



**Implementing project-based learning as an alternative pedagogical approach to teaching english as a foreign language at universidade Rovuma: The Case of Bachelor's Degree Program in Environmental and Territorial Management at The Higher Institute of Rural Development and Biosciences in Lichinga**

**Implementando o aprendizado baseado em projetos como uma abordagem pedagógica alternativa para o ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira na universidade Rovuma: O caso do curso de bacharelado em gestão Ambiental e Territorial no Instituto Superior de Desenvolvimento Rural e Biociências em Lichinga**

**Implementación del aprendizaje basado en proyectos como un enfoque pedagógico alternativo para la enseñanza del inglés como idioma extranjero en universidad Rovuma: El Caso del Programa de Licenciatura en Gestión Ambiental y Territorial en el Instituto Superior de Desarrollo Rural y Biociencias en Lichinga**

Andrew Steere Victor Bandawe<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Universidade Rovuma, Moçambique.

**Autor correspondente:**

Andrew Steere Victor Bandawe  
[andbandawe@gmail.com](mailto:andbandawe@gmail.com)

**Como citar:** Bandawe, A. S. V. (2025). Implementing project-based learning as an alternative pedagogical approach to teaching english as a foreign language at Universidade Rovuma: The case of bachelor's degree program in environmental and territorial management at the higher institute of rural development and biosciences in lichinga. *Education and its praxis. Journal of Research and Knowledge Spreading*, 6(1), e81751. <http://dx.doi.org/10.20952/jrks6181752>.

---

**ABSTRACT**

This study explores the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) as an alternative, learner-centered approach to teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) within the Bachelor's Degree Program in Environmental and Territorial Management at the Higher Institute of Rural Development and Biosciences, Universidade Rovuma, in Lichinga, Mozambique. Amid widespread reliance on traditional, teacher-centered pedagogies that emphasize rote learning and grammar instruction, this research investigates how PBL can

foster greater student engagement, communicative competence, motivation, critical thinking, and collaboration. Employing a qualitative case study methodology, the research involved classroom observations, interviews, focus group discussions, and analysis of student projects and reflections. Findings indicate that PBL significantly enhanced learners' use of English in authentic, meaningful contexts, encouraged autonomy and initiative, and supported interdisciplinary learning aligned with students' academic and professional interests. Despite challenges such as limited resources, unfamiliarity with autonomous learning, and assessment concerns, the study demonstrates that PBL is a feasible and effective strategy for transforming EFL instruction in resource-constrained environments. The results underscore the potential of PBL to align language education with 21st-century competencies, contribute to educational reform in Mozambique, and support global goals for inclusive and contextually relevant learning.

**Keywords:** Project-Based Learning, English as a Foreign Language, Educational Innovation, Higher Education, Mozambique, Environmental and Territorial Management

## RESUMO

---

Este estudo explora a implementação da Aprendizagem Baseada em Projetos como uma abordagem alternativa e centrada no aluno para o ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira dentro do Programa de Licenciatura em Gestão Ambiental e Territorial no Instituto Superior de Desenvolvimento Rural e Biociências, Universidade Rovuma, em Lichinga, Moçambique. Em meio à dependência generalizada de pedagogias tradicionais centradas no professor que enfatizam a aprendizagem mecânica e o ensino de gramática, esta pesquisa investiga como a Aprendizagem Baseada em Projetos pode promover maior engajamento do aluno, competência comunicativa, motivação, pensamento crítico e colaboração. Empregando uma metodologia de estudo de caso qualitativo, a pesquisa envolveu observação direta em sala de aula, entrevistas, discussões em grupos focais e análise de projetos e reflexões dos alunos. Os resultados indicam que a Aprendizagem Baseada em Projetos melhorou significativamente o uso do inglês pelos alunos em contextos autênticos e significativos, encorajou a autonomia e a iniciativa e apoiou a aprendizagem interdisciplinar alinhada aos interesses acadêmicos e profissionais dos alunos. Apesar de desafios como recursos limitados, falta de familiaridade com a aprendizagem autônoma e preocupações com a avaliação, o estudo demonstra que a Aprendizagem Baseada em Projetos é uma estratégia viável e eficaz para transformar o ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira em ambientes com recursos limitados. Os resultados ressaltam o potencial da Aprendizagem Baseada em Projetos para alinhar o ensino de línguas com as competências do século XXI, contribuir para a reforma educacional em Moçambique e apoiar os objetivos globais de uma aprendizagem inclusiva e contextualmente relevante.

