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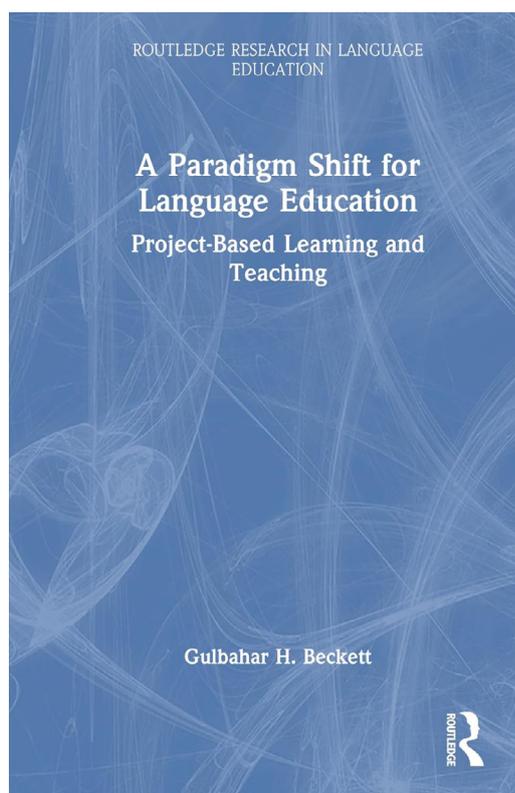
A Paradigm Shift for Language Education: A Book Review

Aidillah Suja ¹, Muassomah ², Sutaman ³

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia

A PARADIGM SHIFT FOR LANGUAGE EDUCATION: PROJECT-BASED LEARNING AND TEACHING, WRITTEN BY G.H. BECKETT, NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE, 2024, 166 PP., (PRINT BOOK), ISBN: 978-1032700168

In line with 21st-century curriculum reforms, "enhancing student learning" has long been a central focus in education, including language education. Researchers and educators have shown strong interest in student-centered approaches. Despite numerous efforts to improve the quality of language education, many classrooms remain predominantly teacher-centered (Sun & Zhu, 2023). In response to this, language scholars and educators have proposed Project-Based Learning and Teaching (PBLT) as an alternative instructional approach to teacher-led instruction (Chen & Yang, 2019; Guo et al., 2019). The book "*A Paradigm Shift for Language Education: Project-Based Learning and Teaching*" by Gulbahar H. Beckett provides an in-depth perspective on the need for a paradigm shift in language education by adopting PBLT. It highlights the significance of combining academic content instruction with developing 21st-century skills in second language (L2) learning. Beckett explains how PBLT can help students achieve deep understanding, think critically, and solve problems in real-world scenarios.



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Correspondence:
Aidillah Suja,
aidillahsuja87@gmail.com

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The 6-string chapters offer a unique insight into PBLT's application and theoretical foundations. The first chapter begins with the question, "Why Project-Based Learning and Teaching (PBLT)?" and discusses the background and philosophy behind PBLT, which has its roots in John Dewey's thoughts on experiential learning (Dewey, 1938), emphasizing that that language learners acquire knowledge most effectively through direct, hands-on experiences, actively constructing meaning through interaction with the target language environment, rather than passively absorbing information, making learning a dynamic process of doing, reflecting, and applying. Beckett introduces PBLT as an educational approach focusing on language teaching and developing 21st-century skills through real-world projects that integrate academic content and social skills. The chapter effectively argues that PBLT equips students not only for language proficiency but for real-world challenges by promoting mastery of both content knowledge and transferable cognitive and social skills. This discussion sets



the stage for a broader argument that a paradigm shift is necessary to meet the evolving needs of today's learners.

Chapter 2, "Philosophical Paradigms and Theoretical Perspectives," places PBLT within the functionalist paradigm, which emphasizes language socialization in real and meaningful contexts. Beckett contrasts PBLT with other methods, such as *Task-Based Language Teaching* (TBLT) and *Content-Based Instruction* (CBI), positioning PBLT as a more comprehensive approach to language acquisition, particularly in contexts requiring the integration of content knowledge and cross-cutting skills. However, the comparison with other approaches could benefit from more in-depth analysis of when and why educators might choose PBLT over TBLT or CBI, depending on the teaching context.

Chapter 3, "Project-Based Learning and Teaching Goals and Evaluations: Philosophical, Cultural, and Linguistic Models," presents an empirical investigation into the cross-cultural challenges of Chinese teachers and students engaging in Project-Based Learning and Teaching (PBLT) within Canadian ESL classrooms. Adopting an ontological perspective that views "human beings as active agents" (p. 60), this chapter delves into empirical data to explore teachers' perceptions of PBLT goals and both teachers' and students' perspectives on PBLT evaluation. The findings reveal a disparity between teachers' positive views of PBLT and students' mixed evaluations. This discrepancy can be attributed to philosophical differences, with teachers aiming to cultivate learners' metacognitive skills while students prioritize the acquisition of foundational knowledge. Cultural factors also play a significant role, as Chinese students, accustomed to a teacher-centered approach, may find the student-centered nature of PBLT unsettling due to reduced teacher involvement. The chapter offers valuable insights for educators working in multicultural contexts and proposes promising strategies for integrating cultural considerations into PBLT implementation.

