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SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

PROJECT-BASED TEACHING IN IMPROVING THE PROFICIENCY AND ACTIVE INDEPENDENT LEARNING FOR THE TOEIC LEVEL 3 STUDENTS

(Áp dụng phương pháp dạy theo dự án giúp tăng cường tính chủ động và khả năng học ngoại ngữ cho sinh viên học TOEIC level 3.)

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ABSTRACT

The present study employed Project-based learning (PBL) which is an instructional strategy that allows students the autonomy to learn, explore and investigate throughout the learning process by means of projects.

In addition, the study examined whether PBL could improve the TOEIC level 3 students' English language proficiency, their active and independent learning. This study utilized both quantitative and qualitative instruments to collect data from participants. The study was conducted in an EFL classroom at Haiphong Private University (HPU). Data were collected from 36 students in the TOEIC level 3 class. The data was derived from quantitative instruments including TOEIC tests and the rich information was obtained from qualitative instruments including questionnaires. The research instruments were utilized for one semester. The results of the study showed that PBL had a statistically significant effect on the development of students' English language proficiency and their active and independent learning.

The major findings of the study were drawn out after the action research. Firstly, the data analysis of pre-action research identifies the reasons why the students' language proficiency and active independent learning is low, which originates from the learning activities and the teaching procedure. The inappropriateness of learning activities and teaching method for student' language proficiency and active independent learning causes low level of their interest, motivation, enthusiasm, attention, concentration and enjoyment in learning activities in English classes.

Secondly, the use of project - based learning can help teacher to create an active learning environment and increase students' participation in learning activities, which seems a big challenge for an English class. In order to do so, it is the teacher's job to prepare lesson plans carefully and equip themselves with the skill of monitoring and managing the English classes.

The last major finding shows that an English lesson with the use of project - based learning and careful preparation of the teachers can help students improve their language proficiency.

Although this study has attained some results in improving the TOEIC level 3 student's language proficiency and active independent learning at HPU, some limitations are inevitable.

Firstly, the study has been done with a rather small number of participants in a short time, so the generalizability of the results is limited. The study would be much more reliable if it were conducted in longer time.

Secondly, although the research used new technique with project - based to suit students' language proficiency and active independent learning as the solution to the problems in her class, the results achieved from action plan were not as the researcher' expectation. There were still some students who were not involved in classroom activities because they found these activities not interesting enough or not appropriate for their level. Not all students were on task all the given time. Therefore, if the teachers understand their students better and have more careful preparation to avoid getting confused about who is doing what, students will feel the tasks they get appropriate for them, so they can be confident to be on task

As no single research design is flawless, all-inclusive and complete, this study cannot cover everything in language proficiency and active independent learning. It is suggested that the above limitations be the challenging questions for any further study, which will find out more effective methods to overcome these shortcomings.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HPU: Haiphong Private University

PBL: Project- based learning

AR: Action research

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

AD: Advertisement

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The current study begins with this introductory chapter, which describes the background to the study and presents the aims and the research questions. It also discusses the scope of the study, the significance of the study and provides an overview of the thesis.

1.1 Background to the study

Haiphong Private University (HPU) has started teaching TOEIC as a compulsory subject for students since 2008. So, both teachers and students have to deal with a great number of difficulties for the change of the syllabus. Besides, the credit-based education is also applied in HPU and this creates a big challenge for teaching and learning. The aim of this type is classifying the knowledge of each subject into different learning units and students earn one credit upon their completion of one unit.

The fact shows the evidence that many of the students are really passive in their learning process. They seem to be used to listening and writing down what the teachers read aloud in the class. The great of time they spend on writing. Furthermore, students feel reluctant to get involved in the activities in the lessons even they understand and this requires a big change. On the other hand, the credit-based transference requires the flexible teaching syllabus with its objectives and contents as well as the self- study of students. Many students do not spend time self-studying so it is very difficult for them to pass the exams. Therefore their language proficiency is low and very few of them can communicate in English fluently.

Obviously, it is high time teacher chose another teaching method to solve the problem that their hours in the class with the students are decreased while the required basic knowledge must be ensured.

On the basis of those evidences, the author of the study has come up with the study on "**Project-based Teaching in Improving the Proficiency and Active Independent learning for the TOEIC level 3 students**"

1.2. Aims of the study

The aim of this thesis is applying a project-based learning for students to improve their language proficiency as well as active and independent learning in which a work of practical usage can be served as a source of inspiration and refreshment for EFL lessons. It is an attempt to generate a project-based task for students and exploit the topic as much as possible for their development.

Equally important, the thesis should be a thorough investigation into PBL and it should enable the author to confirm or disprove long lists of PBL benefits.

1.3. Research question

Our research questions for this study are as follow:

1. **To what extent does project-based learning impact students' language proficiency?**

2. **To what extent does the applicable technique help to improve students' active and independent learning?**

1.4. Scope of the study

The present study focused on improving the TOEIC level 3 students' language proficiency and active independent learning in HPU. The action research lasted over a period of 14 weeks. Because of limited knowledge, time and some other conditions, the researcher conducted an action plan with the application of project- based learning with the topic "Tourism" for the TOEIC level 3 students. Thus, the result of study are limited only to those students participating in this study and these findings may impact the generaliability to the larger population of all students.

1.5. Significance of the study

This study holds significance for several reasons. Initially, the study was undertaken to determine whether the applying project- based learning could have positive effect on students' language proficiency and active independent learning. Secondly, the project- based learning also helps students learn more through their cooperative learning and change students' attitudes toward learning English. Finally, the results of the study provides evidence and necessity to implement project- based method in learning and teaching English at HPU.

1.6. Organization of the study

This thesis consists of five chapters:

Chapter 1, **Introduction**, includes the background to the study. It also includes the aims of the study, the research questions, the scope of the study, the significance of the study . Next the organization of the study is also presented.

Chapter 2, **Literature review**, presents a review of related literature that provides the theoretical background of project- based learning, the active and independent learning.

Chapter 3, **Methodology**, focuses on the research method chosen for the study involves the subjects, data collection instruments and procedure of the study.

Chapter 4, Data analysis and Discussion, will be divided into five parts as follows: initial data, the action plan, data collected during experimental teaching and the evaluation of action research.

Chapter 5, **Conclusions and Recommendations** in teaching reading skills are made; some limitations and suggestions for further research are stated; The last are references, the appendices that include all the documents relating to the study.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of this chapter is to review the literature relevant to the issues under study. The literature review consists of two sections: section one deals with theoretical background of project- based learning, section two focuses on reviewing theoretical background of students' active and independent learning.

2.1 Project-based learning (PBL)

2.1.1 Definitions and Description of PBL

Solomon (2003) explained that PBL is a process of learning that students are responsible for in their own education. Students work collaboratively to solve problems that are "authentic, curriculum-based, and often interdisciplinary". Learners learn how to design their own learning process and decide what and where information can be collected. They analyze and synthesize the information then apply and present their new knowledge at the end. Throughout the process of learning, teachers act as managers and advisors.

Thus, PBL is a teaching method aimed at problem solving in a collaborative environment over an extended period of time. It is a hands-on experience which starts from driving questions or problems that create activities and leads to the meaningful products at the end.

Fried-Booth (2002) developed a definition of PBL as "student- centred and driven by the need to create an end-product". The author further explained that PBL is a means to create an end-product in a real-world environment with confidence and independence. Project work is driven by the intrinsic needs of students who develop their own tasks individually or in small groups. This approach creates links between real-world language and language in textbooks.

When learners see the language that can be used in their lives and is applicable to their tasks or needs, they can develop their language skills and communicative competence and gain confidence, co-operation, imagination, independence and self-discipline. Finally, they can communicate in the target language about their life, their culture and their world. Hilton-Jones (1988) mentioned that PBL is an appropriate approach that suits language classes with mixed abilities because it allows learners to work at their own pace and at their own level.

From the above definitions and explanations of PBL in second language and foreign language studies, the definition of PBL in this study is summarized as an in-depth learning focusing on

real-world problems and challenges that engage students who work as a team through meaningful activities resulting in an end product

It is evident that PBL is a possible means for enabling students to develop their language, content and communicative skills. They can use and integrate language and factual knowledge in their real lives while conducting and generating the project. This is opposite to traditional classrooms, where teachers transfer knowledge from textbooks to students.

2.1.2 Principal Features of PBL

Features of PBL include: (a) complex explorations over a period of time: (b) a student-centred learning activity whereby students plan complete and present the task; (c) challenging questions, problems or topics of student interest which become the centre of the project and the learning process; (d) the de-emphasis of teacher-directed activities; (e) frequent feedback from peers and facilitators, and an opportunity to share resources, ideas and expertise through the hole process in the classroom; (f) hands—on activities and the use of authentic resources and technologies: (g) a collaborative learning environment rather than a competitive one: (h) the use of a variety of skills such as social skills and management skills; (i) the use of effort in connecting ideas and acquiring new skills during different stages of projects; (j) the production of meaningful artifacts that can be shared with peers, teachers, and experts in a public presentation; and (k) assessment in both the process of working from the first stage to the last stage and the finished project (Stoller, 1997).

It is clear that PBL has several distinct characteristics which build upon the essence of authentic learning. Therefore, it is important to study how authentic learning facilitates a project based learning environment

2.1.3 Authentic learning.

Authentic learning allows students to experience relevant and real-world tasks. It makes their learning more meaningful by connecting prior knowledge to their current study. Herrington (2006) stated that students in authentic learning environment are 'engaged in motivating and challenging activities that require collaboration and support'. Students have real-life roles which are similar to the real world outside the class room and these necessitate teamwork, negotiation, and the use of problem-solving skills (Woo, Herrington, Agostinho, Reeves, 2007). The teacher acts as a facilitator to guide students to achieve their learning's goals by giving support and guidance throughout the learning process.

Authentic activities are one of the main features of PBL as students have an opportunity to connect to real world situations while completing their projects. (Markham et al., 2003) A PBL project allows students to engage in authentic situations and practices, for example, communication with people outside the classroom and using problem-solving, teamwork and critical thinking skills. They have the opportunity to use other than their textbooks, they need to search and investigate their project through the use of other resources .

As PBL engages students actively in the learning process and involves students in problem-solving skills, hands-on learning and self-directed learning, it is essential to understand the assessment methods which demonstrate the students' language performance, learning skills and self-confidence through PBL activities.

As learners are empowered in PBL and take full responsibility throughout the process of their learning, a better understanding of learner autonomy is gained which is an important characteristic of PBL.

2.1.4 Learner autonomy.

There are many aspects of learner autonomy such as humanistic language teaching, collaborative learning. experiential learning, and the learning-centred classroom (Little & Dam. 1998). Similar notions to learner autonomy are identified as independent lea lung, flexible learning and student-centred learning (Macaro, 1997). In this study, the term learner autonomy is used because it implies that learners are individuals (Little & Dam, 1998).

Many advantages are found in learner autonomy. Autonomy can enhance a process of lifelong learning (Council of Europe. as cited in Macaro. 1997). In addition, Little (2003) pointed out that there are three benefits of making learners autonomous. First, if learners attend to their learning, better learning is the result. Second, if learners have control over their own learning, they are motivated to complete their learning no matter how challenging it is. The final benefit involves second and foreign languages. Learning to communicate is a function of language practice: the more learners use language in a social context, the higher their spontaneous language proficiency develops. As they are autonomous, learners have the opportunity to choose the ways in which they develop their required skills. They can carry out their tasks, trying to complete them by accessing target language sources and resources that are not prepared by the teacher (Macaro, 1997).