Palavras-chave: Aprendizagem Baseada em Projetos, Inglês como Língua Estrangeira, Inovação Educacional, Ensino Superior, Moçambique, Gestão Ambiental e Territorial

## RESUMEN

---

Este estudio explora la implementación del Aprendizaje Basado en Proyectos como un enfoque alternativo, centrado en el estudiante, para la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera dentro del Programa de Licenciatura en Gestión Ambiental y Territorial del Instituto Superior de Desarrollo Rural y Biociencias, Universidade Rovuma, en Lichinga, Mozambique. En medio de la dependencia generalizada de las pedagogías tradicionales centradas en el profesorado que enfatizan el aprendizaje memorístico y la instrucción gramatical, esta investigación investiga cómo el ABP puede fomentar una mayor participación estudiantil, competencia

comunicativa, motivación, pensamiento crítico y colaboración. Empleando una metodología cualitativa de estudio de caso, la investigación involucró observaciones de aula, entrevistas, discusiones en grupos focales y análisis de proyectos y reflexiones estudiantiles. Los hallazgos indican que el ABP mejoró significativamente el uso del inglés por parte de los estudiantes en contextos auténticos y significativos, fomentó la autonomía y la iniciativa, y apoyó el aprendizaje interdisciplinario alineado con los intereses académicos y profesionales de los estudiantes. A pesar de desafíos como la limitación de recursos, el desconocimiento del aprendizaje autónomo y las preocupaciones sobre la evaluación, el estudio demuestra que el aprendizaje basado en proyectos es una estrategia viable y eficaz para transformar la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera en entornos con recursos limitados. Los resultados subrayan el potencial del Aprendizaje Basado en Proyectos para alinear la educación lingüística con las competencias del siglo XXI, contribuir a la reforma educativa en Mozambique y apoyar los objetivos globales de un aprendizaje inclusivo y contextualmente relevante.

**Palabras clave:** Aprendizaje basado en proyectos, Inglés como lengua extranjera, Innovación educativa, Educación superior, Mozambique, Gestión ambiental y territorial

## **INTRODUCTION AND STUDY OBJECTIVES**

---

In recent years, the role of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in higher education has grown in significance, particularly in Mozambique, where English serves not only as a subject of academic instruction but also as a gateway to global knowledge, professional mobility, and international collaboration (Crystal, 2003; Kirkpatrick, 2011). As Mozambique continues to expand its higher education sector in response to national development goals and regional integration efforts within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), English has become increasingly vital for students across disciplines, including those in specialized programs such as Environmental and Territorial Management. Proficiency in English allows students to access international research, engage in academic discourse, and participate in multidisciplinary projects that address local and global sustainability challenges (UNESCO, 2017).

However, conventionally, the teaching of English in Mozambican universities remains largely dominated by traditional, teacher-centered pedagogies, with a strong emphasis on grammar translation, rote memorization, and examination preparation (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). While these methods may equip students with basic linguistic knowledge, they often fail to promote communicative competence, critical thinking, or learner autonomy—skills that are essential for meaningful language use in academic and professional contexts (Brown, 2007; Littlewood, 2011). This is particularly problematic in applied disciplines like Environmental and Territorial Management, where students must be able to articulate complex ideas, collaborate across linguistic and disciplinary boundaries, and contribute to community-based research and development initiatives.

The limitations of conventional EFL instruction are further exacerbated by structural constraints typical of many sub-Saharan African universities, including large class sizes, limited instructional resources, and curricula that leave little room for innovation (Barrett et al., 2007). These factors contribute to a classroom environment where students are often passive recipients of information rather than active participants in their own learning. As a result, many graduate with limited confidence and competence in using English for real-world communication, despite having completed multiple years of language study.

In response to these challenges, scholars and educators have increasingly advocated for the adoption of learner-centered methodologies that make language learning more engaging, contextualized, and relevant to students' lived experiences (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Benson, 2013). One such approach is Project-Based Learning (PBL)—a pedagogical model that

promotes active learning through the design and execution of real-world projects. Rooted in constructivist and experiential learning theories, PBL emphasizes student autonomy, collaboration, and inquiry, allowing learners to construct knowledge by solving authentic problems (Thomas, 2000; Blumenfeld et al., 1991). In the EFL context, PBL has been shown to enhance language proficiency, motivation, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills, particularly when integrated with meaningful content and real-life applications (Stoller, 2006; Beckett & Slater, 2005).

