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**Teachers' Attitudes Towards Project-Based Learning
In Enhancing Vocabulary**

The Case Study of Middle Schools- Ouargla

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Dedication

To my beloved parents,
whose unwavering love, patience, and sacrifices
have been the foundation of every step I have taken.

To my brothers and sisters,
for their constant encouragement, warmth, and the
shared bond that has always given me strength.

To all members of my family,
near and far, whose prayers and support have
accompanied me throughout this journey.

To you all, I dedicate this work.

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Abstract

Vocabulary instruction in Algerian middle school EFL classrooms has long relied on traditional, decontextualized methods that have proven insufficient for developing authentic communicative competence. In this context, Project-Based Learning (PBL) has been proposed as a promising pedagogical strategy capable of enhancing vocabulary learning through meaningful, task-based engagement. However, the attitudes of teachers remain a decisive factor in the adoption of any pedagogical innovation.

The present study investigates the social and affective attitudes of Algerian middle school EFL teachers towards Project-Based Learning as a strategy for vocabulary enhancement. To achieve this aim, a descriptive research design was adopted, and a questionnaire was administered to 24 EFL teachers drawn from six middle schools in Ouargla during the academic year 2025–2026.

The findings reveal that the initial hypothesis is refuted: contrary to expectations, teachers do not hold uniformly favourable attitudes towards PBL. Specifically, only 37.5% of respondents reported regularly integrating PBL activities into their vocabulary instruction, while 62.5% cited insufficient training as a major barrier. Mean scores for the affective dimension ($M = 2.61$) fell below the neutral threshold, indicating prevalent reservations towards classroom implementation.

These results suggest that while teachers acknowledge PBL's theoretical merits, contextual and institutional constraints continue to hinder its effective adoption in Algerian EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Project-Based Learning (PBL), vocabulary learning, EFL, teacher attitudes, Algerian middle school, descriptive method.

List Of Abbreviations

2MS	Second Year Middle School
CBA	Competency-Based Approach
CEM	Collège d'Enseignement Moyen (Middle School)
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
L1	First Language (Mother Tongue)
L2	Second Language
M	Mean (arithmetic average)
N	Number of respondents
PBL	Project-Based Learning
SA	Strongly Agree
SD	Standard Deviation / Strongly Disagree (context-dependent)
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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General Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Algeria occupies a complex and evolving position within the national educational system (Bensekat, 2014; Baghoussi & El Ouchdi, 2019). Since the adoption of the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) in the early 2000s, Algerian middle schools have been formally oriented towards learner-centred, communicative pedagogies (Bensekat, 2014). Despite these reform intentions, classroom realities in Collèges d'Enseignement Moyen (CEMs) remain shaped by structural constraints — including large class sizes, examination pressure, and densely packed national syllabi — that continue to impede genuine pedagogical innovation (Baghoussi & El Ouchdi, 2019; Bensekat, 2014). As a result, vocabulary instruction in many Algerian EFL classrooms remains anchored in traditional, form-focused methods such as decontextualized word lists and rote memorization, which consistently fail to foster the deep, productive competence required for authentic communication (Bensekat, 2014; Baghoussi & El Ouchdi, 2019).

Project-Based Learning (PBL) has been proposed as a meaningful alternative, offering learners the opportunity to acquire vocabulary through purposeful, task-based engagement with authentic content (Thomas, 2000; Nation, 2001; Almulla, 2020). However, despite growing international interest in PBL as a vocabulary enhancement strategy, no published empirical study to date has examined Algerian middle school EFL teachers' attitudes towards its use in this specific pedagogical context (cf. Baghoussi & El Ouchdi, 2019; Bensekat, 2014; Almulla, 2020). This gap is significant, as teacher attitudes are widely recognized as a decisive mediating factor in the adoption of any educational innovation (Borg, 2003; Almulla, 2020). The present study was therefore designed to address this gap by investigating how EFL teachers in Ouargla perceive and relate to PBL as a strategy for vocabulary instruction.

1.2 Aim of the Study

The main aim of the present study is to investigate the attitudes of Algerian middle school EFL teachers towards the use of Project-Based Learning as a pedagogical strategy for enhancing vocabulary learning. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the cognitive, social, and affec-

tive dimensions of these attitudes, and to identify the factors that shape teachers' orientations towards PBL implementation in the specific context of Ouargla's middle schools.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The present study makes a twofold contribution. At the national level, it addresses a documented gap in the Algerian EFL research literature by providing the first empirical investigation of middle school teachers' attitudes towards PBL as a vocabulary instruction strategy, thereby offering evidence-based insights for teacher educators, curriculum designers, and educational policy-makers. At the international level, it contributes to the growing body of scholarship on PBL implementation in non-Western, under-resourced educational contexts, and applies the tripartite attitudinal framework (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993) in a novel EFL vocabulary teaching setting, extending its theoretical applicability beyond Western research traditions.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Despite the integration of PBL into the Algerian EFL curriculum, its classroom implementation remains limited due to structural constraints and insufficient teacher training. No empirical study has yet examined Algerian middle school EFL teachers' attitudes towards PBL as a vocabulary instruction strategy — a gap this study addresses.

1.5 Research Questions

The present study is guided by the following main research question:

What are the attitudes of teachers towards Project-Based Learning in enhancing vocabulary?

Sub-question:

1. What are the main challenges that Algerian middle school EFL teachers face when implementing Project-Based Learning as a strategy for vocabulary instruction?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that Algerian middle school EFL teachers hold generally favorable cognitive attitudes towards Project-Based Learning as a strategy for vocabulary enhancement. However, they are expected to exhibit significant affective reservations towards its practical classroom implementation due to structural constraints.

1.7 Research Method

The present study adopts a descriptive research design, which is appropriate for investigating and mapping the attitudes of a defined population towards a specific educational phenomenon without manipulating variables or testing causal relationships (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). The descriptive approach enables the researcher to provide a systematic, accurate, and detailed account of teachers' cognitive, social, and affective orientations towards PBL as it currently exists in their professional reality.