Learner autonomy is promoted through project work. In PBL, students are allowed to select the project topic and to be involved in designing and planning their project and the process of learning with support from teachers (Markham et al., 2003). In other words, the authority is given to learners to control their learning from the beginning of the study to the end of the course. Stoller mentions that PBL classroom settings can narrow "the gap between traditional classrooms and more learner and learning-centred settings" (Stoller, 2006). When students have responsibility for their own learning. they are motivated and feel more competent and self-determined. Students are likely to gain interest and succeed in learning (Kohonen, 1992).

It can be concluded that students in PBL involved in the various project work stages (selecting and investigating topics, collecting data, interpreting and presenting data. assessing the project) will have enhanced connection with and self-control over their own learning. Therefore. PBL fosters learners to become autonomous and lifelong learners (Diffily, 2001).

2.1.5 Cooperative learning.

Cooperative learning is defined as "group members working together to accomplish shared goals (Gillies, 2007). To increase the awareness of one's own learning, students should reflect and share their learning experience with their peers. Cooperative learning can be a means to increase learner's awareness of learning (Kohonen, 1992). Besides, cooperative learning is one of the successful teaching strategies that promote higher achievement and greater productivity (Lyman & Foyle, 1988).

To create the most advantageous environment for the second language acquisition classroom, students should engage in meaningful communication so they can effectively complete a cooperative task (Deng. 2007). Gillies (2007) and Johnson (1994) listed five elements essential for successful cooperative learning.

First, there must be positive interdependence. Students share a common goal but that goal can only be achieved if all students complete the task that they have been given responsibility for. Students learn that they "sink or swim together". Second, there must be face- to - face promotive interaction. Students provide effective assistance to each other by exchanging resources, discussing, reasoning and sharing feedback to achieve the group's goals. Third, there must be individual accountability. Every student has his own responsibility with a fair share of the workload to contribute to the group. Fourth, there must be interpersonal and small-group skills. Students must be taught social skills to promote group achievement. These skills build trust and

effective communication, and enhance decision-making and conflict-management skills. Finally, there must be group processing. Students reflect on how well they are working or contributing to their goal and what aspects or steps should be changed or added. In this way, group processing allows students to maintain positive working relationships and have a sense of success and respect when collaboratively working with classmates to achieve their goal.

In conclusion, it is clear that cooperative learning promotes quality learning. Cooperative learning allows learners to consciously reflect and maximize their own learning and the learning of those around them. Students gain benefit from the collective effort, understanding that the combined performance contributes to the group's goals and feelings of success, respect and appreciation for what they achieve. Therefore, cooperative learning has been suggested as an effective and promising practice for ESL learners (Wallace, 1992). When language learners are in charge of their learning. they are challenged and see themselves as competent learners who use the target language communicatively. They feel confident and gain competence. Cooperative learning enhances learners' ability to assess their own competence and create an atmosphere of achievement. Therefore, it is more likely that learners in cooperative learning groups can be successful in second language learning (Kohonen, 1992).

2.1.6 Assessment of PBL

Assessment of PBL can be different and challenging compared to the assessment of traditional learning. Students in PBL are assessed by various means such as "traditional paper-and-pencil tests to new modes of assessment: case-based assessment, self and peer assessment, performance-based assessment and portfolio assessment (Berge, Mortelmans, Spooren, Petegem, Gijbels, Vanthoumout 2006). However, there are some arguments that standardised tests such as multiple-choice End true-false tests are inappropriate to measure student learning outcomes in PBL (Grant, 2002; Markham. et al., 2003; Slater, Beckett Aufderhaar, 2006).

In disciplines other than language teaching, various assessment practices can be integrated. For example, homework assignments, laboratory exercises, final project papers and presentations can be employed to measure content outcomes, while implementation evaluation, informal evaluation and project papers are used to assess scientific process learning outcomes. In addition, assessing the overall outcomes of students can be done through a peer review form, a faculty review panel, a final research presentation and a final paper (Baker, 2006).

In language teaching, students in PBL use real communication, authentic language and learning experiences to achieve the goals of learning. Therefore, performance assessments are crucial in PBL as they allow a variety of assessments to evaluate students' process of learning and tasks (Arlington Education and Employment Program, 1997; Sidman-Taveau & Milner-Bolotin, 2001). According to Hutchinson (1996), the accuracy of grammatical and linguistic structures of target language should not be the only focus of PBL assessment. The principal way for assessing project work is evaluating what students learn, the processes and efforts that lead to the final production and what the learning outcomes are (Blumenfeld, et al., 1991). Therefore, multiple types of formative and summative assessment should be integrated as a part of an effective assessment program (Sidman-Taveau & Milner-Bolotin, 2001; Slater, et al., 2006).

Formative assessment is generally desired for giving feedback throughout the process of creating projects, while summative assessment provides students with the overall degree of their performance at the end of the course (Markham et at., 2003). In addition, summative assessment provides information about the effectiveness of the learning program, learning environment and teacher performance (Cotton, 1995).

Both types of assessment should be carefully designed and constructed to support students' learning. and focus more on learning and performance. Markham et at. (2003) proposed three types of products that need to be produced to demonstrate students' learning: (a) culminating products, (b) multiple products and (c) artefacts.

Culminating Products are products such as research papers, reports, multimedia shows. presentations and exhibitions which are produced and presented at the end of the project in front of an audience. They display depth of learning and a mix of content knowledge and skills. Multiple Products are products generated during the project and require students to produce proposals, outlines, interview plans, drafts, product critiques and final versions of papers. Artefacts are products such as notes, journals, e-mails, records of conversations, interviews with structured questions and a short paragraph describing the progress of work. They demonstrate the process of planning and questioning, problem-solving skills record keeping skills and important life and work skills.

Both multiple products and artifacts should be collected and evaluated by teachers who then give students constructive feedback. This improves both individual and group work as students know they are carrying their project and producing a meaningful product (Markham et al.. 2003;

Solomon, 2003). Teachers should provide formative assessment at least once during the project's process. Feedback from teachers is needed before a project is finalized but it is an ideal practice to use this form of assessment as frequently as possible (Sidman-Taveau & Milner-Bolotin, 2001).

Besides teachers being assessors, peers and learners are the main sources of assessment. Peer assessment allows learners to provide continuous feedback when assessing pee& projects and learning processes (Wilson, 2001). In PBL, students can evaluate their own team members' work or peers' work by offering suggestions for improvement or giving support. Having experience with peer assessment during the learning process helps learners to evaluate their peers' final projects more easily (Arlington Education and Employment Program, 1997). In addition, peer assessment allows students to develop the important skill of giving constructive feedback (O'Farrell, 2005). Students also increase confidence in assessing the quality of their own work (Wilson, 2001). Therefore, peer assessment is not only marking the work of others but also an important part of the learning process. as students are responsible for their comments and actively involved in giving and receiving assessment (Wilson, 2001). Peer assessment also allows teachers to assist and supervise the learning process among students (Buchanan, 2004).

Self-assessment enables students to evaluate their own work by reflecting on the performance. work progress and overall learning process that leads to their achievement (Hattum-Janssen & Pimenta, 2006). As students set their own learning goals and select the method of assessment (Bergh, et al., 2006), they become active, responsible and motivated to take part in their learning process. O'Farrell (2005) stated that it is vital to teach students how to evaluate what they have achieved rather than what criteria and critical reflection skills (O'Frrell, 2005; Buchanan, 2004; Wilson, 2001, Arlington Education and Employment Program, 1997; Ribe & Vidal, 1993). Nevertheless, there are challenges regarding peer and self-assessment, for example, some students feel they are not judged fairly by their peers or lack the necessary experience to critically judge themselves (Hattum-Janssen & Pimenta, 2006).

Rubrics should be carefully designed as the criteria need to meet the class instructional goats and objectives of the project. Rubrics should contain three features: (a) a set of aspects of product or performance, (b) a scale with numerical scores describing each level of performance and (c) criteria with specific indicators for evaluating a product or performance's quality (Markham et al., 2003). Creating rubrics is a time-consuming and challenging task for teachers (Markham et al., 2003). Teachers can either make rubrics by themselves or create rubrics in conjunction with

students by discussing the definition of a high quality and poor quality end product (Andrade, 2000). Rubrics help students to be attentive to learning and understand the standards they must meet as they progress through a class. Additionally, rubrics help teachers to collect data on student development and progress (Keller & Bonk. 2003). Using rubies aligned with vivid assessment criteria provides students with a sense of fairness about grading (Markham et al., 2003). According to a study into using rubrics along with self-assessment of 7th and 8th grade student& writing in San Diego, Andrade (2000) indicated that using both tools enhanced students' learning and thinking and made teachers' instruction more effective.

To convert a rubric into an overall grade, teachers use numbers that represent the level of quality of each criterion, change the figures into the number that shows the middle of the range for a grade, average the scores, and assign a grade accordingly (Andrade, 2000). Alternatively, they can assign points to each aspect of the product and show the point totals that correspond to the letter grades" (Keller & Bonk, 2003). The authors further commented that it is a good idea to provide positive comment when grading so that learners can see the areas that they have achieved in and that they need to improve. The upcoming section describes benefits and challenges associated with PBL when applied in classrooms of language and other disciplines.

2.1.7 Project-based learning versus traditional teaching methods

There are distinct differences between PBL and traditional teaching methods. "Project-based learning is a model which is distinguished from traditional teaching since the focus is put on the learner and his project. Learners have the opportunity to work more autonomously and build their knowledge" (Schneider, 2005). A traditional classroom setting is teacher-centered, with lecture and note taking as key components. A project-based setting is student-centered with student inquiry and exploration as key elements.

In PBL, student's complete contextualized tasks as opposed to isolated lessons. In this manner, students can see the relevance of the task to their everyday lives. "Learning from projects rather than from isolated problems is, in part, so that students can face the task of formulating their own problems, guided on the one hand by the general goals they set, and on the other hand by the 'interesting' phenomena and difficulties they discover through their interaction with the environment" (Collins, Brown and Newman, 1989). Unlike traditional teaching methods, projects are designed to "reflect the learning and work people do outside of the classroom." For that

reason, students are "assessed in a manner that reflects how quality is judged in the real world" (Evertson, 2006).

Project-based instruction is an engaging way to teach state required standards. The state's content standards are indeed taught, but they are joined with other content and skills to make a meaningful, rigorous and interesting learning experience. With traditional teaching methods, it is very difficult to keep students engaged in the learning process. In project-based learning, students can become self-motivated learners through creating products "valuable in their own right" and collaborating with other students (Evertson, 2006).

The main difference between traditional and project-based methods is the student's acquisition of procedural versus conceptual knowledge. Through projects, students can not only learn concepts, they are provoked and encouraged to investigate, ask questions and develop new knowledge. It's not that the previous could not happen in a traditional *lecture/note-taking* classroom setting, but PBL is designed around *student-centeredness* to allow each individual student to draw on previous knowledge, from any level, and develop new knowledge.

Differing from traditional teaching methods, PBL gives students the right amount of choice and autonomy. In PBL, the teacher is not the sole contributor to the learning that occurs in the classroom. The teacher's role is a guide and facilitator. The teacher creates the project and many of the scaffolding activities, but the students do the exploration and discovery. The teacher's role is not just a *transmitter* of knowledge, rather an *advisor* of learning (Newell 2003).

In traditional teaching methods, the majority of the curriculum comes from designated textbooks. Moreover, assessment of student learning comes from traditional paper/pencil tests. In PBL, the students may use a designated text, but this supplements many other resources. In PBL the students are assessed traditionally with quizzes and tests, but they are also assessed in other ways. Rubrics play a major role in PBL assessment. Because the students are assessed in a variety of ways more than one rubric may be used to grade a project. For example, the content of the project may have a rubric, the oral presentations may have a separate rubric, and the student's ability to collaborate well with other group members may be assessed in another rubric.

2.1.8 Benefits of PBL in Language Learning

PBL plays an important role in developing learners' target language for real-life purposes. It helps language students become more competent in the use of the target language and promotes

learners' autonomy learner centredness, learner motivation and integrated skill practice (Sheppard & Stoller, 1995).