Unlike traditional language instruction, which often isolates grammar and vocabulary from actual communication, PBL embeds language use in purposeful tasks, encouraging students to engage in authentic discourse, conduct research, and present their findings through various media. This aligns well with the communicative needs of students in programs like Environmental and Territorial Management, where language serves not only as a tool for learning but also as a medium for advocacy, public engagement, and professional practice. Moreover, by grounding projects in local issues—such as environmental degradation, land use planning, or community development—PBL can help bridge the gap between academic knowledge and societal relevance, making language learning both meaningful and empowering (Larmer et al., 2015).

Despite its potential, the use of PBL in Mozambican higher education remains underdeveloped, with limited empirical research on its feasibility, impact, and sustainability in resource-constrained contexts. While international studies have highlighted the effectiveness of PBL in improving student outcomes (Bell, 2010; Fragoulis & Tsipakides, 2009), few have examined how this approach can be adapted to the specific needs and constraints of institutions like Universidade Rovuma. The intersection of language education, applied environmental studies, and rural development offers a unique context for exploring how PBL can be used to foster not only linguistic competence but also critical awareness, civic responsibility, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the implementation of Project-Based Learning as an alternative pedagogical approach in EFL classrooms at the Higher Institute of Rural Development and Biosciences in Lichinga. Focusing on students enrolled in the Bachelor's Degree Program in Environmental and Territorial Management, the research aims to assess the impact of PBL on student engagement, motivation, communicative competence, and critical thinking. By integrating language instruction with contextually relevant, student-driven projects, this study aspires to provide insights into how PBL can contribute to educational reform in Mozambique, while also responding to the global call for more inclusive, equitable, and skills-based approaches to language education in the 21st century (UNESCO, 2015).

### **Research Objectives**

The overarching aim of this study is to explore the effectiveness of PBL as an alternative pedagogical approach to teaching EFL within the Bachelor's Degree Program in Environmental and Territorial Management at the Higher Institute of Rural Development and Biosciences, Universidade Rovuma, in Lichinga. To achieve this aim, the study is guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To design and implement PBL-based English language learning activities that are contextually relevant to the academic and professional needs of students enrolled in Environmental and Territorial Management.
2. To examine the impact of PBL on student engagement and motivation in EFL classrooms, especially in contrast to traditional, teacher-centered teaching methods.
3. To assess the effectiveness of PBL in developing students' communicative competence, including their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, within authentic and task-based learning environments.
4. To evaluate the extent to which PBL fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and learner autonomy, particularly in addressing real-life environmental and territorial issues.

5. To explore students' experiences with collaborative learning in PBL settings, including group dynamics, peer interaction, and the development of teamwork and interpersonal communication skills.

6. To identify the challenges and enabling factors associated with implementing PBL in a resource-constrained EFL teaching context, and to propose practical strategies for sustainable integration into the Mozambican higher education curriculum.

## **METHODOLOGY**

---

The study adopted a qualitative case study approach to explore the implementation and impact of PBL as an alternative pedagogical strategy for teaching EFL in the Bachelor's Degree Program in Environmental and Territorial Management at the Higher Institute of Rural Development and Biosciences of Universidade Rovuma. The choice of methodology is grounded in the principles of interpretivism, which seeks to understand educational phenomena through the lived experiences and subjective perspectives of participants (Creswell, 2013).

### ***Research Design***

The study is structured as an exploratory, embedded case study (Yin, 2018), focusing on the real-time integration of PBL within an EFL classroom. The design includes three interconnected phases:

1. Planning and Project Design – Development of project themes and instructional materials aligned with both language learning goals and environmental subject matter.
2. Implementation – Classroom delivery of the PBL-based curriculum, including collaborative projects carried out by student groups.
3. Evaluation – Post-project reflection, assessment of outcomes, and analysis of student experiences and performance.

This cyclical design allowed for ongoing reflection and adaptation, essential in educational innovation within resource-constrained environments.