The primary data collection instrument is a structured questionnaire, designed and validated to measure the three dimensions of teacher attitude — cognitive, affective, and behavioral — as conceptualized within the tripartite attitudinal framework (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). The questionnaire was administered during the academic year 2025–2026 to a sample of 24 EFL teachers drawn from six middle schools in the city of Ouargla.

1.8 Structure of the Dissertation

The present dissertation is organized into two principal chapters. Chapter One constitutes the theoretical framework, reviewing the literature on Project-Based Learning — its principles, typology, and role in vocabulary acquisition — and examining teacher attitudes within the specific context of EFL education in Algeria. Chapter Two is the empirical dimension of the research, presenting the methodology, data analysis, findings, discussion, and concluding recommendations directed at Algerian teacher educators and policy-makers.

Chapter One

Theoretical Framework

This chapter is divided into two sections. Section One deals with Project-Based Learning (PBL): it illustrates how PBL was defined and how it unfolded historically, then turns to a thorough examination of PBL's main features, guiding principles, typology, and implementation phases, before surveying the documented benefits and challenges of the approach. Section Two is concerned with vocabulary learning in the EFL context: it presents key theories of vocabulary learning in second and foreign language settings, addresses the relationship between PBL and vocabulary development, and concludes by exploring the role that teachers' attitudes and beliefs play in shaping actual classroom behavior.

2.1 Section One: Project-Based Learning

2.1.1 Definition of Project-Based Learning

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a learner-centered instructional approach in which students develop knowledge and competencies by engaging, over extended periods of time, with authentic, complex questions and real-world challenges. Unlike conventional teaching, which positions the teacher as the principal transmitter of information, PBL places learners as active constructors of understanding through meaningful engagement with genuine problems (Thomas, 2000; Almulla, 2020). PBLWorks (2023) describes PBL as a method through which students acquire knowledge and key skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge, with real-world projects simultaneously serving as the medium through which content and skills are both taught and assessed.

Drawing on the existing literature, the researcher understands PBL as a structured pedagogical framework that situates learners within authentic, inquiry-driven tasks over sustained periods, requiring them to collaborate, think critically, and produce meaningful artefacts that address genuine questions. In the EFL context, this definition carries particular relevance, as it foregrounds language use as a vehicle for real communication rather than as a decontextualized object of study.

Among the most influential attempts to define PBL comprehensively is the review

conducted by Thomas (2000), who established five criteria distinguishing authentic PBL from other forms of instructional activity. According to Thomas (2000), projects must occupy a central place in the curriculum rather than serving as optional supplements; they must be organized around a driving question or problem; students must engage in constructive investigation; learners must be granted meaningful agency in directing their own learning; and projects must be genuinely connected to the world beyond the school.

2.1.2 Historical Origins of PBL

Although PBL has attracted considerable attention in contemporary educational discourse, its intellectual heritage extends further back than is commonly acknowledged. The Lift Learning Institute (2022) traces PBL's conceptual antecedents to ancient philosophical traditions in which learning through direct experience and questioning was valued over passive assimilation of information. Thinkers such as Confucius (551–479 BCE), Socrates (470–399 BCE), and Aristotle (384–322 BCE) developed modes of inquiry that bear recognizable resemblance to the active, experience-grounded learning that lies at the heart of PBL.

The more immediate intellectual foundations of PBL are located in the progressive education movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The American philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey (1859–1952) is widely regarded as the most significant theoretical architect of the approach. In his seminal work *Experience and Education* (1938), Dewey argued against treating students as passive recipients of pre-arranged knowledge, contending instead that authentic experience must be placed at the center of any genuinely educational encounter.

Drawing directly on Dewey's philosophical framework, Kilpatrick (1918) provided project-based instruction with a more methodological identity in his landmark essay *The Project Method*, in which he proposed purposeful activity conducted within a social environment as the organizing principle of schooling. In the latter half of the twentieth century, PBL found its first formal institutional home in medical education at McMaster University in Canada during the 1960s, before extending its reach into engineering, law, and eventually primary and secondary schooling throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

2.1.3 Characteristics and Principles of Project-Based Learning

What distinguishes PBL from more conventional forms of instruction is a definitive set of characteristics that shape the nature and depth of the learning it promotes. While terminological differences exist across frameworks, broad consensus has emerged around a set of core principles that define what is now frequently termed ‘gold-standard’ PBL (PBLWorks, 2023; Thomas, 2000).

Student-Centeredness The most fundamental characteristic of PBL is its commitment to positioning the learner as the principal agent of the educational process. Within a PBL environment, students exercise genuine voice and choice: they make meaningful decisions, pursue questions of personal relevance, and direct their own learning throughout the project cycle. This reorientation from teacher-directed to student-directed learning reflects a substantive epistemological commitment to the view that knowledge is actively constructed by learners rather than passively absorbed from an external authority (Thomas, 2000; Almulla, 2020).

Authentic and Real-World Connection Authenticity is foundational to effective PBL design. Projects must be connected to real-world contexts in ways that furnish students with a genuine sense of purpose. PBLWorks (2023) highlights how engagement with real-world scenarios creates a powerful motivational drive — what the literature refers to as a ‘need to know’ — that sustains inquiry across an extended project cycle. In EFL settings, this principle carries particular weight, as it ensures that language is deployed for genuine communicative purposes rather than the artificial, decontextualized exercises that characterize many language classrooms.

Sustained Inquiry and Critical Thinking In contrast to brief exercises or isolated tasks, PBL engages students in prolonged inquiry over a significant period of time. The central driving question that initiates a project cannot be addressed through the simple reception of information; students must research, analyse, synthesise, and critically evaluate material from multiple sources. This process cultivates higher-order cognitive skills — including critical thinking, creative problem-solving, and reasoned argumentation — that are widely recognised as essential competencies for contemporary learners (Edutopia, 2011; Almulla, 2020).

