأن استخدام استراتيجية التعلم القائم على المشروعات كاستراتيجية لتنمية مهارة الكتابة لديهم. تم اتباع المنهج الوصفي الكمي لتحقيق هذا الهدف. شارك في البحث بعد ترم كامل من تطبيق البرنامج عينة عشوائية مكونة من 40 طالب في المستوى الثاني بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية، جامعة صنعاء. تم جمع البيانات باستخدام استبيان مغلق. ثم تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام برنامج الحزمة الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS)، وذلك باستخدام الإحصاءات الوصفية مثل المتوسطات والانحراف المعياري والوزن النسبي لتفسير النتائج. أظهرت النتائج أن لدى الطلبة اتجاهات إيجابية نحو استخدام استراتيجية التعلم القائم على المشروعات في تطوير مهارات الكتابة لديهم. وبناءً على تلك النتائج، توصي الدراسة بمزيد من البحث حول فعالية التعلم القائم على المشاريع في تحسين مهارات اللغة الأخرى لدى طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، بالإضافة إلى تطبيق هذه الاستراتيجية في كليات وجامعات مختلفة.

Introduction:

Approaches to education have undergone significant transformation in recent years, as teachers are increasingly concentrating on meeting students' learning needs and interests rather than adopting standard, one-size-fits-all lessons. Giving students greater autonomy, maintaining their interest, and assisting them in seeing the relevance of what they are learning to the outside world are the objectives of most modern educational approaches. One of the teaching approaches that help realize such objectives is Project-Based Learning (PBL), a teaching method that is particularly popular in language classes.

PBL, as opposed to traditional teacher-led approaches where students primarily listen and take notes, places students in charge of the learning process and offers them the opportunity to work together on worthwhile initiatives. In addition to encouraging students to explore important issues, exercise their creativity, and aid in their learning of the assigned material, PBL helps students develop essential abilities, such as communication skills, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking (Bell, 2010; Larmer et al., 2015).

Anyone who has tried learning how to write in English as a second language would know how quite challenging a task it is to undertake. It is not just a question of learning vocabulary items and grammatical rules; students also need to learn how to organize and communicate their thoughts in a coherent manner. Since EFL students learn the language in a far-from-real-life environment, traditional writing lessons frequently fall short; students learn by rote lexis and grammatical rules and, when taking examinations, they fill in blanks; they seldom ever get to apply English in meaningful ways. This is altered by PBL, where the process of learning writing becomes much more interesting and less daunting by incorporating writing assignments into authentic, meaningful tasks (Stoller, 2006; Beckett & Slater, 2005).

PBL is fundamentally about carrying out projects to address difficult, real-world issues. Thomas (2000) asserts that it all decreases to delving deeply into important issues and completing meticulously planned assignments. Students get the opportunity to collaborate, make decisions, consider what they have learned, and present their work to others. Because learners naturally integrate speaking, writing, listening, and reading, these elements are particularly beneficial for language learners (Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2006).

PBL may particularly be effective when it comes to writing in English. In addition to learning proper grammar, students also develop their creativity, organizational skills, and communication clarity, and they also become more conscious of cultural differences. PBL gives writing a purpose by having students produce content like newsletters, blogs, or tales, whereas traditional classes frequently concentrate only on the technical aspects of writing. In PBL classes, students learn to think more critically and thoroughly by drafting and revising their own work, giving and receiving feedback, and being exposed to many forms of writing (Beckett & Miller, 2006).

According to Fernández Dobao (2012), PBL is typically carried out in groups, which is another significant benefit. Students collaborate to write, exchange ideas, and help one another develop their writing skills. For people who are anxious about writing in a foreign language, this teaching method helps relieve some of the writing-induced stress and makes the process less frightening. Students are typically more engaged and motivated when they are aware that their work will be seen by a real audience.