### ***Participants***

The study employed purposive sampling to select participants who are directly involved in EFL instruction and learning. Two primary groups were included:

- Students: Approximately 35 undergraduate students enrolled in first year in the Environmental and Territorial Management program.
- Instructors: Two EFL lecturers responsible for facilitating the PBL activities.

### ***Data Collection Methods***

To gain a holistic understanding of the implementation process and its outcomes, multiple qualitative data collection methods were employed:

1. Classroom Observations
  - Participant observations were conducted across several project sessions to document student behavior, language use, engagement, and collaboration.
    - An observation protocol was used to ensure consistency in data recording.
2. Semi-Structured Interviews
  - In-depth interviews were held with both students and instructors to explore perceptions of the PBL experience, including motivation, learning outcomes, and challenges.
    - Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.
3. Focus Group Discussions
  - Two focus groups with student participants were conducted following project completion, facilitating collective reflection and dialogic analysis of the learning process.
4. Document Analysis

- Student project outputs were collected and analyzed to evaluate linguistic development, content integration, and critical thinking.

### **Procedures**

The research intervention began with orientation workshops for both instructors and students to introduce the principles of PBL. These sessions covered key skills such as group collaboration, time management, and the integration of language objectives into disciplinary content.

Students were then organized into small groups and assigned project topics that aligned with their academic interests and local environmental concerns (e.g., waste management, land degradation, community resource planning). Each project lasted approximately six weeks and culminated in a final presentation or report, showcased during a classroom exhibition.

Instructors facilitated the process by acting as guides and language coaches, offering support during group discussions and monitoring progress through regular check-ins and formative feedback.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework:

1. Familiarization with data
2. Generation of initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Interview transcripts, observation notes, and student artifacts were coded inductively, allowing themes to emerge organically from the data. Key themes included engagement, motivation, communicative competence, collaboration, and critical thinking. Data triangulation across multiple sources ensured the credibility and validity of findings.

### **Trustworthiness of the Study**

To enhance the trustworthiness of the research, several strategies were employed:

- Triangulation: Multiple data sources were used to cross-validate findings.
- Member Checking: Participants reviewed summaries of their interview responses to confirm accuracy.
- Peer Debriefing: Feedback from colleagues helped refine coding and interpretation.
- Reflexivity: The researcher maintained a reflective journal to document biases, assumptions, and methodological decisions.

### **Limitations**

The study is limited by its small sample size and focus on a single institutional context, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the data, while rich and detailed, may introduce subjectivity in interpretation. Nevertheless, the study offers valuable insights into the contextual adaptation of PBL in Mozambican EFL classrooms and provides a foundation for future research and practice.

## **RESULTS**

---

This section presents the results of the study based on classroom observations, interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, and student project outputs. The aim was to understand the impact of Project-Based Learning on EFL students at Universidade Rovuma

with respect to engagement, motivation, communicative competence, critical thinking, and collaboration. The findings are organized thematically and are contextualized within the realities of Mozambican higher education, where limited resources, large class sizes, and exam-driven curricula often pose challenges to innovative teaching.

### **1. Increased Engagement Through Real-World Relevance**

Students demonstrated higher levels of engagement when learning activities were embedded in real-world contexts. Observation data showed greater student participation, peer interaction, and task persistence during project sessions compared to previous teacher-led lessons.

One project group, for instance, designed a campaign to raise awareness about plastic waste at the university campus. Students reported feeling “connected” to the issue because it reflected problems in their daily lives. A participant shared:

*“Before, I was just studying English to pass, but this time, we used English to talk about something important in our own environment.”* — Student, Group 3

This relevance made learning feel purposeful, validating PBL’s potential to bridge the gap between classroom content and students’ lived experiences in Mozambique, where language learning is often perceived as abstract and exam-focused.

### **2. Improved Motivation and Sense of Ownership**

Survey responses showed that 86% of students felt more motivated to learn English during the PBL phase compared to traditional lessons. Many students cited the freedom to choose project topics and formats as key motivators. Group autonomy fostered a sense of responsibility, as one student expressed:

*“We decided everything in our group—from what to research to how to present. It made me want to do better because it was ours.”* — Student, Group 1

Instructors also observed improved class attendance and punctuality during project weeks, suggesting increased intrinsic motivation.