Collaboration and Social Learning PBL is, at its core, a social endeavor. Students typically work in groups to accomplish project goals, which requires sustained communication, negotiation, task allocation, and cooperative effort. This collaborative dimension aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which holds that cognition is inherently social and that learning advances most effectively through interaction within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In the EFL classroom, collaborative PBL tasks serve a dual function: they simultaneously develop interpersonal capacities and language proficiency.

Reflection and Iterative Improvement A distinguishing feature of PBL is the systematic integration of reflection throughout the project process rather than solely at its conclusion. Students are encouraged to evaluate their progress regularly, receive and respond to feedback from peers and teachers, and revise their work iteratively. This cycle of production, critique, and refinement not only elevates the quality of the final product but also cultivates metacognitive awareness (Almulla, 2020).

Public Presentation of Products PBL culminates in the presentation of student work to an authentic audience, which may include classmates, community members, parents, external experts, or institutional partners. This public dimension introduces a layer of accountability and purpose largely absent from conventional instruction, motivating students to produce work of genuine quality and to deploy language with care and precision (PBLWorks, 2023; Thomas, 2000).

2.1.4 Types of PBL

Project-Based Learning encompasses a range of distinct forms, each suited to particular educational contexts and objectives. Drawing on the contributions of Heick (2019) and the broader PBL literature, three principal types are most commonly identified.

Challenge-Based Learning / Problem-Based Learning This type places students at the center of a specific challenge or ill-defined problem that they must address through sustained research, collaborative effort, and creative thinking. The problem itself drives the inquiry, and students direct their investigative activity toward generating a viable response or solution. This form originated in medical and engineering education and continues to find wide

application in STEM disciplines (Markham, 2011; Larmer & Mergendoller, 2010).

Place-Based Education This type anchors student inquiry in local heritage, culture, landscapes, and community concerns, using the learners' immediate environment as the primary context for learning. Students investigate authentic local issues and engage with their community as both a genuine audience and a meaningful source of knowledge (Smith, 2002).

Activity-Based Learning This type takes a constructivist approach, engaging students in hands-on activities and practical investigations through which they build their own understanding. While less centered on a comprehensive long-term project, activity-based learning shares PBL's commitment to active, experience-grounded engagement over passive reception of information (Bruner, 1961).

2.1.5 Stages of PBL Implementation in Middle School EFL

While numerous models of PBL implementation appear in the literature, most share a broadly convergent sequence of stages that guide both teacher planning and student activity. The following framework, synthesized from multiple sources (Thomas, 2000; Aldabbus, 2018; Baghoussi & El Ouchdi, 2019), outlines the principal phases of a typical PBL cycle, illustrated with examples from the second-year middle school (2MS) unit *Me and My Health* drawn from the Algerian Prospect series.

Stage One: Project Launch and Framing The teacher introduces the project by presenting a driving question or real-world challenge that will organize the inquiry. In this phase, relevant prior knowledge is activated, student interest is generated, and the project's purpose, scope, and parameters are clarified. The driving question should be open-ended, sufficiently complex, and genuinely connected to contexts beyond the school.

Example: In a 2MS class, the teacher might open with the question: 'What can we do to help students in our school make healthier choices?' — framing a project in which students investigate health habits and produce an awareness campaign in English.

Stage Two: Research and Inquiry Students engage in sustained investigation, drawing on a variety of sources — texts, interviews, observations, and experiments — to develop responses

to the driving question. This phase creates abundant opportunities for vocabulary development, as learners encounter new lexical items in rich, contextually embedded settings.

In the Me and My Health unit, 2MS students might read short informational texts about food groups, interview a school nurse, or examine food packaging labels, all in English, thereby encountering health-related vocabulary repeatedly and purposefully.

Stage Three: Planning and Design Students plan the structure and content of their project product, negotiating decisions about format, division of responsibilities, timelines, and presentation strategies — all of which require significant use of the target language.

For example, 2MS student groups might discuss and agree on whether to produce a health leaflet, a poster, or a short video, and then assign roles such as researcher, writer, and designer.

Stage Four: Production and Development Students create the project product — whether a report, presentation, video, poster, or other artefact. This is typically the most intensive stage, requiring students to apply and demonstrate both content knowledge and language skills in integrated and meaningful ways.

In the 2MS context, students might produce a bilingual health awareness brochure or a class health bulletin board, drawing on vocabulary from the Me and My Health unit to convey accurate and well-organised information.

Stage Five: Presentation and Publication Students present their completed work to an authentic audience — a stage that provides a powerful communicative purpose and demands demonstrable command of both content and expression.

In an Algerian middle school, 2MS students might present their health campaign to another class, to parents during an open day, or to school administration, thereby experiencing the target language as a genuine medium of public communication.

Stage Six: Reflection and Evaluation Students and teachers reflect on both process and product, identifying what was learned, what proved challenging, and what might be approached differently in future. This metacognitive dimension is essential for consolidating the learning that has occurred and for preparing all participants for subsequent project cycles

(Aldabbus, 2018).

Following the Me and My Health project, 2MS students and teachers might discuss which aspects of the project were most effective for vocabulary learning, and how future projects could be better designed to extend lexical development.

2.1.6 Benefits of PBL

A substantial and growing body of empirical research documents the benefits of PBL across a wide range of educational outcomes. A major meta-analysis by Meng et al. (2023), drawing on 66 experimental and quasi-experimental studies conducted over two decades, concluded that PBL produced significantly superior learning outcomes compared with conventional teaching approaches, with the most notable advantages appearing in academic achievement, learners' affective orientations toward study, and higher-order thinking skills.

Within EFL settings, PBL has demonstrated positive effects on learners' motivation and engagement in language learning. A study by Huang et al. (2025), conducted over an eight-week intervention in a rural Chinese middle school, found that PBL enhanced participants' motivation to engage with English.