Students' perceptions of PBL are quite important. How much students participate and what they gain from PBL can be greatly influenced by their attitudes (Dörnyei, 2001; Ushioda, 2013). Positive PBL experiences frequently result in students becoming more organized, increasing their vocabulary, improving their correctness, and developing confidence in their writing. Additionally,

students recognize the importance of their work, which motivate them to assume greater responsibility and engage in creative self-expression. Students may grow dissatisfied, though, if projects are poorly organized, or if there is misunderstanding, disagreement, or a lack of support. This highlights how crucial it is for teachers to carefully design projects and provide direction as needed.

To Thomas (2000) and Larmer et al. (2015), it is also true that PBL has its share of difficulties. Time-consuming projects can be difficult to oversee in a busy classroom. It's not always easy to evaluate the process and the outcome, and group projects can occasionally be challenging if not everyone contributes equally. Additionally, teachers must assume new responsibilities as facilitators, which frequently requires them to acquire new abilities. Despite these setbacks, many educators discover that the advantages—such as better writing and more student engagement—make the work worthwhile when they receive clear instructions and frequent feedback.

Ultimately, PBL provides an engaging and adaptable teaching method that truly meets the demands of language learners today. PBL increases students' confidence and drive while also assisting them in becoming better writers by assigning them authentic, group writing assignments. Therefore, the present study attempts to examine EFL students' perceptions of using PBL to enhance their writing skills, highlighting its overall impact.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the clear importance of writing skill, many EFL students, including sophomores in English Department at Faculty of Education at Sana'a University, still struggle with writing, the language skill that stands out as the most challenging to master. Based on the researchers' experience as lecturers at the English Department, Faculty of Education, Sana'a University, it was observed that second-year students' writing skills are poor, and the students themselves have low motivation towards current teaching methods. The results

of writing exams reveal writing deficiencies in terms of grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, organization, and other key writing components. This highlights a pressing need for innovative teaching strategies that can engage students more effectively. Furthermore, integrating practical and collaborative elements into the curriculum may foster a more dynamic learning environment. The aim of the study is to find out what the students say and think about PBL as a strategy for developing writing skills (Solomon, 2003)

Literature Review

The effectiveness of PBL in teaching English as foreign language (TEFL) – especially in relation to the development of writing skills, a challenge many EFL students face – has attracted increasing attention from both researchers and educators.

PBL is a student-centered approach where learners take the lead in their education by collaborating on real-world projects over extended periods of time. As defined by Thomas (2000), PBL incorporates complex tasks, investigative activities, and problem-solving techniques. It encourages authentic language use and integrates all language skills, with a particular focus on writing activities like drafting, editing, and reflecting. Previous research (e.g. Fragoulis, 2009) has shown that PBL positively impacts EFL writing, particularly by boosting motivation through meaningful, real-world projects.

Beyond improving writing skills, PBL promotes collaboration and feedback sharing (Stoller, 2006), as well as critical thinking and creativity (Beckett, 2002). Through authentic tasks tied to real-life situations, writing becomes more relevant and engaging for students (Guo, 2006).

However, several factors can influence how students perceive and adapt to PBL, including their prior learning experiences, cultural background, and language proficiency levels (Simpson, 2011; Almulla, 2020). While many students appreciate the independence and creativity that PBL offers, others—especially

those with limited learning experience—may struggle with the open-ended nature of projects. Implementing PBL also comes with challenges, such as time constraints (Beckett & Slater, 2005), the need for well-trained teachers (Moss & Van Duzer, 1998), supporting students unaccustomed to self-directed learning (Thomas, 2000), and evaluating both the process and final product of writing.

Despite these obstacles, research consistently highlights PBL's benefits in developing writing skills. Frequent and purposeful writing helps students improve their accuracy and fluency (Hedge, 2005). By focusing on the key stages of writing—planning, drafting, revising, and editing—PBL enhances students' understanding of effective writing. Additionally, working on meaningful projects builds confidence, which positively impacts other areas of language learning (Fragoulis, 2009).