PBL has been described as an effective way of engaging in simultaneous acquisition of language content and skills' (Beckett & Slater, 2005). PBL would therefore help language learners relate to the task, to the language and to the culture because it offers the potential to integrate the target language into the learner's communicative competence helps the language become more relevant to their needs and enables them to communicate and understand the target language's culture (Hutchinson, 1996). It is clear that PBL can be a connection between using the target language in class and using the target language in authentic contexts outside the classroom. Research has shown that there are many benefits to using PBL in the language classroom. These are:

 • Gaining language proficiency, self-efficacy and self-esteem

 • Using real-life language and experiencing language in meaningful life situations

 • Developing motivation, self-confidence and the cognitive domain in second/foreign language learning

2.1.9 Challenges in implementing project-based learning

Although studies have shown that PBL allows students to understand and reflect on particular learning areas, taking responsibility for their own learning with increased achievement in their learning processes, performance skills and valuable outcomes, there are difficulties associated with PBL such as time-management, crafting questions, keeping focus and some concerns of teachers.

2.1.9.1 Time-management.

According to a study of project-based learning by Glilbahar and Tinmaz (2006), students stated that it was difficult for them to manage the deadlines for submission of their work as they were overloaded during the semester and spent extensive time and effort on their own projects. They also claimed that they could not maintain their motivation level throughout the project.

2.1.9.2 Crafting questions.

Students have difficulty creating important scientific questions because their experience in and concept of crafting questions are limited. Additionally, analyzing and assessing data and developing reasons to support the data and the conclusions are mentioned as problems (Thomas, 2000).

2.1.9.3 Concerns of teachers

Teachers sometimes have difficulty selecting topics for the study that match the curriculum plans to the needs of the students (Marx. Blumenfeld, Krajcik and Soloway as cited in Curtis, 2002). In addition, the same study found that time limitations can also be a problem with in-depth exploration of projects often requiring more time than expected. Teachers were concerned regarding the role of the teacher in setting task requirements, scaffolding activities, creating rubrics, and assessing student& projects.

It was found that PBL generates more work for teachers when compared to the traditional method, which has exact plans for each study period (Curtis. 2002). Teachers need to make sure that they incorporate topics from the regular curriculum into the projects.

2.1.10 Conclusion

To summarize the benefits and challenges of PBL, current research shows that project- based leaning supports self-directed learning. Students have an important role in selecting the content areas and the nature of projects that they are interested in and wish to study. This instruction can challenge learners to engage in independent work within the framework of a group project and can develop lifelong learning strategies. Doing project work allows integration of the four basic language skills (listening. speaking. reading and writing), collaborative teamwork, problem-solving and other social skills which are important in a fast changing world. However, with some of the challenges found in PBL teachers need to carefully design and develop programs and give special attention to issues such as time-management, difficulty in crafting questions and lack of focus. In addition, in the case of teachers' challenges, further research is needed into how teachers can manage PBL more effectively in the classroom in different cultural teaching and learning contexts.

2.2 Definitions of active learning and independent learning

2.2.1 Definitions of active learning

Below are a few definitions offered by experts in the field of active learning.

     *Active Learning puts the responsibility of organizing what is to be learned in the hands of the learners themselves, and ideally lends itself to a more diverse range of learning styles (Dodge, 1996).

*Active Learning attempts to model the methods and mindsets which are at the heart of scientific inquiry, and to provide opportunities for students to connect abstract ideas to their real world applications and acquire useful skills, and in so doing gain knowledge that persists beyond the course experience in which it was acquired (Allen & Tanner, 2003).

*Active Learning refers to techniques where students do more than simply listen to a lecture. Students are doing something including discovering, processing, and applying information (McKinney, 2007).

*Active Learning is comprised of a student centered environment which raises student's motivational level to stimulate thinking and go beyond facts and details (Brody, 2009).

2.2.2 Definitions of independent learning

There are some concepts on independent study, as follows: Independent study is a process, a method and a philosophy of education whereby a learner acquires knowledge by his or her own efforts and develops the ability for enquiry and critical evaluation. (Philip Candy, 1991).

People often assume that independent learning means that a student needs to work alone. Working alone does not automatically develop independent learning skills in students, equally important, independent learning can also take place in the classroom (Broady & Kenning, 1996).

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This chapter consists of five parts. The first part will focus on the research method of the study: Action research (AR) and research procedure. The second part will present the research questions, the third part will describe the participants of the study and the next part will be concerned with data collection tools. The last part will deal with data analysis methods.

3.1. Action research

The purpose of this section is to provide definitions of AR and research procedure of AR. It then explains the reason why AR was chosen for this study and also the chosen research procedure.

3.1.1 Definitions of AR

AR is one of the terms heard quite often in today's educational circle. Many different definitions of AR show educators' interest in this theme. Watt (1985) proposes the idea that a process in which participants examine their own educational: practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research.

Besides, AR in the language classroom is now becoming a popular tool for teacher and curriculum development. It is a teacher- initiated classroom research which seeks to increase the teacher's understanding of classroom teaching and learning and to bring about improvements in classroom practices (Richards, 1994). Related to some views concerning action research as classroom research, Wallace (1998) conceptualizes action research as a process in which some decisions about teachers' future practice result from problem identification and analysis on daily practice. Its main aim is to bring about change (Richards in Brenner, 1993). It is situational or content-based, collaborative, participatory, and self-evaluative (Cohen & Marion, 1980). It is "problem focused," mainly "concerned with a single case in a specific situation," and tries to find solutions to the problem in focus. It not only encourages teachers to compare methods and ideas with a critical eye, and to adopt these ideas into their teaching environment (Nunan, 1998), but engages them in their teaching in a deep way (Richards in Brenner, 1993). In this way, the teacher's awareness of theory is also raised (Stringer, 1996).

It is stated by Nunan (1992) that AR is problem-focused and mainly concerned with a single case in a specific situation, and tries to find solutions to the problem in focus. It not only encourages teachers to compare methods and ideas with critical eyes and to adopt these ideas into with

critical eyes and to adopt these ideas into their teaching environment but also engages them in their teaching in a deeper way.

Sharing the same point of view, Wallace (1998) defines AR as a process which collects data or everyday practice and analyses them in order to make a decision about what the future practice should he

According to the definitions above, in education setting, action research is concerned with trying to improving one specific point in a teacher's technique in a particular classroom using empirical measurement. Rather than deal with the theoretical. AR allow practitioners address those concerns that are closest to them, look for the ways to improve instruction and increase student achievement.

3.1.2. Rationale for choosing AR

AR was employed as the research method for this study because of its outstanding advantages. First of all, AR is very practical to teaching and learning context in general and in the context of the study in particular. Cohen and Marion (1980) point out that action research takes place when a single teacher, like the present researcher, works with her own class as she feels the need to improve her teaching/learning experiences. It is therefore said that AR helps to improve the current teaching situation. The second reason is that AR is beneficial to both participants: researchers and the learners. To a researcher, AR is a way to look critically at what is going on at class, what need to be changed for better teaching and learning, consequently, he or she will understand learners more clearly. Gibbs (1995) states this change is "a change essential for sustained pedagogical development". To learners, they will experience new methods that may be more suitable to study. For these reasons, it is worth spending time and energy to conduct an AR to improve current teaching and learning in the context of HPU.

3.1.3. Research procedure

Along with AR's definitions, the steps to carry out an AR are recommended differently by many researchers. According to Kemmis & Taggart (1988) AR is characterized by spiraling cycles of planning, action, observation and reflection.

Burns (1999) reports an AR sequence of cycles which consists of eleven phases: exploring, identifying, planning, collecting data, analyzing / reflecting, hypothesizing / speculating, intervening, observing, reporting, writing and presenting.

Nunan (1992, p.19) recommends six steps. They are initiation, preliminary investigations, hypothesis, intervention, evaluation and dissemination.

Although steps of AR are proposed with different names, it is easily recognized that all authors share the same view in conducting AR. In order to carry out AR, one has to identify the problem, planning, intervening, and evaluating the effect of action.