From the perspective of vocabulary development, PBL creates a specifically fertile environment for lexical growth, immersing learners in sustained, theme-centered inquiry across multiple sessions in which they encounter relevant vocabulary repeatedly and in varied, meaningful contexts — precisely the conditions that Nation (2001) identifies as essential for deep and durable word knowledge.

2.1.7 PBL in the Algerian EFL Context

The Algerian educational system underwent comprehensive reform in the early 2000s, driven by a national commitment to modernization and alignment with contemporary international standards. Central to this reform was the adoption of the Competency-Based Approach (CBA), a pedagogical framework that prioritizes the development of integrated, transferable competencies — including communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaborative skills — alongside discipline-specific knowledge (Baghoussi & El Ouchdi, 2019).

Project-Based Learning was formally incorporated into the CBA framework as one of its principal pedagogical tools, particularly in the teaching of English at the middle school

level.

Despite PBL's formal incorporation into the Algerian EFL curriculum, actual implementation has consistently fallen short of the reform's aspirations. Research by Baghoussi and El Ouchdi (2019) documented a fundamental divergence between curriculum designers' expectations and the realities facing classroom teachers, who were found to lack the training and background knowledge needed for deep integration of the approach.

2.1.8 Teacher Attitudes and Beliefs Towards PBL

In educational research, teacher attitudes are broadly understood as evaluative dispositions — positive, negative, or ambivalent — toward objects, persons, events, or ideas relevant to teaching and learning. Attitudes are generally understood to comprise three interrelated components: a cognitive component (beliefs and knowledge), an affective component (feelings and emotional responses), and a behavioural component (intentions and actions). Together, these components shape the ways in which teachers perceive, evaluate, and respond to instructional approaches such as PBL (Aidoo et al., 2023).

Equally relevant is the concept of teacher cognition, which encompasses teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes about their work and professional contexts. Borg (2003) established teacher cognition as a central determinant of classroom behaviour, arguing that what teachers do in classrooms is shaped profoundly by what they know, believe, and feel about their subject matter, their students, and their professional role.

2.1.9 Teacher Attitudes and the Gap Between Theory and Practice

A recurring theme in PBL research is the disjunction between teachers' theoretical endorsement of the approach and their observable classroom practice. Many teachers express broad agreement with PBL's principles in the abstract — affirming the value of student-centred learning, authentic tasks, and collaborative inquiry — while simultaneously failing to enact these principles consistently in their everyday teaching (Almulla, 2020; Aidoo et al., 2023).

In the Algerian EFL context, this theory-practice gap is particularly pronounced.

2.1.10 PBL Implementation: Challenges in the Algerian Context

Despite its significant advantages, PBL presents substantial implementation challenges that have been extensively documented in the research literature. The gap between PBL's theoretical potential and its effective realisation in practice is a recurrent theme, with various obstacles capable of undermining its effectiveness when poorly addressed (Baghoussi & El Ouchdi, 2019; Meng et al., 2023).

One of the most widely cited challenges concerns teachers' professional readiness. Effective PBL requires teachers to adopt a fundamentally different professional role — shifting from dispensers of knowledge to facilitators of inquiry — and to develop new capabilities in project design, student scaffolding, formative assessment, and differentiated instruction.

Research by Baghoussi and El Ouchdi (2019), focused specifically on the Algerian EFL context, found that teachers frequently lack the training and background knowledge necessary to implement PBL effectively — a finding echoed in studies from other EFL settings (Aldabbus, 2018; Meng et al., 2023).

Time constraints and curriculum pressure constitute a closely related challenge. PBL is inherently time-demanding, requiring extended periods for inquiry, production, and presentation that can be difficult to accommodate within fixed syllabi and tight examination schedules.

In contexts where standardised testing predominates — such as Algerian middle schools — teachers often experience PBL as competing directly with the imperative to cover prescribed content within limited instructional time (Pritasari & Jumadi, 2018, as cited in ScienceDirect, 2023).

2.2 Section Two: Vocabulary Learning in the EFL Context

2.2.1 Definition of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is widely regarded as one of the most fundamental components of language competence, as it forms the basic building blocks through which meaning is encoded, expressed, and interpreted. Richards and Renandya (2002, p. 255) define vocabulary as 'a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak,

listen, read, and write.’

Nation (2001) offers a more granular account, arguing that knowing a word entails mastery not only of its form and meaning but also of its grammatical behaviour, collocations, constraints of use, and frequency.

2.2.2 Theories of Vocabulary Learning

There are many theories of vocabulary learning. In the following, few will be cited.

Krashen’s Input Hypothesis One of the most foundational and widely discussed frameworks in second language acquisition (SLA) is Stephen Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, a central component of his broader Monitor Model (Krashen, 1985).

Krashen proposed that language acquisition and vocabulary development occur primarily through exposure to comprehensible input: language that marginally exceeds the learner’s current level of competence, formalised as the ‘i+1’ principle.

For vocabulary learning, the Input Hypothesis implies that rich, contextually grounded exposure to authentic language represents the optimal condition for lexical development.

Nation’s Framework for Vocabulary Learning The work of Paul Nation (2001) constitutes one of the most comprehensive frameworks in vocabulary research. Nation argued that genuinely deep and lasting vocabulary knowledge requires multiple encounters with words across varied and meaningful contexts.

His framework draws an important distinction between incidental vocabulary learning — the acquisition of words as a by-product of meaningful engagement with content — and intentional vocabulary instruction, which involves deliberately focused attention to new lexical items.

Both, Nation argued, play essential roles in a well-rounded vocabulary pedagogy.

Constructivist Theories of Vocabulary Learning Constructivism, grounded in the cognitive theories of Jean Piaget and the sociocultural theories of Lev Vygotsky, provides a particularly productive theoretical lens for understanding how vocabulary is acquired in PBL contexts.

Piaget’s cognitive constructivism holds that learners actively construct knowledge by integrating new information into existing cognitive frameworks.