Attitudes also play a crucial role in the success of PBL. As defined by Allport (1935), an attitude is a mental and emotional state shaped by experience, which influences how individuals respond to situations or tasks. Previous studies (see e.g. Abebaw et al., 2025; Nurul et al., 2025; Taufik et al., 2024) have confirmed that PBL not only improves EFL writing skills but also fosters active student participation. Other studies, such as those by Fadhilah et al. (2023), Sari et al. (2023), and Zubaidi et al. (2023), have shown that students generally hold positive attitudes toward PBL, further highlighting its effectiveness.

In summary, PBL is widely recognized as an effective method for improving EFL writing. Its authentic, interactive, and engaging nature makes it well-received by students. However, to maximize its benefits, challenges like time limits, teacher training, and student readiness must be addressed. Overall, PBL is a transformative approach that not only enhances writing skills but also fosters critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong learning.

Methodology

The current study adopted a quantitative-descriptive research method to uncover EFL Yemeni university students' attitudes towards project-based learning (PBL) and its effectiveness in developing their writing skill. To achieve this, an attitude questionnaire was administered to an experimental group of 40 students selected randomly from level two EFL learners at English Department, Faculty of Education, Sana'a University. The participants, who were nearly homogeneous in terms of educational and cultural backgrounds, responded to a questionnaire comprising 40 statements. Each statement was rated using a five-point Likert scale, allowing the researchers to assess the students' perceptions in a nuanced manner. The questionnaire was closed after all responses were collected, ensuring that data reflected the authentic attitudes of the study population regarding the use of PBL as a strategy for enhancing writing skill.

Question of the Study

1. What are the attitudes of EFL Yemeni University students towards using project-based learning strategy in improving their writing skill?

Limitations of the Study

The study is subject to several limitations. Topically, it focused on investigating students' attitudes towards the project-based learning strategy in developing EFL university students' writing skills, specifically addressing content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. In terms of human-related limitation, the study was restricted to second-level EFL university students in the Department of English at the Faculty of Education, Sana'a University. Spatially, the research was confined to the Department of English within the same faculty and institution. Regarding time limitation, the study was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2024/2025.

Results of the Study

The results presented in Table (1) below underscore the strong positive attitudes among students regarding the use of the PBL strategy

in improving their English writing skills. The overall average of students' responses was notably high ($M=4.35$, $SD=0.21$), reflecting a very strong consensus on the value of this approach. Nearly all scale items received high average scores, indicating that students generally hold very favorable attitudes towards the PBL strategy.

A closer examination of the individual scale items further highlights these positive attitudes. Students' responses ranged from "agree" to "strongly agree," with item averages falling

between ($M=4.10$) and ($M=4.75$). The highest-rated item was "The guidance of my teacher during the use of project-based learning functions was valuable," which achieved an impressive average ($M=4.75$, $RW=95\%$). This result underscores the crucial role played by the teachers in guiding and supporting students throughout the learning process.

Items related to collaboration and enjoyment also received high ratings. Both "Project-based learning strategy fostered a sense of collaboration among students that led to the