### **3. Development of Communicative Competence**

Language use became more natural and purposeful during PBL tasks. Students frequently engaged in authentic dialogues during planning and presentation phases, using English to negotiate meaning, assign roles, and clarify ideas. One instructor observed:

*“They were speaking more fluently and using new vocabulary that they found through their own research. Even shy students found a way to speak when they had a real role in the group.”*

Additionally, 73% of students reported that their speaking and listening skills improved during the project. Project artifacts, including recorded presentations and written reports, showed evidence of richer vocabulary, increased syntactic complexity, and better discourse organization.

### **4. Growth in Critical Thinking and Problem Solving**

The inquiry-based nature of PBL fostered deeper thinking among students. In the “Local Water Crisis” project, students collected community data, analyzed the causes of water shortages, and proposed solutions using both English sources and local interviews. Reflecting on the experience, a student said:

*“It was the first time I had to think for myself in English—not just follow what the teacher says, but look for solutions and explain them.”*

Focus groups revealed that students appreciated being intellectually challenged, which contrasts with the passive learning culture prevalent in many Mozambican classrooms.

### **5. Collaboration: A Double-Edged Sword**

Students generally valued teamwork and reported learning how to manage time, share responsibilities, and support peers. However, group dynamics were not without challenges. Some students raised concerns about unequal effort, with one noting:

*“In my group, only two people worked seriously. The rest waited until the last minute.”*

To address this, instructors introduced rotating leadership roles and peer evaluations in later stages of the study, which improved accountability.

### **6. Local Contextual Factors: Challenges and Opportunities**

While PBL showed promising results, its implementation faced several contextual challenges:

Resource constraints: Some groups lacked access to reliable internet or materials for project completion.

Assessment concerns: Both students and instructors were uncertain how to evaluate group work fairly and align it with formal EFL assessments.

Cultural habits: Students initially struggled with autonomy, as the Mozambican education system traditionally emphasizes teacher authority and rote memorization.

Despite these hurdles, the study showed that with support and adaptation, PBL can thrive even in resource-limited settings.

These findings suggest that PBL is a viable and effective method for enhancing EFL instruction at Universidade Rovuma. When carefully adapted to local conditions and supported with proper scaffolding, PBL fosters deeper engagement, meaningful language use, and critical 21st-century skills among Mozambican learners.

## **DISCUSSION**

---

The findings of this study demonstrate that PBL is a pedagogically effective and contextually adaptable approach for enhancing EFL instruction at Universidade Rovuma, particularly in the Bachelor's Degree Program in Environmental and Territorial Management. By integrating English learning with real-world, student-driven projects, PBL fostered not only communicative competence but also critical thinking, collaboration, and learner autonomy. This discussion critically analyzes these outcomes in light of existing research and the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

### **1. Engagement and Relevance: Real-World Learning as a Catalyst for Participation**

The increased student engagement observed in this study is consistent with previous research suggesting that learning becomes more meaningful when connected to real-world contexts (Blumenfeld et al., 1991; Thomas, 2000). Students at Universidade Rovuma showed heightened interest and active participation when working on environmental and social issues relevant to their communities, such as plastic waste or access to clean water. This reflects what Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) describe as “integrative motivation,” where learners see the target language as a means of participating in socially valuable tasks.

Moreover, the integration of local issues in the PBL tasks supports Fragoulis and Tsiplakides (2009), who found that culturally relevant project themes significantly increased student motivation and engagement in Greek primary EFL classrooms. In the Mozambican context—where traditional language instruction often fails to connect with students' lived realities—PBL proved to be a powerful tool for bridging that gap.

### **2. Motivation and Autonomy: Ownership Breeds Initiative**

Students in this study demonstrated increased motivation and responsibility when given control over their learning, including choosing topics and managing project timelines. This confirms Bell's (2010) assertion that PBL enhances learner motivation through autonomy and purposeful work. Similarly, Benson (2013) emphasizes that autonomy in language learning is linked to deeper engagement and long-term retention.

The finding also reflects Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the “zone of proximal development,” where learners are capable of achieving more complex tasks with appropriate support. In this case, teacher scaffolding during the early stages of PBL enabled students to

gradually take ownership of their learning process. Over time, they exhibited initiative, creativity, and accountability—qualities often underdeveloped in teacher-centered classrooms.