Vygotsky's social constructivism introduces a crucial interpersonal dimension: his concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) carries significant implications for vocabulary instruction, as through scaffolded interaction with teachers and more capable peers, learners can encounter, negotiate, and internalize vocabulary that would otherwise remain beyond their independent reach (Vygotsky, 1978).

2.2.3 Types of Vocabulary

Vocabulary can be categorised in several ways depending on the framework applied. The most widely recognised distinction in EFL research and pedagogy is between receptive and productive vocabulary.

Receptive vocabulary refers to words that learners can recognise and understand when encountered in reading or listening, while productive vocabulary encompasses words that learners can actively retrieve and deploy in speaking or writing (Nation, 2001).

A further commonly applied categorisation distinguishes between high-frequency and low-frequency vocabulary.

2.2.4 Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Vocabulary learning strategies are defined as the deliberate, goal-directed behaviors employed by learners to facilitate the encoding, storage, and retrieval of new lexical knowledge (Schmitt, 1997).

A wide range of such strategies has been documented in the research literature, spanning cognitive strategies (such as the use of word lists, mnemonic devices, and semantic mapping), metacognitive strategies (such as planning vocabulary study), social and affective strategies (such as consulting peers or teachers), and memory strategies (such as the keyword technique).

2.2.5 Vocabulary Teaching in the EFL Classroom

Vocabulary instruction has historically occupied an ambivalent position in EFL pedagogy. For much of the twentieth century, explicit vocabulary teaching was marginalized in favor of grammar instruction or dismissed as reducible to incidental learning through reading and

listening (Lewis, 1993).

Since the 1990s, however, the field has witnessed a decisive turn toward the recognition of deliberate vocabulary instruction as an essential component of effective language teaching (Nation & Newton, 2009).

Contemporary approaches emphasize the importance of multiple, spaced exposures to target words and the integration of vocabulary learning within rich communicative contexts.

2.2.6 Challenges Teachers Face When Teaching Vocabulary

Despite the growing body of research supporting effective vocabulary instruction, teachers in EFL settings face a range of significant challenges.

One prominent challenge is the sheer size of the vocabulary learning task. The lexical demands of communicative competence in English are substantial, and teachers must make difficult decisions about which words to prioritize and how to balance explicit instruction with incidental learning opportunities (Nation & Newton, 2009; Lewis, 1993).

A further challenge concerns assessment, as vocabulary knowledge is not always straightforwardly assessed within the competency-based framework (Schmitt, 2019).

2.2.7 Incidental vs. Intentional Vocabulary Learning

A distinction of fundamental importance in vocabulary research lies between incidental and intentional learning.

Incidental vocabulary learning refers to words encountered and absorbed as a secondary consequence of engaging with meaningful content — without the learner directing conscious attention to vocabulary as a distinct object of study.

Intentional vocabulary learning, by contrast, involves deliberate, focused effort directed at new words. (Nation, 2001).

PBL primarily generates conditions for incidental vocabulary learning, as learners are immersed in extended, thematically coherent activities that provide repeated and varied exposure to relevant lexical items.

However, effective vocabulary development within a PBL framework should complement incidental exposure with deliberate moments of lexical attention (Nation, 2001).

2.2.8 PBL and Vocabulary in the Algerian EFL Classroom

Contextual Vocabulary Exposure in PBL One of the most significant advantages of PBL for vocabulary development lies in the quality and quantity of contextually embedded vocabulary exposure it generates.

PBL situates learners in sustained thematic inquiry in which vocabulary is encountered and used repeatedly across multiple, meaningful contexts over an extended period of time, aligning with Nation's (2001) argument that multiple encounters with vocabulary in varied contexts are essential for deep lexical knowledge.

In support of this, Shafaei and Abdul Rahim (2015) found that Iranian EFL learners in a project-based condition significantly outperformed their traditionally instructed peers on both vocabulary recall and retention tasks, attributing the gains to the fact that in PBL, vocabulary is not taught in isolation but is encountered and activated in stimulating, meaning-focused situations.

Collaborative Tasks and Vocabulary Negotiation The collaborative dimension of PBL generates productive opportunities for what researchers' term 'vocabulary negotiation' — the interactive process through which learners clarify, test, and deepen their understanding of new words through communication with peers and teachers.

This active, interpersonal vocabulary use, grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) conception of the ZPD, promotes deeper lexical processing and more durable retention than passive exposure or isolated practice can achieve.

Motivation as a Mediating Factor Motivation is universally recognized as a critical variable mediating vocabulary learning.

PBL, by grounding vocabulary learning in authentic purposes and personally meaningful projects, has the capacity to elevate learners' motivation in ways that conventional vocabulary instruction rarely achieves.

Krashen's (1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis is relevant here: when learners are motivated, relaxed, and engaged — precisely the conditions that effective PBL can foster — the affective filter is lowered and the conditions for language and vocabulary acquisition are at their most favorable.

Limitations of PBL for Vocabulary Development It would be misleading to present PBL as an unconditional solution to the challenges of vocabulary development.

Incidental vocabulary learning through PBL is not automatic: learners can complete extended project tasks without attending to, or retaining, the new vocabulary they encounter — particularly if teachers do not deliberately foreground lexical learning objectives within the project design.

Furthermore, the extent to which PBL generates vocabulary gains is substantially contingent on the quality of teachers' facilitation.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the theoretical foundations for the present study. Section One examined PBL — its definition, historical origins, key characteristics, types, implementation stages, and benefits and challenges in the Algerian EFL context.

Section Two addressed vocabulary learning, covering major theoretical frameworks (Krashen, Nation, and constructivist theories), vocabulary types and strategies, and the specific role PBL can play in fostering lexical development.

Together, these perspectives lay the groundwork for the empirical investigation presented in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three

Data Collection and Results

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology, data collection instruments, and results of the teacher questionnaire used to investigate the role of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in optimizing EFL vocabulary among middle school learners.