3.1.4 The research procedure of the study

As stated there are many different procedures to carry out an AR. After considering the ways carefully, the researcher decided to follow the seven research steps adapted from Somekh in Mc Bride & Schotak (1989) to fulfill the study because it is really clear to understand and easy to adopt in the real situation at HPU

```
                          (2) collecting data
  (1) identifying a focus of
      interest or a problem              (3) analyzing data/
                                             generating
                    SOCIAL
  'spiral to next circle                  (4) planning action steps
                    SITUATION
  (7) analysis and evaluation       (5) implementing action

              (6) collecting data
              to monitor change
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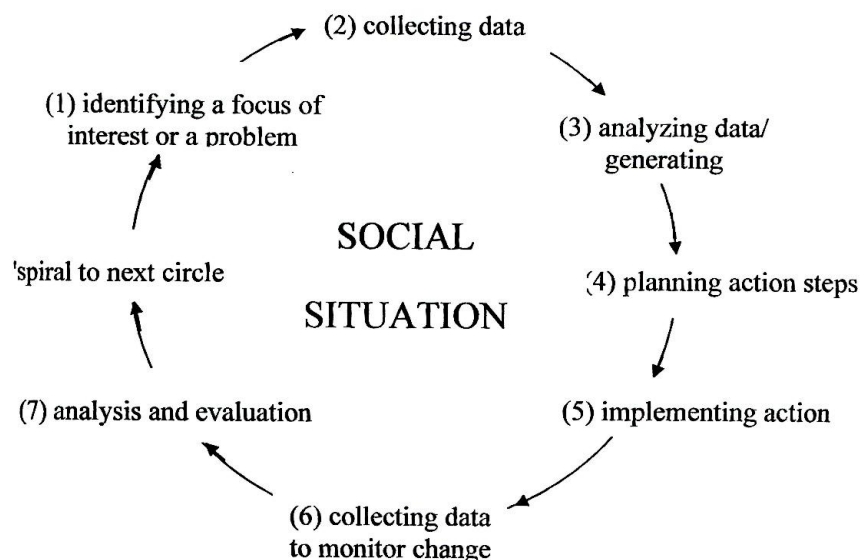
Figure 1: Action research cycle (Adapted from Mc Bride and Schotak, 1989)

The first step is identifying a focus of interest or a problem (week 1 and week 2), that is selecting a theme in the teaching process to concentrate on and to make it more tangible so that it can be changed or improved more easily. After teaching and observing students at HPU, the researcher saw that most of them learn very passively and seem to dislike participating in the English lessons even when they did understand. The discussion with other teachers in the department and her own teaching experience reveals the fact that students often do not prepare lessons at home and learn very dependently while the contact classroom hours are limited so their language skills are not good. For this reason, this aspect is the research focus of the study.

The second step is collecting initial data(week 3). This step aims to collect initial data for the action plan. In this step, the main information on the students' language proficiency and their active and independent learning were identified by questionnaire 1.

The third step is analyzing data/ generating hypothesis (week 4). The researcher analyzes the data to confirm her assumption. It was hypothesized that if the teacher made a project- based learning with students' favorite topics, students' language proficiency and active independent learning level would increase.

The fourth step is planning action (week 5). That means after the problem is identified, it is time to develop an action plan to improve the present situation. There is a need for a detailed plan informing who is going to do what, when it has to be completed, what the modifications to the curriculum are, how the revised teaching strategies will be implemented, etc.

The fifth step is implementing the action plan (from week 6 to week 12). The action plan would be carried out for seven weeks in the first term in the researcher's class.

Following the action plan, **the sixth step is collecting data to monitor change (from week 6 to week 12)**. After seven weeks, data about students' language proficiency and active independent learning level were collected through posttest and questionnaires. **The last step is analyzing and evaluating data (week 13 and 14)** during two weeks and give some recommendations.

3.2 Research questions

Our research questions for this study are as follow:

3. To what extent does project-based learning impact students' language proficiency?

4. To what extent does the applicable technique help to improve students' active and independent learning level?

3.3 The subjects of the study

The subjects of the study includes the researcher and the students. All details about the subjects of the study will be discussed as follows.

3.3.1. The researcher

The study was carried out by a researcher who has been teaching English at HPU for 9 years.

3.3.2. The students

Students in our study are in their first year and experience the first year of credit-based education transference in HPU. Some of the evidences are unfortunately showing that many of the students who have just finished high schools are really passive in their learning process. They appear to be used to listening to the lectures and writing down what the teachers read aloud or copying what is written on the board. Particularly, for English majors a big number of them are really passive in their learning process proven by the fact that they only focus on trying to understand words and grammar structures in the given text book. For some lessons, majority of the students are not (well)-prepared for what appears in the text book, which certainly lays great difficulties and psychological pressure on the teachers to lecture while the main reason is their lack of interests and motivation and of course their chronic laziness. Consequently, a question raised here is what we should do now to inspire in students the interests and motivation and innovative involvement and to demand greater student responsibility in active learning and of course all these things help to improve students' learning ability.

3.4 Data collection instruments

In order to achieve the aims of the study and collect necessary data for the study, two data collection instruments including pre-test and post-test, questionnaires are applied.

 The first research question, for example, investigates how PBL improves HPU students' English language proficiency in order to generate a context for understanding the students' gains or changes, the quantitative data (the comparison of pre-test and post-test scores from a standardized test- TOEIC test, the student & English achievement. To provide further information about students' English language proficiency in other contexts other than the standardized tests. Qualitative data (reflection or opinions of the students on the use of English in the PBL context and in-depth explanations from the researcher's point of view) are needed. Qualitative data added depth and details of how or which characteristics of PBL helped to further improve the students' four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The second research question deals specifically with the students' active and independent learning. The aim is to explore areas where the activeness and independence learning developed during the application of PBL. To be able to examine these effectively, the study needed multiple data sources: for example: students' and teachers' assessment, questionnaires.

Thus a mixed methods approach was essential in examining the students' English proficiency (as in research question 1) and active and independent learning (as in research question 2) in more

depth. The sufficiency of the data according to different data sources or data collection methods allowed the researcher in this study to identify and elicit aspects of investigation for the same situation and the same time with multiple sources of evidence.

3.4.1. Tests

TOEIC tests are utilized to get information on the students' language proficiency. And this will be used once again to make comparison between the before and after intervention.

3.4.2 Questionnaires

Nunan (1992) points out that "A questionnaire is an instrument for the collection of data, usually in written form, consisting of open and closed questions and other probes requiring a response from subjects". Richards et. al (1994) also defines questionnaires as an effective way of collecting information about "affective dimensions of teaching and learning, such as beliefs, attitudes, motivation, and preferences, and enable a teacher to collect a large amount of information relatively quickly". In addition, having the same idea with Richards, Seliger and Shohany (1995) also state that questionnaire is an attractive means of collecting data on phenomena, which are not easily observed, such as motivation, attitude, language learning strategy use, etc.

In this study, questionnaires are selected as one of the important data collection instruments because it not only provides information gathered from a large number of participants but also helps to obtain information about different kinds of issues. The questionnaires are distributed to students to get information on their attitude toward English and their active and independent in learning English.

3.5 Summary

This chapter presented the research method of the study- action research- as well as the reasons for the method selection. This action research contains 7 steps which are clearly presented in 3 phases including pre- action research, action research and post- action research. Besides, the description of the different data collection instrument comprising tests, questionnaires, students and teachers' assessment which are considered as essential tools to collect information about the students' language proficiency, active and independent learning; and more valid information about the participants were also introduces in detail. The result of the present study would be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter describes and discusses three stages of the action research including the pre- action research, the action research and the post- action research. Analysis of the data collected from the pre and post research is also provided to answer the research questions. In addition, this chapter attempts to evaluate the AR. As a result, the major findings of the study are displayed to give answers to the following research questions:

1. To what extent does project-based learning impact students' language proficiency?

2. To what extent does the applicable technique help to improve students' active and independent learning level?

4.1. Data collected before action plan.

The researcher analyzed the pre- action research data collected from: the pretest result and the questionnaire result which is to find out the students' language proficiency and active independent learning, the discussions with other teachers in the departments are also a base to collect information. The hypothesis of the study was formed basing on this analysis.

4.1.1 Data from the pretest

The pre- test was administered to investigate students' language proficiency at the beginning of the action research. The pre- test was then collected and scored. The pretest scores are presented in table 1 below:

Table 1: The pre- test results

| Skills	Low 1- 4	Medium 5-6	High 7- 10	No of students
Listening skill	12	19	5	36
Speaking skill	13	19	4	36
Reading skill	12	20	4	36
Writing skill	8	22	6	36

The table 1 above showed that there are many students at low and medium level of all 4 skills meanwhile few students got high level of English.

4.1.2 Data from students' questionnaire

The survey was carried out before researcher began teaching project-based learning. Thirty- six copies were delivered to thirty six students in the class and the same number was returned. After collecting all completed questionnaires from students, the researcher carried out the analysis. The final results were presented as follows.

4.1.2.1 Students' attitudes towards learning English

Chart 1: Students' attitudes towards learning English
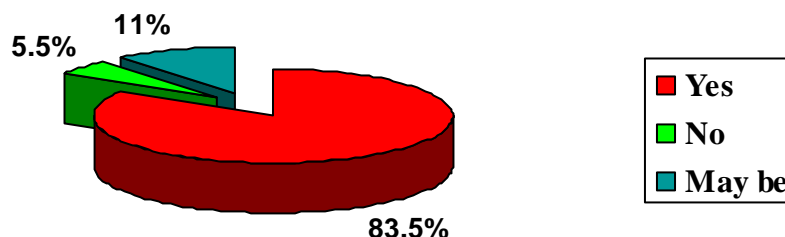
In terms of students' attitude towards learning English, a majority of the students had positive attitudes towards English as well as learning English. The results showed that 30 students (83.5%) answered that they liked learning English whereas only 4 students in the class (11%) admitted that they disliked learning English. A small number of them (5,5%) still hesitated whether they liked or disliked learning English. These results revealed the fact that most of students like learning English, so the cause for students' low language proficiency and inactive dependent learning was not only from them but also from another causes.

4.1.2.2 Students' impression on the English lessons

Chart 2: Students' impression on the English lessons
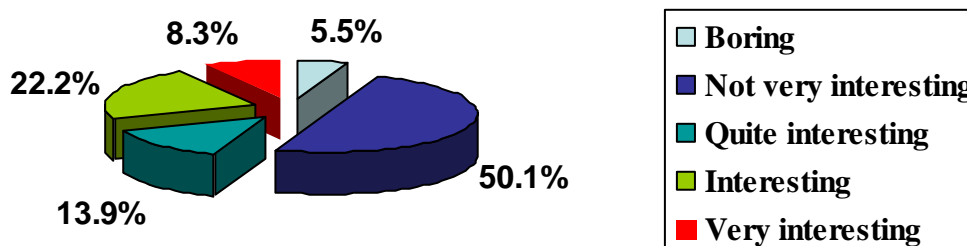
With regard to students' opinion on the English lesson, the collected data from question two showed that, very few students only 3 students (8.3 %) responded that they found the English lessons very interesting or interesting (13.9%). Whereas a large number of students (50.1%)

claimed that they had no much interest in all English lessons implemented in their class, even worse, some of them (22.2%) felt bored with the English lessons.

The above results posed a question for the researcher that why in question 1 many students (83.5%) showed their positive attitude towards learning English while the collected data in question 2 showed that very few of them (8.3%) found the English lessons very interesting. What are the reasons for this problem?

The data collected from the next question in questionnaire will help to answer this question.

4.1.2.3 Students' opinion on the classroom activities

### Chart 3: Students' impression on the class activities
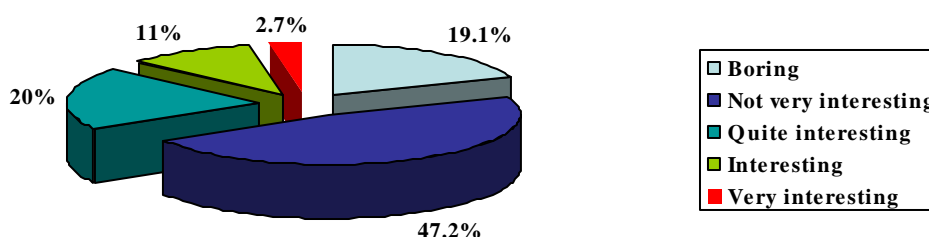
As can be looked at the above chart, nearly half of students (47.2%) responded that the classroom activities in the English lessons were not very interesting, even worse, 19.1% of them claimed that they were bored with the English classroom activities implemented in their class. Not many students (20%) thought that the classroom activities were quite interesting and a small number students said that they are interesting or very interesting.

This result strengthens the researcher's conclusion that a large number of students felt bored with English lessons because the classroom activities were not very interesting. These activities did not really create interest and active independent learning for students.

4.1.2.4 Students' activeness and independence in the English classroom activities

In terms of Students' activeness and independence in the classroom activities, the collected data from question 4 showed that many of students (55.7%) did not learn actively and independently in the English lessons. 22.2% of them admitted that they did not really learn actively and independently in while very few students (13.9%) responded that they learnt actively and independently. These data were shown clearly in the chart below.

Chart 4: Students' activeness and independence

Not active and independent

Not very active and independent

Quite active and

5.5%
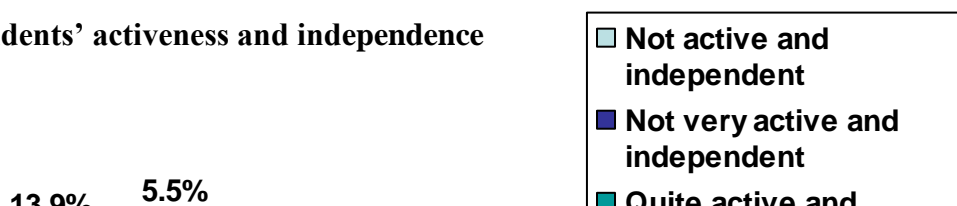
Not surprisingly, the data in question 3 pointed out that the classroom activities in the English lessons were not very interesting, even boring, so hat a large number of students felt unmotivated and did not take part in actively.

4.1.2.5 Students' opinions on the appropriateness of the classroom activities for students' language skills and active and independent learning

Chart 5: Students' opinions on the appropriateness of the classroom activities
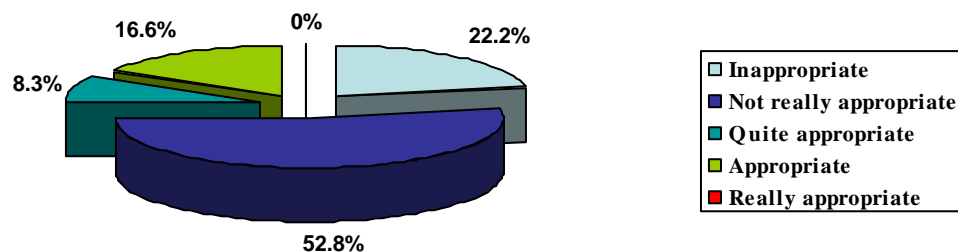
It can be seen from the chart below, more than half of the students(52.8%) claimed that the classroom activities were not really appropriate for students' language proficiency and active and independent learning, even 20% of them students thought that the classroom activities were inappropriate. In contrast, only some of them thought that the classroom activities were appropriate (16.6%) or quite appropriate (8.3%). None of the students felt these activities were very appropriate for their language proficiency and active and independent learning.

Obviously, many students complained about the inappropriateness of the classroom activities in the English lesson for their language proficiency and active independent learning. Perhaps, they found these activities too difficult or too easy, some of them felt interested, some others felt boring or unmotivated. That is the reason why very few of them learnt actively and independently.

4.1.2.6 Students' opinions on the appropriateness of the material

The data about students' opinions on the appropriateness of the material in use were collected and presented clearly in the following chart.

Chart 6: Students' opinions on the appropriateness of the material

0 5.5%   8.3%

44.4%

☐	**Inappropiate**
■	**Not really appropriate**
■	**Quite appropriate**
☐	**Appropriate**
■	**Really appropriate**

41.8%
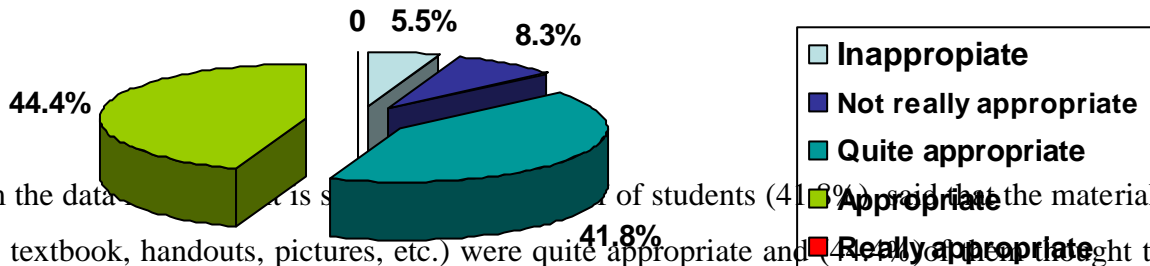
From the data, it is shown that of students (41.8%) said that the material in use (textbook, handouts, pictures, etc.) were quite appropriate and (44.4%) thought that the teaching material used in the lessons were appropriate. While(8.3%) claimed that the teaching material used in the lessons were not really appropriate, even some of them (5.5%) found these activities inappropriate. None of them said that the teaching materials in use were really appropriate.

Analysing the data collected from question 6 showed that the number of students who agreed that the teaching material was quite appropriate and the ones who thought that the teaching material was not really appropriate were in the same number.

4.1.2.7 Students' opinions on the appropriateness of the teaching method used in English lessons

Chart 7: Students' opinions on the appropriateness of the teaching method

8.3%   2.7% 5.5%

25%

☐	**Inappropriate**
■	**Not really appropriate**
■	**Quite appropriate**
☐	**Appropriate**
■	**Really appropriate**

58.5%
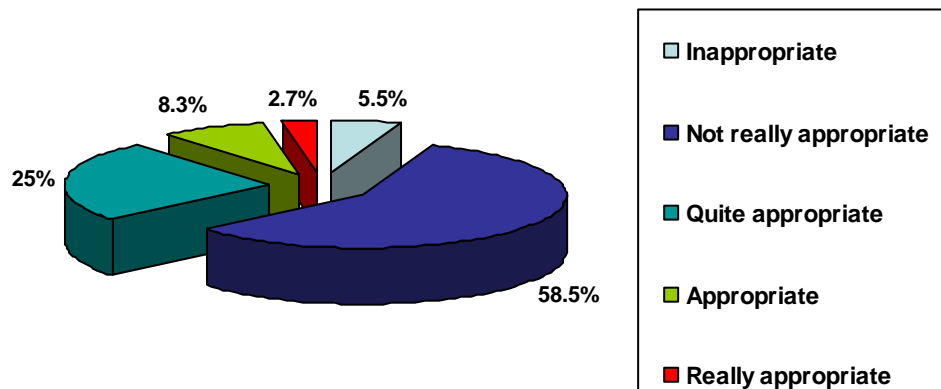
In terms of students' opinions on the appropriateness of the teaching method, more than half of the students (58.5%) showed their negative attitude towards the teaching method. They admitted that the teaching method used in the English lessons was not really appropriate, even some of them (5.5%) claimed that the method their teacher used in their classes was inappropriate. Only one fifth of students thought that it was quite appropriate (25%) and appropriate (8.3%).

The data presented above revealed that the majority of the students said they felt bored with the English lessons and were not really involved in classroom activities because according to them, the classroom activities and teaching method implemented in their class were not really appropriate.