No.	Statements	Rank	Mean	S. D.	Agr. Deg.
Teacher Guidance & Support		Rank	Mean	S. D.	Agr. Deg.
40	The guidance of my teacher during the use of project-based learning tasks are valuable.	1	4.75	0.43	Strongly agree
10	The teacher's support when using project-based learning improves my English writing abilities.	6	4.47	0.50	Strongly agree
21	The feedback of my teacher during the use of project-based learning tasks are valuable.	14	4.40	0.49	Strongly agree
Collaborative & Social Learning		Rank	Mean	S. D.	Agr. Deg.
27	Project-based learning strategy foster a sense of collaboration among students that lead to the improvement of their English writing skills.	2	4.57	0.50	Strongly agree
5	I prefer collaborative work with peers to enhance my writing skills through the project-based learning.	5	4.47	0.50	Strongly agree
Personal Learning Experience & Skill Development		Rank	Mean	S. D.	Agr. Deg.
38	Project-based learning activities are enjoyable for the development of my English writing skills.	3	4.57	0.50	Strongly agree
1	Project-based learning activities are engaging for the development of my English writing skills.	4	4.47	0.50	Strongly agree
19	I enjoy the flexibility in expressing my ideas through writing during project-based learning.	7	4.47	0.50	Strongly agree
23	I feel empowered to take ownership of my learning and progress in English writing through project-based activities.	8	4.47	0.50	Strongly agree
32	Project-based learning strategy cultivate a growth mindset in me as I strive to improve my English writing abilities through active engagement in projects.	9	4.47	0.50	Strongly agree
2	Project-based learning activities are an effective method for enhancing my English writing skills.	10	4.42	0.50	Strongly agree
28	Project-based learning strategy is a more personalized approach to the development of English writing proficiency.	11	4.42	0.54	Strongly agree
31	I appreciate the emphasis on self-assessment in project-based learning enhanced my English writing competencies.	12	4.42	0.54	Strongly agree
13	I appreciate the opportunities of self-directed learning that project-based learning provided for improving my writing skills.	13	4.40	0.49	Strongly agree
3	I actively participate in the writing tasks and class activities to improve my English writing skills.	15	4.37	0.58	Strongly agree

No.	Statements	Rank	Mean	S. D.	Agr. Deg.
6	I always try to excel in my writing tasks when using project-based learning as a strategy.	16	4.37	0.54	Strongly agree
11	I express my ideas through writing during project-based learning freely.	17	4.37	0.77	Strongly agree
17	I am always eager to explore new writing topics and themes through project-based learning to enhance my English writing proficiency.	18	4.35	0.53	Strongly agree
26	I enjoy the hands-on approach of project-based learning that allowed me to experiment with different writing styles and genres in English.	19	4.35	0.48	Strongly agree
33	Project-based learning is a catalyst for continuous improvement and lifelong learning.	20	4.35	0.62	Strongly agree
4	I become more confident of my writing due to the use of the project-based learning activities.	21	4.32	0.47	Strongly agree
8	Project-based learning activities help me to better understand English writing concepts.	22	4.32	0.72	Strongly agree
16	Project-based learning foster a deeper understanding of English writing concepts compared to traditional classroom instruction.	23	4.32	0.79	Strongly agree
22	Project-based learning is a holistic approach when teaching English writing that integrates various language skills and knowledge.	24	4.32	0.57	Strongly agree
25	Project-based learning strategy is seen by me as a platform for exploring diverse perspectives through English writing projects.	25	4.32	0.61	Strongly agree
36	Project-based learning strategy help me to develop valuable transferable skills for my future academic and professional endeavors.	26	4.32	0.52	Strongly agree
15	Project-based learning activities help me to better apply English writing concepts.	27	4.30	0.51	Strongly agree
20	Project-based learning tasks are more authentic in developing my English writing skills.	28	4.30	0.46	Strongly agree
30	I value the interdisciplinary connections made through project-based learning that enrich my understanding of English writing in various contexts.	29	4.30	0.51	Strongly agree
34	The opportunity of exploring my interests and passions through English writing projects within the framework of project-based learning, make the learning process more attractive and meaningful.	30	4.30	0.51	Strongly agree
7	I am satisfied with the outcomes of using project-based learning on the development of my English writing skills.	31	4.27	0.45	Strongly agree
37	Project-based learning strategy is a practical method for applying English writing skills in real-life situations.	32	4.25	0.49	Strongly agree
39	English writing skills through project-based learning tasks are real.	33	4.25	0.49	Strongly agree
12	English writing skills through project-based learning tasks are valuable.	34	4.22	0.47	Strongly agree
29	I recognize the relevance of project-based learning in preparing me for real-world communication scenarios that require effective English writing skills.	35	4.22	0.57	Strongly agree
9	Project-based learning activities enhance my creativity in English writing.	36	4.20	0.46	Strongly agree
14	I am motivated to use various writing styles depending on project-based learning activities.	37	4.20	0.72	Strongly agree