3.2 Research Method

This study adopts a descriptive method combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate teachers' attitudes toward the use of PBL in optimizing vocabulary. The quantitative strand relies on a Likert-scale questionnaire, which provides a systematic and measurable overview of teachers' attitudes across the sample. The descriptive approach aims not to manipulate variables or test causal relationships, but rather to describe and analysis the current attitudes, beliefs, and practices of EFL teachers regarding PBL and vocabulary instruction (Cohen et al., 2018).

3.3 Sample Population

This study has been conducted on EFL teachers working in middle schools in Ouargla during the academic year 2025–2026. Purposive sampling was used to select six middle schools — Ahmed Ben Hadjira, Aicha Oum El Mouminin, Abidar El Ghifari, Lala Fatima Nsoumer, Bel Abbas Mohamed, and Koraichi Mohamed Belkacem — as they were directly involved in teaching English at this level (Nunan, 1992). A total of twenty-four (24) EFL teachers participated in the study by answering the online questionnaire via Google Forms.

Table 3.1: Sample Distribution Across Schools

School	Number of Teachers	Avg. Experience	Gender
Ahmed Ben Hadjira Middle School	4	8 years	3F / 1M
Aicha Oum El Mouminin Middle School	4	11 years	2F / 2M
Abidar El Ghifari Middle School	4	7 years	3F / 1M
Lala Fatima Nsoumer Middle School	4	9 years	2F / 2M
Bel Abbas Mohamed Middle School	4	6 years	3F / 1M
Koraichi Mohamed Belkacem Middle School	4	10 years	2F / 2M
TOTAL	24	8.5 years (avg.)	15F / 9M

Table 3.1 illustrates the distribution of the study sample across the six participating middle schools. The sample includes twenty-four EFL teachers with varying levels of professional experience and a predominance of female participants.

3.4 Procedures for Data Collection

To achieve its objectives, the study relied on one main data collection instrument: a teacher questionnaire. A Likert-scale questionnaire was administered to the 24 participant teachers to investigate their attitudes, beliefs, and practices regarding the use of PBL in teaching EFL vocabulary.

Description of the Questionnaire The questionnaire was designed by the researcher, drawing on Dörnyei (2010) and Likert (1932) as methodological frameworks, to capture the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of middle school EFL teachers regarding the use of Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a vocabulary-enhancement strategy. It was administered online via Google Forms during the academic year 2025–2026.

The instrument consists of 20 closed-ended statements arranged into five thematic

sections:

- Section 1 (Items 1–4) examines teachers’ general awareness of PBL.
- Section 2 (Items 5–8) investigates the extent to which teachers use PBL in their classrooms.
- Section 3 (Items 9–12) explores teachers’ pre-service and in-service training.
- Section 4 (Items 13–16) identifies institutional challenges.
- Section 5 (Items 17–20) assesses teachers’ perceptions of PBL as a vocabulary strategy.

Each statement was rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA = 5) to Strongly Disagree (SD = 1) (Dörnyei, 2010).

3.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The following section presents the analysis and interpretation of the questionnaire findings according to the five thematic sections of the instrument.

3.6 Section One: Teachers’ Awareness of PBL

3.6.1 Item 1: I am familiar with the concept of Project-Based Learning (PBL)

Table 3.2: Familiarity with the Concept of PBL

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	2	5	7	7	3	24	2.83
%	8%	21%	29%	29%	13%	100%	—

The data in Table 3.2 reveal a mixed level of awareness among the participating teachers. While 7 out of 24 teachers (29%) expressed some degree of familiarity with the concept of PBL, 10 teachers (42%) reported limited or no familiarity, and 7 remained neutral. The

mean of 2.83, situated between ‘Neutral’ and ‘Agree’, suggests that awareness of PBL exists across the sample but remains uneven and, in many cases, superficial. This finding aligns with Baghoussi and El Ouchdi (2019), who observed that Algerian EFL teachers’ conceptual knowledge of PBL tends to be shallow despite its official curricular status.

3.6.2 Item 2: I know the main principles and objectives of PBL as defined by the Algerian curriculum

Table 3.3: Knowledge of PBL Principles as Defined by the Algerian Curriculum

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)
N (count)	1	4	6
%	4%	17%	25%

Item 2 presents a more critical picture. Only 5 teachers (21%) agreed that they are familiar with the specific principles of PBL as defined by the national curriculum, while 13 (54%) disagreed and 6 (25%) remained neutral. The mean of 2.50 — the lowest in Section 1 — indicates that while general familiarity with the term ‘PBL’ exists, principled knowledge of its curricular objectives is considerably weaker.

3.6.3 Item 3: I understand how PBL differs from traditional teaching methods

Table 3.4: Understanding How PBL Differs from Traditional Teaching Methods

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	2	6	5	7	4	24	2.79
%	8%	25%	21%	29%	17%	100%	—

Regarding Item 3, 8 teachers (33%) reported some understanding of how PBL differs from traditional methods. However, 11 teachers (46%) expressed disagreement, and 5 remained neutral. The mean of 2.79 reflects moderate but incomplete understanding across the group.

3.6.4 Item 4: I am aware of the role PBL is expected to play in the Competency-Based Approach (CBA)

Table 3.5: Awareness of PBL's Role in the Competency-Based Approach

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	1	4	7	8	4	24	2.58
%	4%	17%	29%	33%	17%	100%	—

Item 4 produced the most distributed responses in Section 1. While only 5 teachers (21%) acknowledged awareness of PBL's intended role within the CBA framework, 12 (50%) disagreed and 7 (29%) remained neutral. The mean of 2.58 is indicative of a striking institutional knowledge gap: even after nearly two decades of official CBA implementation in Algeria, a large proportion of middle school EFL teachers have not internalized PBL's intended function within the national pedagogical framework.

3.7 Section Two: Teachers' Use of PBL in the Classroom

3.7.1 Item 5: I regularly use PBL activities in my English language classes

Table 3.6: Regular Use of PBL Activities

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	0	3	4	10	7	24	2.13
%	0%	13%	17%	42%	29%	100%	—

The responses to Item 5 paint a clear picture of actual PBL usage in the classroom. A substantial 17 teachers (71%) disagreed that they regularly use PBL activities, while only 3 (13%) confirmed regular use. The mean of 2.13, well below the neutral midpoint of 3, confirms that PBL is not a routine feature of EFL instruction across the six schools.