In short, the data collected and analysed from students' questionnaire revealed the fact that although many students liked learning English and felt interested in learning English, a large number of them found the English lessons in their class boring, so they were not very involved in the classroom activities. The explanation for this problem was that most of them said the classroom activities used in the English lessons were not very interesting even boring. Therefore it can be concluded that according to students' opinions, the main cause of their low language skills and inactive dependent learning in the classroom activities came from teachers' teaching method and the classroom activities used in the English lessons.

4.1.3 Summary

In brief, the analysis of the initial data collected from the questionnaire survey for both teachers and students in the first 2 weeks helps the researcher realized some problems

First of all, the collected data showed the fact that the main cause of students' low language proficiency and inactive dependent learning in classroom activities in the researched class was not from themselves because most of them showed their positive attitude towards learning. A mmany of them were interested in learning English.

Second, some teachers at HPU were teaching in the classes of students with inappropriate teaching methods. That is why many students were not involved in the classroom activities and their language proficiency are so low.

Therefore, the hypothesis of the study formed basing on the result from the initial collected data is that using an appropriate by applying project- based learning will increase students' language proficiency and active independent learning. The researcher decided to choose the project- based learning as the solution for the problem.

4.2 The action plan

From the hypothesis based on the data analysis of the pretest, and questionnaire, and the knowledge gained from the literature review on students' language proficiency and active independent learning in classroom activities, an action plan was carried out. The action plan was

applied in 7 weeks with the lesson plans which were designed carefully. The detailed description of the action plan will be briefly presented as follows.

The action plan is carried out from week 6 to week 14

Week 6: The following steps will be done as follow

- Introduction to project-based learning

- Choose topic for project

- Divide students into 5 groups

There are many topics students discuss on for example: Culture, music, famous people, environment, economics,... However, Vietnam is famous for beauty spots especially Ha Long Bay in Haiphong recognized as one of 7 natural wonders in the world. The 5 groups in the researcher's class decided to choose the topic: "Famous tourist destination".

Homework: Groups choose their destinations.

Week7: The following steps will be done as follow

- Teacher instructs students how to persuade someone (see in tourism lesson plan in the Appendix below).

- Decide on groups' destinations

1. Ha Long Bay

2. Nha Trang Beach

3. Hue

4. Sapa

5. Phong Nha Ke Bang Cave

- Students have to deal with the following questions

1. What type of destination(s)? (City, beach, mountains, scenic areas, etc)

2. How will people get to the destinations? (Type of transportation)

3. What will they do there? (activities, attractions)

Homework: Students collect information on the chosen topics

Week 8: The following steps will be done

- Students in groups share information

- Teacher instructs students to make brochure(see a sample of brochure in the Appendix below)

Write a one-page brochure / itinerary for the tour. It should include a time table which tells about transportation, accommodations, activities, etc. Also, students try to make an estimate of the price of their tour. Try to make it as attractive as possible, with pictures and exciting descriptions.

Homework: Students prepare a brochure

Week 9: The following steps will be done

- Students in groups arrange materials

- Students start writing introduction to the destination

Homework: Students write a report on their destination

Week 10: The following steps will be done

- Students check the brochure and its report within each group

- Teacher introduces presentation skills

Homework: Students practice presentation

Week 11: The following steps will be done

- Practice group presentation

- Teacher guides for the tour fair

Create a name for your travel agency. The name should match the type of tour that you plan to have. (example: "Sunny Seas Tours" for a beach resort tour)

Each agency (group) will set up a booth/kiosk to attract tourists and explain the tour to them. Bring in some photographs, items, pictures, or anything else to help students convince people that your tour is the best. Students could also wear some clothes or other things (sunglasses, hats, etc.) to make your tour agency more attractive.

Everyone in students' group must be able to describe the tour to a customer. During the tour fair, every student will be a tour agent for some time, and every student will be a tourist for the rest of

the time. Students should practice with each other, using their brochure, to make sure each person in the group can easily describe the tour. Try to persuade others about how great students' tour will be!

 Marking for the Tour Fair

       One mark for the group (not individual)

           - Teacher will consider if one person is outstanding or very poor

       Marks based on

          1. ability of all members to describe students' tour - most important

          2. brochure / itinerary

          3. attractiveness of your kiosk

Homework: Students prepare for the tour fair

Week 12: Tour fair

During the process of carrying out action , the following rubics of assessment are made: the rubic of writing assessment, the rubic of presentation assessment.

The evaluators of project are both teachers and students. The evaluation is regularly reviewed in the process of teaching until the final products.

The evidences of assessment are **t**he final product of the student, the assessment form for individual student working in groups and the presentation assessment form.

4.3 Data collected during and from experimental teaching

To collect data during 7 experimental weeks, the same data collection instrument used in the pre-action stage was once again applied. The posttest is to measure whether the students' language proficiency increased, and the questionnaire survey is to know students' attitude towards the lessons, the learning tasks and the teaching method after having intervention.

4.3.1 Data collected from the post-test

After doing the post-test, the result is collected as follow:

Table 2: The post- test results

Skills	Low	Medium	High	No

	1- 4	5-6	7- 10	of students
Listening skill	2	16	18	36
Speaking skill	4	15	17	36
Reading skill	4	13	19	36
Writing skill	3	14	19	36

In general, the number of students with low level has remarkably decreased and many other students have high mark. This will be discussed more in the evaluation part.

Followings are the results of questionnaire.

4.3.2 Data collected from questionnaire survey

In order to confirm the observation results and to see if there are any changes in the students' opinions towards English lessons and English classroom activities, the students were once again asked to fill in questionnaire. Thirty- six copies were delivered to the students of the researched class and the same number returned.

Followings are the results of questionnaire

4.3.2.1 Students' attitude towards learning English

Chart 8: Students' attitude towards learning English
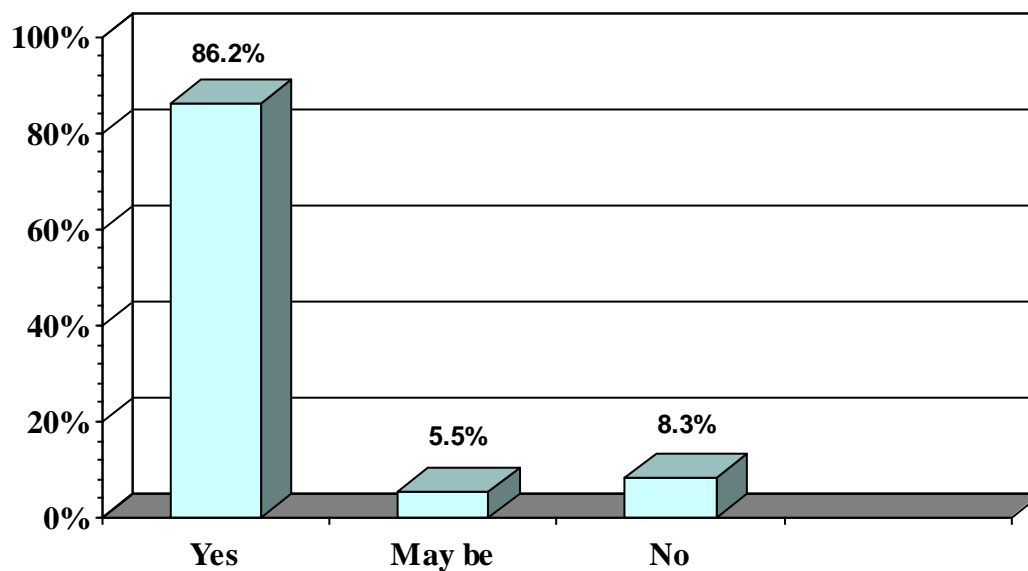
As we look at the above, most of students (86.2%) showed their positive attitude towards learning English when they responded that they like learning English. However, there were still some of them (5.5 %) admitted that they really dislike learning English. Clearly, a high percentage of students in the class both after and before experimental teaching admitted they like learning English.

4.3.2.2 Students' impression on the English lessons

Chart 9: Students' impression on the English lessons
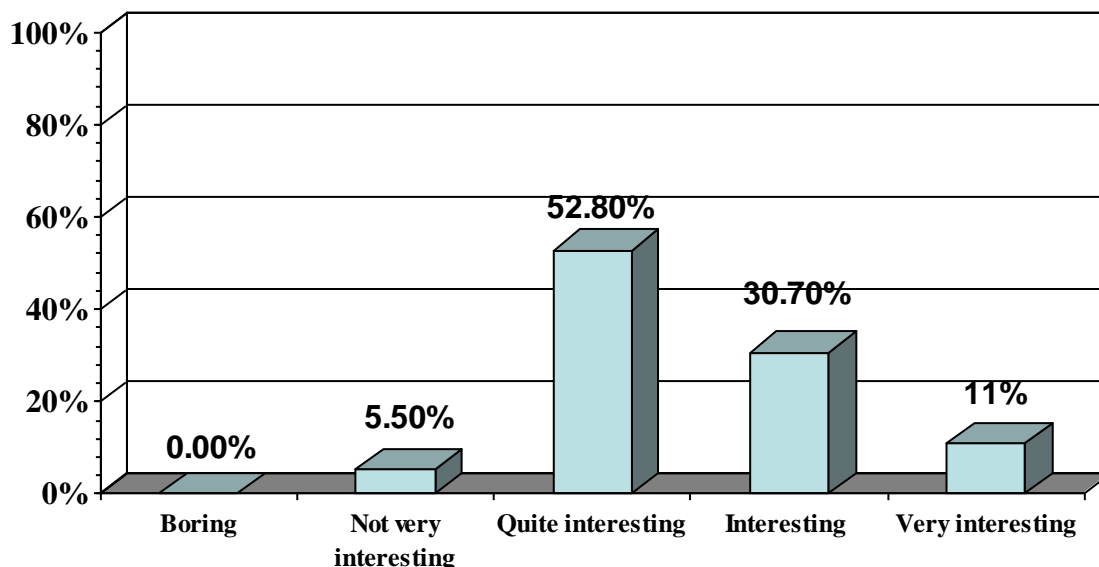
As shown in the above, students' opinions on the English lessons was quite good. A relatively high percentage of students (52.8%) responded that they found the English lessons quite interesting, one third of them (30.7%) felt interesting and even a small number (11.0%) admitted that the lessons were very interesting. Only two of them (5.5%) thought that the English lessons were not very interesting. Obviously, after classroom activities were changed,, none of the students felt the English lessons boring.

4.3.2.3 Students' opinions on the class activities

Chart 10: Students' opinions on the class activities
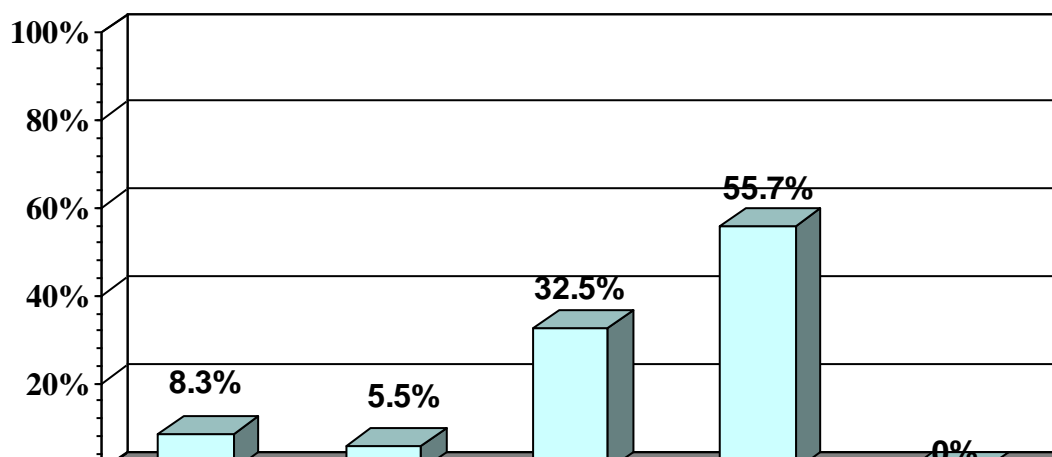
According to the data presented above, more than half of students (55.7%) said that they found classroom activities interesting and learnt very actively and dependently. The rest of students in the class admitted that the activities used in English lessons were quite interesting. None of them said that the classroom activities were boring. Therefore, it is evident to say that students' attitude and motivation on the classroom activities as well as English lessons were quite improved. These results also shows that students accepted and used to leaning with the applying the project- based learning.