No.	Statements	Rank	Mean	S. D.	Agr. Deg.
35	Project-based learning is seen by me as a platform for enhancing cultural awareness through English writing projects.	38	4.17	0.50	Agree
24	Project-based learning strategy is a practical method for applying English writing skills in real-life situations.	39	4.15	0.42	Agree
18	Project-based learning activities enhance my critical thinking skills in English writing.	40	4.10	0.44	Agree
Overall			4.35	0.21	Strongly agree

improvement of their English writing skills” and “Project-based learning activities were enjoyable for the development of my English writing skills” got an average of (M=4.57). These findings highlight the significant impact of collaborative and enjoyable learning environments in enhancing students’ writing abilities. Additionally, the statement “Project-based learning activities were engaging for the development of my English writing skills” was also highly rated (M=4.47) indicating that students found the activities within this strategy to be particularly appealing and motivating.

Although all items were rated positively, the lowest-rated item was “Project-based learning activities enhanced my critical thinking skills in English writing,” with an average of (M=4.10). While this still represents a high level of agreement, it suggests that some students may have perceived less development in their critical thinking skills compared to other areas of improvement. Similarly, the item “Project-based learning strategy was a practical method for applying English writing skills in real-life situations” received a relatively high rating (M=4.15), though it was lower compared to other items, indicating a possible need for even stronger connections between classroom projects and practical, real-world applications.

The results of the following studies are consistent with those of the present study and have shown that PBL positively influences students’ attitudes, perceptions, and abilities in writing courses. According to Fadhilah et al. (2023), students valued the teacher’s support and guidance during PBL activities, which led to favorable views of this teaching method. In

the same vein, Sari et al. (2023) found that students considered PBL to be helpful and felt it had a positive effect on their essay writing. Zubaidi et al. (2023) discovered that students not only responded positively to project-based learning but also enjoyed using Wattpad as a tool to support their writing projects. Abidah et al. (2022) reported that PBL was effective in improving the writing skills, motivation, and creativity of distance learners, especially when they created comic strips. Additionally, Syarifah and Emiliasari (2019) observed that students became more interested and creative when engaging in narrative writing, designing, and illustrating their stories through PBL. Gede et al. (2014) also found that university students had a positive response to the use of project-based learning in their writing classes. In summary, these studies collectively highlight that project-based learning is effective in enhancing students’ motivation, creativity, and overall attitudes toward writing across different educational settings.

Overall, these results illustrate the overwhelmingly positive attitudes of project-based learning among students, emphasizing its effectiveness in creating an engaging, supportive, and collaborative environment that fosters the development of English writing skills. The results also highlight the importance of teachers' guidance and suggest areas for further enhancement, such as increasing the focus on critical thinking and practical real-life application within project-based learning activities.

Major Findings

The findings of this study highlight the significant and multidimensional benefits of

implementing the project-based learning strategy in developing English writing skills among students. Central to the success of this method was the critical role of the researcher, whose guidance and feedback during the project-based tasks were highly valued by students. Items related to the teacher's support and feedback received some of the highest ratings, underscoring that effective guidance is essential for maximizing the benefits of this strategy and ensuring students feel supported throughout their learning journey.

Project-based learning was also found to be highly effective in promoting collaboration and interaction among students. The results showed that items addressing teamwork and peer interaction received very high ratings. This indicates that the strategy fostered a supportive and motivating environment, where students worked together, shared ideas, and encouraged one another, all of which contributed to the enhancement of their writing skills.

Moreover, the impact of project-based learning on writing skill development was clear and substantial. Students reported that the strategy was effective in improving various aspects of their English writing, including content, organization, language use, vocabulary, and mechanics. High average scores for items related to writing skill development reflect the students' satisfaction with the engaging and purposeful activities, demonstrating the strategy's success in achieving its educational objectives.