Chapter 4, "Implementing Projects into Existing Curricula and Raising Awareness with the Project Framework," focuses on how projects can be integrated into current curricula. A case study from Canada demonstrates that PBLT, when applied using "The Project Framework," can seamlessly integrate academic content, skills development, and language learning. Beckett makes a strong argument for embedding project-based work throughout the curriculum rather than assigning it as standalone projects. While the case study is compelling, the chapter would benefit from a discussion of how this framework could be adapted for different educational settings, particularly those with limited resources or institutional support.

Chapter 5, "A Project for Critical Thinking and Language Development with Social Studies Social Media," explores how PBLT can enhance critical thinking and language devel-

opment using social media in social studies classes. Beckett emphasizes the growing importance of digital literacy alongside traditional language and critical thinking skills, demonstrating how PBLT can be mediated by technology to develop critical thinking (CT) in both first and second language learners. This chapter offers valuable insights for teacher education and preparation programs but could further explore the practical challenges teachers face when implementing technology-mediated PBLT, particularly in under-resourced settings.

Chapter 6, "Critical Project-Based Learning and Teaching for 21st Century with Five Cs," integrates critical thinking with the Five Cs to create authentic, challenging, collaborative learning experiences, communicative, critical thinking-oriented, and culturally responsive. Beckett underscores the value of these competencies in fostering not only linguistic development but also learners' social (including collaboration and teamwork, communication and negotiation skills, cultural awareness and sensitivity, and respect for diverse perspectives) and cognitive developments (involving critical thinking and problem-solving skills, creativity and innovation, information and digital literacy, and self-directed learning). This final chapter summarizes the book's main arguments and reiterates the importance of preparing students for a rapidly changing and digitized world.

This book offers some strengths which are useful for language educators and stakeholders. In regards of theoretical and practical balance, the book strikes a well-calibrated balance between theory and practice, providing a clear rationale for the use of PBLT in language education while offering practical case studies to illustrate its implementation. The use of John Dewey's experiential learning as a philosophical foundation gives the book depth, and its focus on real-world projects makes it highly relevant for educators. In terms of curriculum integration, the book explains in-detailed on how PBLT can be integrated into existing curricula. By showing how PBLT can be embedded throughout the learning process rather than isolated at the end of a course, Beckett provides educators with actionable strategies to shift toward more student-centered teaching. Lastly, in terms of second language (L2) research development, the discussion of PBLT's potential to develop not only language skills but also cognitive and social competencies make this book a solid resource for both academic and practitioner audiences.

The book also offers a broad and comprehensive view of how PBLT can be applied in language learning contexts and across various disciplines. Beckett integrates multiple aspects of teaching academic content and 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and digital literacy. This holistic approach reflects the complexity of modern education, where students are not just expected to learn subject-specific knowledge but also acquire transferable skills that prepare them for the chal-

allenges of the contemporary world. Integrating these competencies into language education is crucial for developing learners who can navigate academic and real-world scenarios effectively. This approach is highly relevant to current research trends focusing on project-based learning to foster language competence and cross-disciplinary skills, including problem-solving and collaboration in diverse fields.

The importance of technology integration in implementing PBLT is one of the key elements emphasized in this book, particularly in developing critical thinking skills and digital literacy. Beckett demonstrates how using social media platforms, digital collaboration tools, and other technological resources can significantly enhance the student learning experience, enabling more interactive and engaging project work. Digital tools allow students to collaborate beyond the classroom, interacting in broader, more authentic, and dynamic environments. This form of engagement helps learners apply their knowledge in real-world situations, which is critical for developing academic and practical skills. Beckett's focus on technology aligns with current educational research on technology-based learning, where digital technologies are increasingly recognized for their role in improving accessibility, student engagement, and overall learning outcomes. These tools promote self-directed learning and foster a deeper understanding of content and the skills to navigate a digitally driven world.

The book also thoroughly explores how PBLT can be adapted to work effectively in multicultural and multilingual environments. Beckett highlights the challenges and opportunities when implementing PBLT in cross-cultural contexts, particularly in interpreting project guidelines and facilitating effective intercultural communication among students from diverse backgrounds. This discussion is highly relevant to current research focusing on multicultural education, where adapting teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students has become an essential topic. Recognizing and embracing cultural diversity in language learning through PBLT reflects the growing body of research in inclusivity and multicultural education. These studies advocate for flexible and responsive teaching methods, as they are necessary to achieve optimal learning outcomes in diverse classrooms where students bring a wide range of cultural experiences and perspectives.

As every work has its strengths and drawbacks, some improvements would make this book more complete. Although

the book acknowledges the challenges of implementing PBLT—such as the need for a systematic guide for evaluating proposed projects, assessments within PBLT, high workloads, limited resources, and lack of institutional support—the solutions presented are not always detailed. A more in-depth discussion of how to overcome these challenges, particularly in resource-limited educational contexts, would enhance the book's practicality. Moreover, as a book advocating a paradigm shift, it would have been beneficial to include discussions on how PBLT can be adapted for teaching languages beyond English, such as Arabic or other languages with significant dialectal variations. This would increase the book's global relevance and applicability.

Gulbahar H. Beckett's *A Paradigm Shift for Language Education: Project-Based Learning and Teaching* offers a comprehensive and compelling argument for adopting PBLT in language education. It effectively balances theoretical insights with practical guidance, making it a valuable resource for educators, researchers, and policymakers interested in student-centered learning. While the book presents some challenges in implementation, it provides a solid foundation for those looking to transform their approach to language teaching in line with 21st-century educational goals.

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DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

None declared.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Aidillah Suja: Conceptualization, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing, funding acquisition.

Muassomah: Supervision, validation.

Sutaman: Supervision, writing – review & editing.

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