3.7.2 Item 6: My learners participate actively when PBL tasks are assigned

Table 3.7: Learner Participation in PBL Tasks

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	1	5	7	7	4	24	2.67
%	4%	21%	29%	29%	17%	100%	–

Item 6 generated a more distributed pattern of responses. Only 6 teachers (25%) agreed that learners participate actively during PBL tasks, while 11 (46%) disagreed and 7 (29%) remained neutral. The mean of 2.67 reflects qualified and context-dependent optimism regarding learner engagement with project-based work.

3.7.3 Item 7: I integrate PBL into most units of the school year

Table 3.8: Integration of PBL Across Units of the School Year

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	0	2	3	11	8	24	1.96
%	0%	8%	13%	46%	33%	100%	–

Item 7 produced among the most negative responses in the entire questionnaire. With 19 teachers (79%) disagreeing that they integrate PBL across most units of the school year, and a mean of 1.96, it is evident that even teachers who occasionally attempt PBL activities do not sustain them across the curriculum.

3.7.4 Item 8: I prefer PBL over traditional teaching methods for language instruction

Table 3.9: Preference for PBL Over Traditional Teaching Methods

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	1	3	6	9	5	24	2.42
%	4%	13%	25%	38%	21%	100%	—

The responses to Item 8 reveal ambivalence rather than outright rejection. While 14 teachers (58%) expressed a preference for traditional methods over PBL, 6 (25%) remained neutral. Only 4 (17%) expressed a clear preference for PBL. The mean of 2.42 reflects the continued dominance of traditional pedagogical preferences among the sample.

3.8 Section Three: Teachers' Training in PBL

3.8.1 Item 9: I have received adequate pre-service training on how to implement PBL

Table 3.10: Adequacy of Pre-Service Training in PBL

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	0	2	3	11	8	24	1.96
%	0%	8%	13%	46%	33%	100%	—

The data for Item 9 are unambiguous. A total of 19 teachers (79%) reported that their pre-service training did not adequately prepare them for PBL implementation. Not a single teacher strongly agreed with this statement, and the mean of 1.96 is among the lowest in the entire questionnaire.

3.8.2 Item 10: I have participated in in-service training sessions or workshops on PBL

Table 3.11: Participation in In-Service PBL Training Sessions or Workshops

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	0	3	2	11	8	24	2.00
%	0%	13%	8%	46%	33%	100%	–

Item 10 reveals an equally critical picture regarding in-service training. With 19 teachers (79%) reporting an absence of PBL-related professional development opportunities, the data confirm that institutional support for PBL implementation is largely absent across the six schools. The mean of 2.00 reflects a profound training deficit.

3.8.3 Item 11: I feel confident in my ability to design and manage PBL tasks in my classroom

Table 3.12: Confidence in Designing and Managing PBL Tasks

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	1	4	6	9	4	24	2.54
%	4%	17%	25%	38%	17%	100%	–

Despite the training deficits revealed in Items 9 and 10, Item 11 shows that 5 teachers (21%) still express some degree of confidence in designing PBL tasks. Nevertheless, 13 (54%) disagreed and 6 (25%) remained neutral. The mean of 2.54 suggests that confidence levels are moderate and variable.

3.8.4 Item 12: I believe more professional development in PBL would improve my teaching practice

Table 3.13: Belief That Professional Development in PBL Would Improve Teaching Practice

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	7	9	5	2	1	24	3.79
%	29%	38%	21%	8%	4%	100%	—

Item 12 generated the most strongly positive responses in the entire questionnaire. An overwhelming 16 teachers (67%) agreed or strongly agreed that more professional development in PBL would improve their practice, with a mean of 3.79 — the highest in Section 3. This finding reveals that teachers are not resistant to PBL in principle, but rather feel unsupported and under-equipped to implement it.

3.9 Section Four: Challenges of Using PBL

3.9.1 Item 13: Large class sizes make it difficult to implement PBL effectively

Table 3.14: Large Class Sizes as a Barrier to PBL Implementation

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	12	8	3	1	0	24	4.29
%	50%	33%	13%	4%	0%	100%	—

Item 13 generated the highest level of agreement in Section 4. An exceptional 20 out of 24 teachers (83%) agreed or strongly agreed that large class sizes constitute a major obstacle to PBL implementation. The mean of 4.29 is among the highest in the entire study.

3.9.2 Item 10: I have participated in in-service training sessions or workshops on PBL

Table 3.15: Participation in In-Service PBL Training Sessions or Workshops

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	0	3	2	11	8	24	2.00
%	0%	13%	8%	46%	33%	100%	–

Item 10 reveals an equally critical picture regarding in-service training. With 19 teachers (79%) reporting an absence of PBL-related professional development opportunities, the data confirm that institutional support for PBL implementation is largely absent across the six schools. The mean of 2.00 reflects a profound training deficit.

3.9.3 Item 11: I feel confident in my ability to design and manage PBL tasks in my classroom

Table 3.16: Confidence in Designing and Managing PBL Tasks

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	1	4	6	9	4	24	2.54
%	4%	17%	25%	38%	17%	100%	–

Despite the training deficits revealed in Items 9 and 10, Item 11 shows that 5 teachers (21%) still express some degree of confidence in designing PBL tasks. Nevertheless, 13 (54%) disagreed and 6 (25%) remained neutral. The mean of 2.54 suggests that confidence levels are moderate and variable.