4.3.2.4 Students' activeness and independence in the English classroom activities

Chart 11: Students' activeness and independence
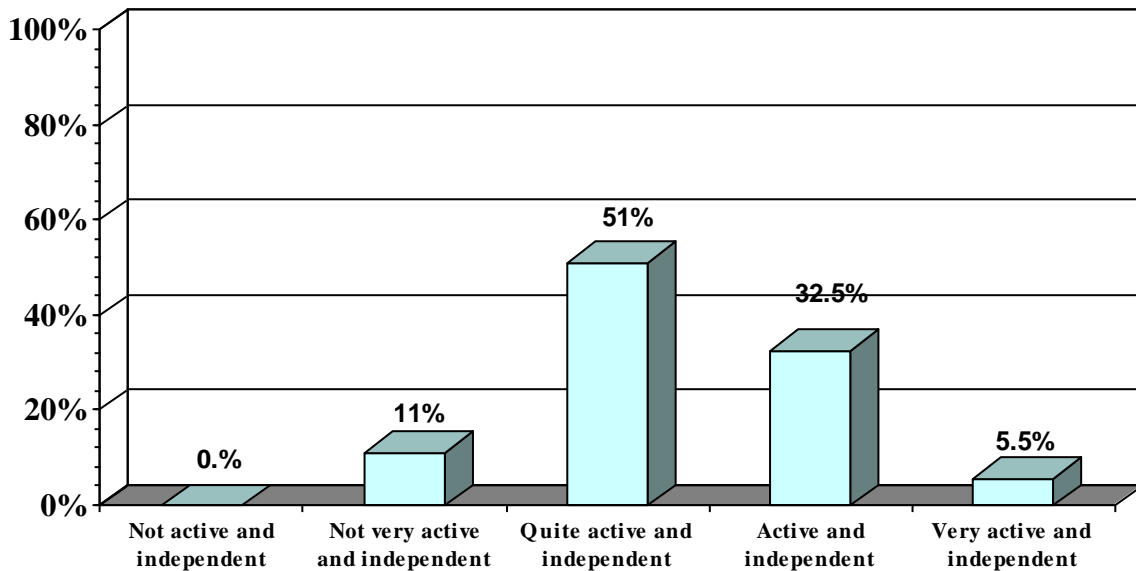
It can be seen clearly from the data in chart that more than half of students (51.0%) admitted that they were quite active and independent in classroom activities and a large number of them (32.5%) responded that they were active and independent in classroom activities. Only few of them (11%) claimed that they were not very active and independent. From the result mentioned above, it is not very difficult to explain that most of students were active and independent, even very active and independent because students' opinions on the classroom activities were quite good, they were very interested in activities of the project- based learning, so they were quite active.

4.3.2.5 Students' opinions on the appropriateness of the classroom activities for students' language skills and active and independent learning
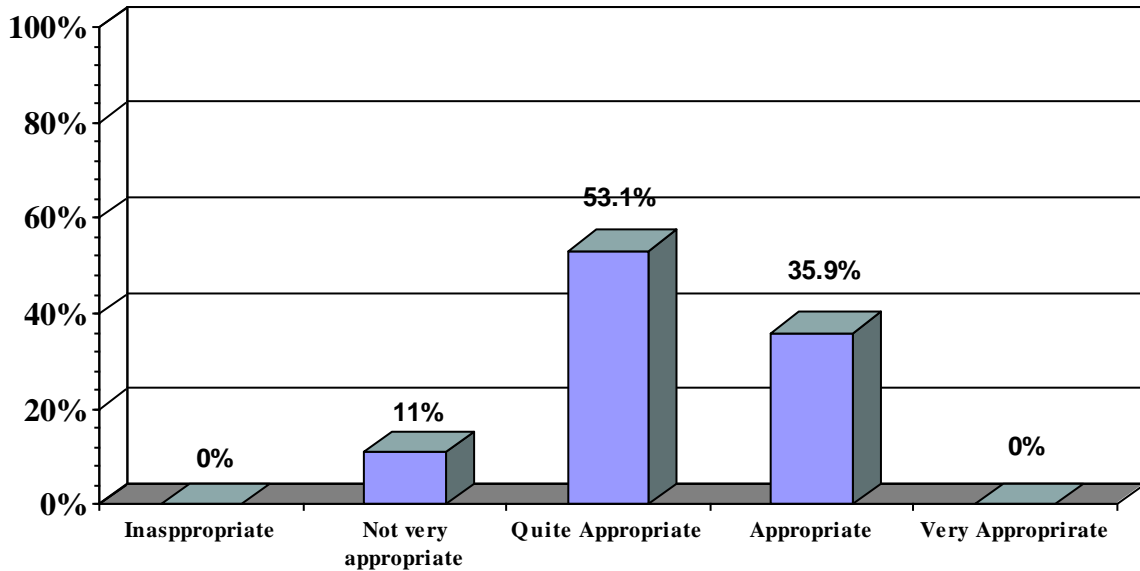
Chart 12: Students' opinions on the appropriateness of the classroom activities
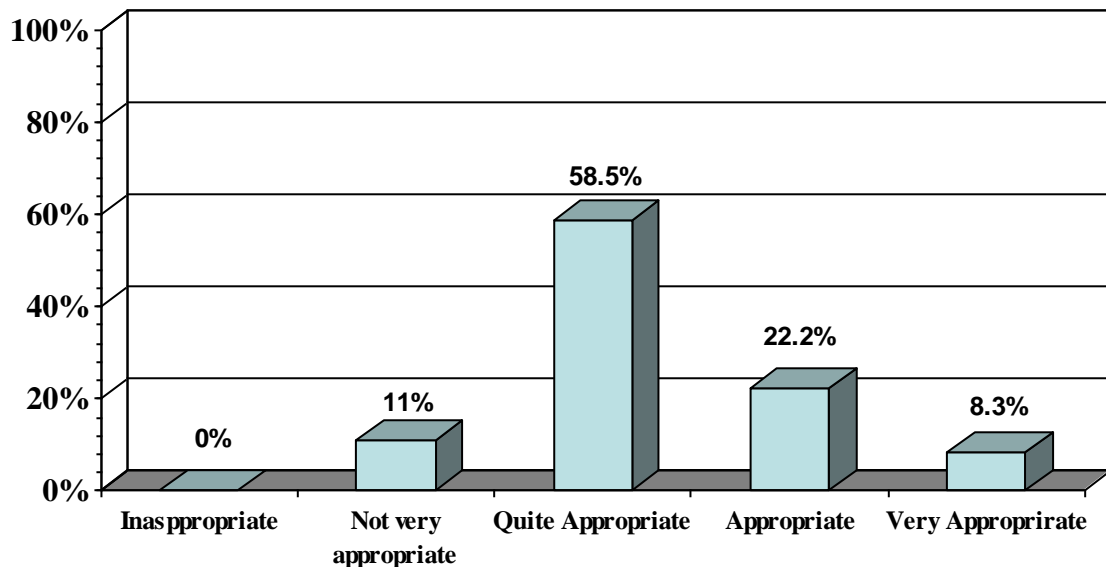
As shown in the chart above, many of the students agreed that the class activities are suitable for them and very few other students had different ideas.

4.3.2.6 Students' opinions on the appropriateness of the material
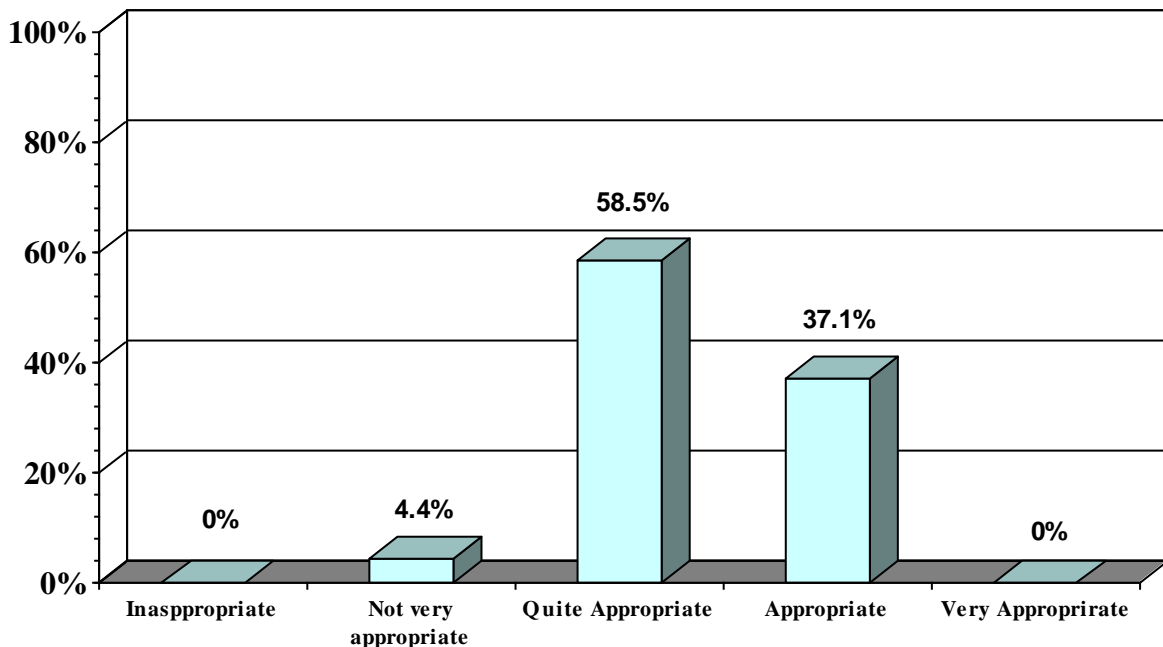
Chart 13: Students' opinions on the appropriateness of the material

The chart above revealed that 89% students appreciated the material applied in the class and only 11% students disliked them.

4.3.2.7 Students' opinions on the appropriateness of the teaching method used in English lessons

Chart 14: Students' opinions on the appropriateness of the teaching method

As can be seen in chart above, a majority of students 58.5% believed that the teaching method used in the lessons was quite appropriate so that they were really interested in the learning activities. 37.1% of them said that their teacher used appropriate teaching method with interesting activities. However, a small number of students in the class (4.4%) thought that the teaching method of their teacher was not very appropriate.

In summary, based on the data analyzed above, it is possible to conclude that the students were much more interested and active in the classroom activities in the period of experiment. The percentage of students' language proficiency and active independent learning and teaching method were quite higher than before their teacher applied action plan.

4.4. Evaluation of action plan

Based on the analysis of the data collected during the experimental weeks, it is evident to say that the action plan achieved some objectives despite some failures.
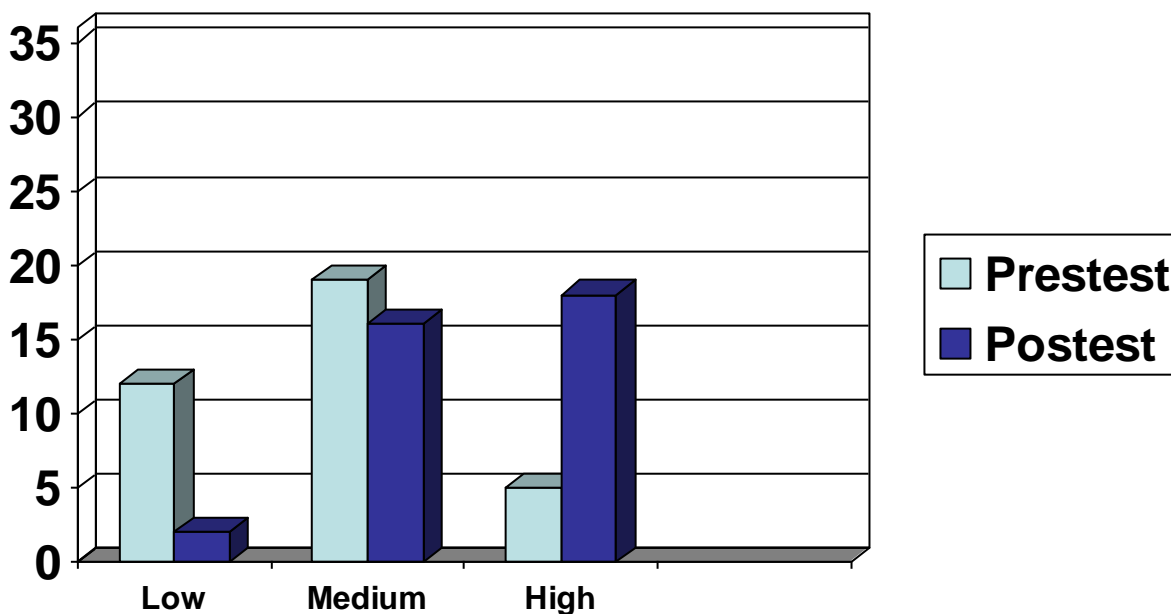
4.4.1. Achieved objectives

4.4.1.1. Improvements in students' language proficiency

The comparison of pre-test and post-test result on students' language proficiency will be done as follow:

4.4.1.1.1 Comparison of pre-test and post-test result on Listening skill

Chart 15: Comparison of pre-test and post-test result on Listening skill

The chart above showed that students achieved good result on listening skill. 18 students got high mark, only 2 students got low mark. And there is not remarkable change on the average students.

4.4.1.1.2 Comparison of pre-test and post-test result on Speaking

Chart 16: Comparison of pre-test and post-test result on Speaking
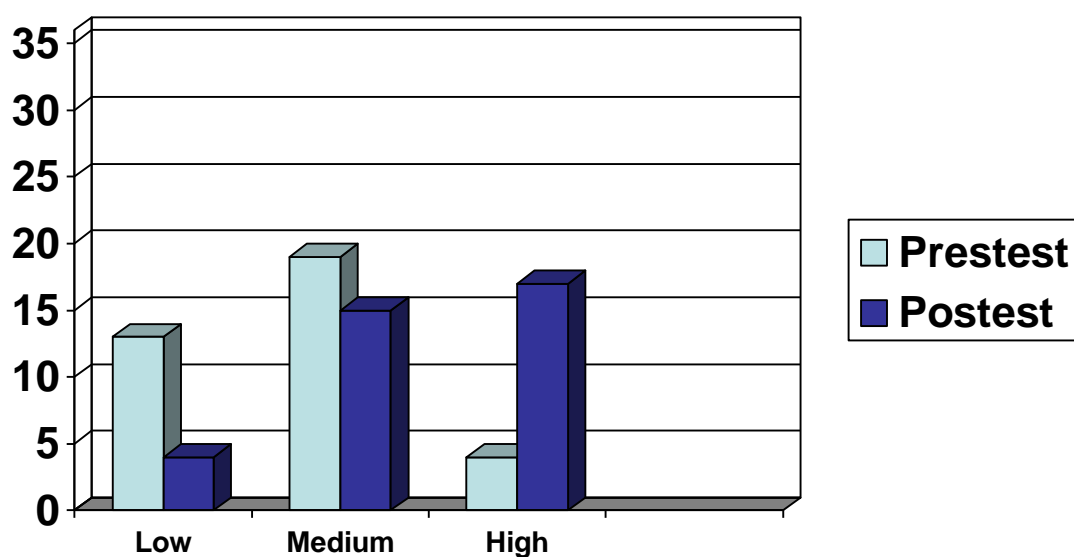
We can see from the chart that there is a big change on the number of students at low level, there are only 4 students at low level on the post test. Beside, the number of students at high level increased much.

4.4.1.1.3 Comparison of pre-test and post-test result on Reading

Chart 17: Comparison of pre-test and post-test result on Reading
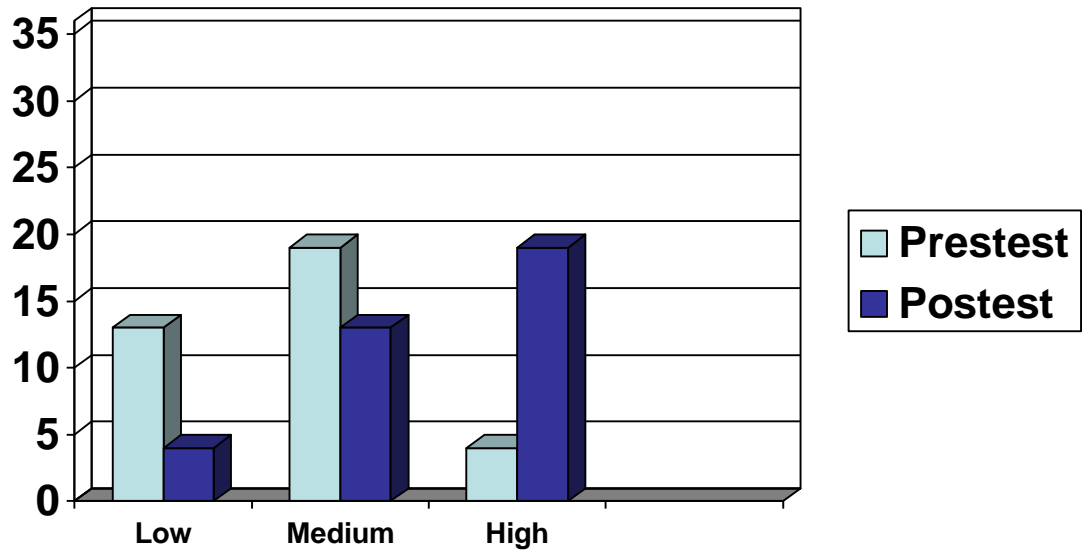
After applying project-based learning, many students had good mark on reading skill (19). The students at low and average level decreased remarkably.

4.4.1.1.4 Comparison of pre-test and post-test result on Writing

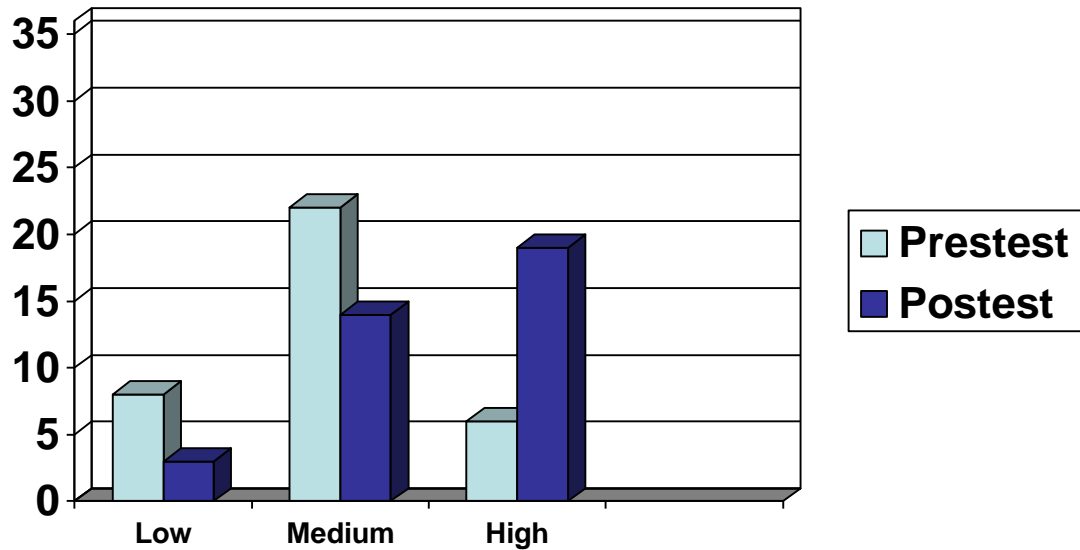**Chart 18: Comparison of pre-test and post-test result on Writing**

The chart above showed that students made surprising progress on writing, 19 students got good marks and only 3 students got low mark.

As can be seen from the charts above, the students' language proficiency are much better. Therefore, it can be concluded that the lesson plan gained success with the improvement in students' language proficiency.

4.4.1.2. Improvements in students' active and independent learning

Firstly, the action plan gained the remarkable objective in improving students' active and independent learning After experimental teaching, most of the students showed their improvement in it.

Secondly, the change of students' opinions on the lesson activities was one of the biggest achieved objectives. A large number of them admitted that the lesson activities their teacher used with application of project - based learning was quite appropriate for them so they were highly motivated and involved in classroom activities.

Thirdly, it is argued that the researcher did try her best in project - based learning in classroom activities to be more suitable to her students language active independent learning. The data collected from questionnaire after experimental teaching showed that they were quite interested

in the classroom activities, felt more comfortable and confident with the learning task they were given so they participated in the classroom activities actively.

4.4.2. Unachieved objectives

Despite the fact that there were more students participating in classroom activities, there remained several problems.

First of all, the designed classroom activities did not receive all of the great agreement from the students. As mentioned before, there still were some students who found the classroom activities not very appropriate for them.

Second, the students' language proficiency did not increase as high as the researcher expected. This means that the students did not participate in the classroom activities in all of the given time and some of them did not take part in the classroom activities fully and actively at some time though the new technique was applied.

4.4.3. Derived difficulties

The action plan created some difficulties. First, the teacher had to spend so much time to prepare for each lesson because she had to study the lesson very carefully to decide what activity should be done, or how to organize classroom activities to have a smooth lesson. Second, in the process of teaching, the teacher may get confused about controlling the groups. These difficulties mentioned may be solved. The solution will be mentioned in the next chapter.

4.5. Summary

Chapter IV has been devoted to a description and discussion of all the stages of the AR. Pre-action research identified the main reasons for students' low language proficiency and passive dependent. Pretest and posttest as well as questionnaire survey are data collection instruments which were used to collect the data for this purpose. Therefore, the causes of the problem was identified as the inappropriateness of the classroom activities and teaching method in the English lessons after analyzing the initial data. From, these results, the hypothesis of the study is formed: the use of project - based learning in English lessons will help to increase students' language proficiency and active independent learning in English classes. An action plan was carried out with the post action research data collected through posttest, and questionnaire survey to measure students' language proficiency and active independent learning. An evaluation of the action research was made. The evaluation showed that students' pproficiency, active and independent

learning significantly increased when the researcher applied the new technique - project - based learning task.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter includes four sections. The first section provides some discussions of the major findings, the second discusses the recommendations, the third is the limitations of the study and suggestions for further study. The chapter ends with a conclusion to the whole study.

5.1. Major findings

The major findings of the study were drawn out after the action research. Firstly, the data analysis of pre-action research identifies the reasons why the students' language proficiency and active independent learning is low, which originates from the learning activities and the teaching procedure. The inappropriateness of learning activities and teaching method for student' language proficiency and active independent learning causes low level of their interest, motivation, enthusiasm, attention, concentration and enjoyment in learning activities in English classes.