Careful planning and preparation played a vital role in the effective implementation of project-based learning. The researcher meticulously designed activities tailored to students' needs, ensuring that tasks were relevant and conducive to skill development. Clear instructions were provided, and students were adequately prepared for collaborative work, which enhanced both their communication and critical writing abilities. The high rating for guidance (average of 4.75) reflects the students' appreciation for clear and effective instruction.

The inclusion of diverse and motivational activities further contributed to the gradual and sustainable improvement in students' writing skills. Students reported finding the activities both enjoyable and beneficial, with an average rating of (4.57) and (91.4%) strongly agreeing that collaboration was enhanced through these activities. Such positive engagement fostered a sense of belonging and teamwork, which is essential for effective language learning.

Continuous assessment and follow-up were integral to the strategy's success. The researcher employed a variety of assessment tools, including continuous teacher feedback, self-assessment, and peer assessment. Students acknowledged the value of this feedback, with high ratings for its contribution to their progress (average of 4.40), and for the researcher's ongoing support (average of 4.47). These ongoing assessments allowed for timely intervention and support, further driving improvement in students' writing abilities.

The overall average of students' responses was 4.35, indicating a strong consensus on the strategy's effectiveness. Students expressed high levels of satisfaction with their progress, reflecting the successful application of project-based learning in this context.

In summary, these findings demonstrate that the project-based learning strategy was widely accepted and appreciated by students. Not only did it improve their English writing skills; it also enhanced their ability to collaborate and interact within a dynamic learning environment. The results underscore the importance of adopting project-based learning more broadly in educational curricula due to its tangible, positive impact on student achievement and language development.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study concludes that the implementation of the project-based learning strategy brings substantial educational benefits to students learning English as a Foreign Language. One of the most significant findings is the

development of positive student attitudes toward this strategy. Students consistently described project-based learning as motivating and enjoyable, and they recognized its positive impact on the development of their writing skills. The research also revealed a strong correlation between the improvement of writing abilities and the fostering of positive attitudes towards learning, emphasizing how this strategy can transform students' overall educational experience.

A distinctive feature of this study is its exploration of the relationship between writing skill development and attitudes toward project-based learning—an area that was not examined previously in the Yemeni context. This unique focus strengthens the relevance of the findings and provides valuable insight for educators aiming to improve language instruction in similar settings.

The study confirms that project-based learning not only enhances linguistic competence but also stimulates students' motivation and self-confidence. As a result of applying this teaching method, students demonstrated greater ability to express themselves clearly and accurately when writing in English. Moreover, the strategy cultivated an interactive classroom environment characterized by teamwork, discussion, and critical thinking, further supporting students' academic and personal growth.

Based on these important findings, several recommendations are proposed to maximize the benefits of project-based learning in English language education. First, it is advised that the use of project-based learning strategies be generalized and widely adopted in the teaching of writing skills to EFL students, given its proven effectiveness in improving both the quality of writing and students' attitudes toward learning. Second, comprehensive teacher training programs should be developed to equip educators with the skills necessary for implementing project-

based learning effectively, ensuring that students make the best of this approach.

Additionally, English language curricula should be enriched with interactive activities and practical projects that address a range of writing skills, including content development, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Such integration will foster comprehensive written expression and practical language use. To further support student development, educators should promote a collaborative and interactive learning environment by encouraging group work on writing projects, thus enhancing both linguistic and social skills.

Finally, the creation and adoption of modern assessment tools are essential. These tools should align with the principles of project-based learning, focusing on students' actual writing performance and their ability to utilize acquired skills in realistic contexts, rather than relying solely on traditional test-based assessments.

In summary, the study demonstrates the powerful impact of project-based learning on both the development of writing skills and the cultivation of positive attitudes in EFL students. By adopting the recommended strategies, educational institutions can further enhance the quality and effectiveness of English language instruction, better preparing students for academic and real-world success.

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