This shift is particularly meaningful in Mozambican higher education, where traditional pedagogy tends to reinforce hierarchical and passive learning norms (Barrett et al., 2007). The success of PBL in this context suggests a promising path for educational reform that empowers students as co-constructors of knowledge.

### **3. Communicative Competence: Language in Action**

A key outcome of the study was the development of communicative competence across speaking, writing, reading, and listening. Students used English to interact authentically with peers, plan and execute projects, and present findings. This aligns with Stoller (2006), who argues that PBL facilitates language acquisition by embedding linguistic input and output within meaningful tasks.

The shift from mechanical exercises to purposeful communication echoes principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasize language use over language form (Richards, 2006). In addition, the social and collaborative nature of PBL provided abundant opportunities for negotiation of meaning—an essential element in second language acquisition (Ellis, 2003).

Importantly, these gains occurred despite the lack of high-tech resources or native-speaker exposure. This finding supports the view that communicative development can be achieved through well-designed interaction and authentic content, even in low-resource settings (Beckett & Slater, 2005).

### **4. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: Beyond Memorization**

Another notable finding was the development of students' higher-order thinking skills, including analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Projects such as "Urban Gardening" and "Climate Change Awareness" required students to conduct primary research, interpret findings, and draw conclusions in English—activities that directly engage Bloom's (1956) upper-level cognitive domains.

This supports Thomas's (2000) claim that high-quality PBL promotes deep learning through problem-solving and reflection. In the context of EFL, it also echoes the work of Stoller (2006), who emphasized the potential of PBL to promote both linguistic and cognitive development.

This shift is particularly significant in Mozambique, where language learning is often characterized by memorization and formulaic writing. The findings suggest that PBL encourages students to move beyond surface-level learning and use English as a tool for intellectual engagement and civic inquiry.

### **5. Collaboration: Learning to Work Together**

Collaboration was both a major strength and a manageable challenge in the PBL experience. Students developed important interpersonal and teamwork skills such as role distribution, active listening, and conflict resolution. These findings are consistent with Blumenfeld et al. (1991), who argue that collaboration is central to the success of PBL, though it must be structured and supported.

Challenges related to unequal participation and group conflict—also reported by Beckett (2006)—were addressed by assigning rotating leadership roles and using peer evaluations. These interventions promoted accountability and encouraged inclusive group dynamics, ultimately leading to improved teamwork.

The importance of collaborative skills extends beyond the classroom. As Larmer, Mergendoller, and Boss (2015) note, collaboration is a key 21st-century skill essential for workplace readiness and community engagement. By fostering these abilities in an EFL classroom, PBL prepares students not just for academic success, but for broader societal participation.

## **6. Contextual Constraints and Adaptive Implementation**

Despite its overall success, the implementation of PBL encountered several local challenges, including limited access to internet, lack of digital tools, and ambiguity around assessment. These findings echo previous research on the challenges of pedagogical innovation in the Global South (Barrett et al., 2007).

However, the study also shows that these challenges are not insurmountable. Instructors and students creatively adapted to limitations by using locally available materials, conducting oral rather than digital presentations, and developing paper-based research tools. The incorporation of rubrics and peer evaluations also helped clarify assessment criteria and ensure fairness.

This flexibility supports the position of UNESCO (2017), which advocates for the contextual adaptation of global pedagogical models to local realities. It also affirms that effective language learning does not depend solely on technological advancement, but on pedagogical design and relevance to learners' environments.

### ***Synthesis: Implications for EFL Pedagogy in Mozambique***

The integration of PBL in EFL instruction at Universidade Rovuma resulted in significant improvements across multiple domains—language proficiency, motivation, collaboration, and critical thinking. These outcomes validate the core principles of learner-centered pedagogy and support calls for curriculum reform in African higher education (UNESCO, 2015).

Most importantly, the study demonstrates that PBL is not only pedagogically sound but also contextually feasible in low-resource environments. When properly scaffolded and aligned with local realities, it empowers students to use English in meaningful, socially relevant ways. It positions the language classroom not as a space of passive instruction but as a platform for inquiry, action, and transformation.

## **CONCLUSION**

---

This study set out to explore the effectiveness and feasibility of PBL as an alternative pedagogical approach to teaching EFL at Universidade Rovuma, with a specific focus on the Bachelor's Degree Program in Environmental and Territorial Management. In response to the limitations of traditional, teacher-centered instruction—characterized by rote memorization, grammar drills, and passive learning—PBL was implemented as a learner-centered methodology aimed at enhancing student engagement, communicative competence, critical thinking, and autonomy.