Secondly, the use of project - based learning can help teacher to create an active learning environment and increase students' participation in learning activities, which seems a big challenge for an English class. In order to do so, it is the teacher's job to prepare lesson plans carefully and equip themselves with the skill of monitoring and managing the English classes.

The last major finding shows that an English lesson with the use of project - based learning and careful preparation of the teachers can help to make students more active and independent in learning activities.

5.2. Recommendations

To make all students feel interested and involved in the classroom activities, it is necessary for the teacher to share her intention in organizing the lesson with the students, for example, the teacher should tell them which group they are and call these groups by funny names or let them choose their names. By these ways, students may feel confident and ready to participate in the classroom activities. Therefore, they participated more actively and fully.

5.3. Limitations and suggestions for further research

The study has attained some results in improving the TOEIC level 3 student's language proficiency and active independent learning at HPU. However, some limitations are inevitable.

Firstly, the study has been done with a rather small number of participants in a short time time, so the generalizability of the results is limited. The study would be much more reliable if it were conducted in longer time.

Secondly, although the research used new technique with project - based to suit students' language proficiency and active independent learning as the solution to the problems in her class, the results achieved from action plan were not as the researcher' expectation. There were still some students who were not involved in classroom activities because they found these activities not interesting enough or not appropriate for their level. Not all students were on task all the given time. Therefore, if the teachers understand their students better and have more careful preparation to avoid getting confused about who is doing what, students will feel the tasks they get appropriate for them, so they can be confident to be on task

As no single research design is flawless, all-inclusive and complete, this study cannot cover everything in language proficiency and active independent learning . It is suggested that the above limitations be the challenging questions for any further study, which will find out more effective methods to overcome these shortcomings.

5.4. Conclusion

After having taught for nine years at HPU, the researcher realized that most all students' language proficiency is low and the students did not gain much participation in learning activities when they were in English classes. Therefore, the researcher wanted to find out the main causes of the problem related to students' low language proficiency and passive dependent learning in English classes. In addition, she also wanted to find out a better way of teaching in these classes by using a new technique and conduct an experimental teaching in a group of students.

The results from data collected of this study can be summarized as follows:

First, the main cause of students' low language proficiency and active independent learning in classroom activities comes from the teachers' teaching method. The initial collected data revealed the fact that using an inappropriate teaching method and classroom activities was the main cause of students' low language proficiency and passive dependent learning in English classroom .

Second, the situation was improved when the researcher used activities with the project - based learning that was suitable to her students.

Third, most of the students in the researched class were more interested and involved in the classroom activities and they were on task most of the given time.

Although the action plan gained some success, the solution applied in the action plan created some difficulties for the teacher. Firstly, the teacher must spend lot of time in preparing the lesson plans because it is very important for her to study the lesson very carefully to help her students, to understand and to be interested in the lessons during the process of teaching, or how to organize classroom activities with different activities and to have a smooth lesson. In order to solve this problem, it is useful to build up a series of interesting tasks and keep them to use in the future. Secondly, the teacher may get confused about controlling the 5 groups of students in the process of teaching, so sometimes she meets some difficulties in her classroom.

The results of the study may probably trigger a number of thoughtful thoughts among the teachers of English at HPU. More and more efforts should be made by the teachers to find their own right approach to teaching in the English classroom. However, this is action research work in the researcher's own class and the above recommendations are not quite comprehensive. The researcher would highly appreciate any contribution to this study with a view to fostering it and, in the long run, bringing greater benefits to the students at HPU.

APPENDIX 1A : QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Dear students,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to know about your attitude towards to your current learning English and the English lessons. Its ultimate purpose is to improve teaching and learning English. Please do give your own opinions frankly!

Please, circle or tick the answer that best described your ideas and add final comments at the bottom of the sheet if you wish .We need your frank opinions about the English lessons to make them more relevant and interesting, as well as to meet your needs .We thank you for your cooperation!

1. Your attitude toward learning English in general.

Do you like learning English?

A. Yes

B. Maybe

C. No

2. Overall opinions

On the whole, what do you think about the English lessons in your class?

A. Boring   B. Not very interesting   C. Quite interesting

D. Interesting   E. Very interesting

3. Opinions of classroom activities

On the whole, what do you think about the English classroom activities?

A. Boring   B. Not very interesting   C. Quite interesting

D. Interesting   E. Very interesting

4. The activeness and independence in the English classroom activities

How are you active and independent in the English classroom activities?

A. Not active and independent .   B. Not very active and independent

C. Quite active and independent   D. Active and independent

E. Very active and independent

5. The appropriateness of classroom activities

How are the classroom activities appropriate for your language proficiency and active and independent learning?

A. Inappropriate   B. Not really appropriate

C. Appropriate   D. Quite appropriate

E. Really appropriate

6. The appropriateness of classroom materials

How are the materials in use are appropriate for your level?

A. Inappropriate   B. Not really appropriate

C. Appropriate   D. Quite appropriate   E. Really appropriate

7. The appropriateness of the teaching method

What do you think about the teaching method used in English lessons?

A. Inappropriate   B. Not really appropriate for your level

C Appropriate   D Quite appropriate

E Really appropriate

<u>Comments:</u>

Thank you for your co-operation!

CÂU HỎI KHẢO SÁT

Các em thân mến,

Hãy điền vào bảng câu hỏi này và gửi lại cho chúng tôi. Chúng tôi cần những ý kiến thẳng thắn của các em về việc học tiếng Anh trên lớp để làm chúng ngày càng thú vị và phù hợp hơn cũng như để hiểu được mong muốn của các em.

Hãy khoanh tròn hoặc đánh dấu vào câu trả lời miêu tả đúng nhất ý kiến của em và viết thêm một vài bình luận của em ở dưới. Rất cảm ơn sự hợp tác của các em!

1. Ý kiến chung

Em có thích học tiếng Anh không?

A. Có

B. Có thể

C. Không

2. Em nghĩ gì về các giờ học tiếng Anh ở lớp em?

A. Buồn chán   B. Không thú vị lắm   C. Khá thú vị

D. Thú vị   E. Rất thú vị

3. Ý kiến về các hoạt động trong lớp

Em nghĩ gì về các hoạt động trong giờ học tiếng Anh?

A. Buồn chán   B. Không thú vị lắm   C. Khá thú vị

D. Thú vị   E. Rất thú vị

4. Tính chủ động trong việc học tiếng Anh trên lớp

Em chủ động trong các hoạt động học tiếng Anh trong lớp như thế nào?

A. Không chủ động   B. Không chủ động mấy   C. Hơi chủ động

D. Chủ động   E. Hoàn toàn chủ động

5. Tính phù hợp của các hoạt động học tiếng Anh

Em thấy các hoạt động trong giờ tiếng Anh phù hợp các kỹ năng và tính chủ động của em như thế nào?

A. Không phù hợp   B. Không thực sự phù hợp   C. Khá phù hợp

D. Phù hợp   E. Thực sự phù hợp

6. Tính phù hợp của tài liệu

Em thấy các tài liệu dùng trong các giờ học tiếng Anh phù hợp với các kỹ năng và tính chủ động của em như thế nào?

A. Không phù hợp   B. Không thực sự phù hợp   C. Khá phù hợp

D. Phù hợp   E. Thực sự phù hợp

7. Tính phù hợp của phương pháp dạy

Em nghĩ gì về phương pháp giảng dạy của giáo viên trong các giờ học tiếng Anh?

A. Không phù hợp   B. Không thực sự phù hợp   C. Khá phù hợp

D. Phù hợp   E. Thực sự phù hợp

<u>Ý kiến của em:</u>

Cám ơn sự hợp tác của các em!