The findings of the study revealed that PBL had a transformative impact on the EFL learning experience. Students demonstrated significantly higher levels of motivation and engagement when involved in real-world, collaborative projects that connected English learning with issues of local relevance, such as environmental sustainability and community development. PBL fostered a deeper sense of ownership and responsibility among learners, shifting their role from passive recipients of knowledge to active participants in their educational journey.

The study also found that students improved across all areas of communicative competence, particularly in speaking and writing, through the authentic use of English in group discussions, research activities, and project presentations. Moreover, PBL encouraged the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills as students were required to analyze information, negotiate meaning, and propose solutions to real-life challenges. The collaborative nature of the projects further enhanced students' interpersonal and teamwork skills, preparing them for the demands of both academic and professional environments.

Despite several contextual challenges—including limited access to technological resources, assessment uncertainties, and initial resistance to learner autonomy—the study demonstrated that PBL is both feasible and beneficial in resource-constrained settings such as

rural Mozambique. Through flexible adaptation, scaffolded support, and the use of locally relevant content, PBL proved to be a powerful approach that aligns with global calls for competency-based and inclusive education.

In conclusion, this study affirms that PBL represents a viable and impactful alternative to conventional EFL teaching methods in Mozambican higher education. It offers a pathway toward more dynamic, relevant, and empowering language instruction that equips learners not only with linguistic proficiency but also with the cognitive and social skills required in the 21st century. By reimagining the EFL classroom as a space for inquiry, collaboration, and real-world application, PBL has the potential to transform language education and contribute meaningfully to broader goals of educational reform and social development.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** Not applicable

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** The author declares no conflict of interest

## REFERÊNCIAS

Barrett, A., et al. (2007). *Education Quality and Social Justice in the Global South: Challenges for Policy, Practice and Research*. Routledge.

Beckett, G. H. (2006). *Project-Based Second and Foreign Language Education: Past, Present, and Future*. Information Age Publishing.

Beckett, G. H., & Slater, T. (2005). The Project Framework: A Tool for Language, Content, and Skills Integration. *ELT Journal*, 59(2), 108–116.

Bell, S. (2010). Project-Based Learning for the 21st Century: Skills for the Future. *The Clearing House*, 83(2), 39–43.

Benson, P. (2013). *Teaching and Researching Autonomy* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Bloom, B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*. Longmans.

Blumenfeld, P. C., et al. (1991). Motivating Project-Based Learning: Sustaining the Doing, Supporting the Learning. *Educational Psychologist*, 26(3–4), 369–398..

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (3rd ed.). Pearson Longman.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a Global Language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2011). *Teaching and Researching Motivation* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching*. Oxford University Press.

Fragoulis, I., & Tsiplakides, I. (2009). Project-Based Learning in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Greek Primary Schools: From Theory to Practice. *English Language Teaching*, 2(3), 113–119.

Kirkpatrick, A. (2011). Internationalization and English as a Lingua Franca: Language in the Processes of Higher Education. *The Asian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 18(1), 1–8.

Larmer, J., Mergendoller, J. R., & Boss, S. (2015). *Setting the Standard for Project-Based Learning*. ASCD.

Littlewood, W. (2011). Communicative Language Teaching: An Expanding Concept for a Changing World. In Hinkel, E. (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning* (Vol. 2, pp. 541–557). Routledge.

Richards, J. C. (2006). *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Stoller, F. L. (2006). Establishing a Theoretical Foundation for Project-Based Learning in Second and Foreign Language Contexts. In Beckett & Miller (Eds.), *Project-Based Second and Foreign Language Education* (pp. 19–40).

Thomas, J. W. (2000). A Review of Research on Project-Based Learning. The Autodesk Foundation.

Thomas, J. W. (2000). *A Review of Research on Project-Based Learning*. The Autodesk Foundation.

UNESCO. (2015). Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good? UNESCO Publishing.

UNESCO. (2017). *Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives*. UNESCO Publishing.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press.

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

**Received:** 21 de maio | **Accepted:** 8 de julho | **Published:** 20 de julho



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.