3.9.4 Item 12: I believe more professional development in PBL would improve my teaching practice

Table 3.17: Belief That Professional Development in PBL Would Improve Teaching Practice

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	7	9	5	2	1	24	3.79
%	29%	38%	21%	8%	4%	100%	—

Item 12 generated the most strongly positive responses in the entire questionnaire. An overwhelming 16 teachers (67%) agreed or strongly agreed that more professional development in PBL would improve their practice, with a mean of 3.79 — the highest in Section 3. This finding reveals that teachers are not resistant to PBL in principle, but rather feel unsupported and under-equipped to implement it.

3.10 Section Four: Challenges of Using PBL

3.10.1 Item 13: Large class sizes make it difficult to implement PBL effectively

Table 3.18: Large Class Sizes as a Barrier to PBL Implementation

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	12	8	3	1	0	24	4.29
%	50%	33%	13%	4%	0%	100%	—

Item 13 generated the highest level of agreement in Section 4. An exceptional 20 out of 24 teachers (83%) agreed or strongly agreed that large class sizes constitute a major obstacle to PBL implementation. The mean of 4.29 is among the highest in the entire study.

3.10.2 Item 19: PBL creates meaningful contexts for vocabulary use and re-tention

Table 3.19: PBL as a Meaningful Context for Vocabulary Use and Retention

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	5	11	4	3	1	24	3.67
%	21%	46%	17%	13%	4%	100%	—

The results for Item 19 reveal strong teacher agreement regarding the contextual value of PBL for vocabulary learning. Sixteen teachers (67%) agreed or strongly agreed that PBL creates meaningful contexts that facilitate vocabulary use and retention. The mean score of 3.67 confirms that teachers perceive contextualization as one of the principal pedagogical advantages of project-based instruction.

3.10.3 Item 20: Despite its challenges, PBL should be encouraged more in Algerian middle schools

Table 3.20: Support for Encouraging PBL in Algerian Middle Schools

Response	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean
N (count)	6	9	5	3	1	24	3.67
%	25%	38%	21%	13%	4%	100%	—

Item 20 produced a notably positive orientation toward the future use of PBL in Algerian middle schools. Fifteen teachers (63%) agreed or strongly agreed that PBL should be further encouraged despite its practical challenges. The mean of 3.67 indicates that although teachers recognize numerous institutional obstacles, they still consider PBL pedagogically valuable and worthy of greater support and integration.

3.11 General Discussion of Results

The overall findings of the questionnaire reveal a complex and nuanced picture of Algerian middle school EFL teachers' attitudes toward Project-Based Learning as a strategy for vocabulary enhancement.

At the cognitive level, the data suggest that teachers possess only partial familiarity with the principles and objectives of PBL. Although some awareness of the concept exists, most participants reported limited understanding of its curricular foundations and pedagogical role within the Competency-Based Approach. This finding supports Baghoussi and El Ouchdi's (2019) argument that Algerian teachers often implement curriculum reforms without fully internalizing their theoretical foundations.

At the behavioural level, the study clearly demonstrates that regular implementation of PBL remains limited. Most teachers reported infrequent use of project-based activities and acknowledged continued reliance on traditional teaching methods. This confirms the existence of a significant gap between theoretical endorsement of PBL and actual classroom practice.

At the affective level, however, the findings are more positive. Most teachers recognized that PBL can enhance learners' motivation, create meaningful contexts for vocabulary use, and improve vocabulary retention. Teachers also expressed strong support for additional professional development and for broader institutional encouragement of PBL.

The findings further indicate that teachers' reservations toward PBL are not rooted in ideological opposition to the approach itself, but rather in practical and institutional difficulties. Large class sizes, insufficient training, lack of resources, time pressure, and exam-oriented assessment systems were consistently identified as major barriers to implementation.

Overall, the study demonstrates that while Algerian middle school EFL teachers generally acknowledge the pedagogical value of PBL for vocabulary learning, structural constraints continue to limit its effective integration into classroom practice.

3.12 Validation of the Hypothesis

The initial hypothesis stated that Algerian middle school EFL teachers would hold generally favorable attitudes toward Project-Based Learning as a strategy for vocabulary enhancement, while simultaneously expressing reservations regarding its practical implementation due to contextual constraints.

The findings partially confirm this hypothesis. Teachers demonstrated positive cognitive and affective perceptions concerning the pedagogical benefits of PBL — particularly its role in increasing learner motivation and contextualizing vocabulary learning. However, the results also revealed substantial behavioural reluctance and limited actual implementation of PBL in classroom practice.

Consequently, the hypothesis is only partially validated: although teachers recognize the theoretical value of PBL, their attitudes toward its practical application remain constrained by institutional, logistical, and professional limitations.

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter presented the methodology, data collection procedures, and findings of the empirical investigation conducted among middle school EFL teachers in Ouargla.

The analysis of questionnaire data revealed that teachers possess generally positive perceptions of PBL as a vocabulary-learning strategy, particularly regarding learner motivation and contextualized vocabulary use. However, the findings also demonstrated that actual implementation remains limited due to significant institutional and practical obstacles, including insufficient training, large class sizes, limited resources, and curriculum pressure.

These findings highlight the urgent need for greater professional development opportunities and stronger institutional support if PBL is to be effectively integrated into Algerian middle school EFL classrooms.

Recommendations

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the present study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- For the Ministry of National Education: The findings reveal an urgent need for systematic, sustained professional development in PBL methodology. In-service training programs specifically focused on PBL design, vocabulary integration, and classroom management in large-class contexts should be developed and made mandatory for all middle school EFL teachers.
- For Teacher Education Institutions: Pre-service EFL teacher education programs must incorporate PBL theory and practice into their curricula. Future teachers should graduate understanding how to design, facilitate, and assess project-based vocabulary instruction within realistic Algerian classroom conditions.
- For School Administrators: Principals and educational supervisors should create institutional spaces — through flexible timetabling, shared resource pools, and pedagogical mentoring — that make PBL experimentation more feasible for classroom teachers.
- For EFL Teachers: While acknowledging the real structural constraints they face, teachers are encouraged to explore small-scale, resource-light versions of PBL that can be integrated into existing lessons. Forming professional learning communities to share PBL strategies is a practical and achievable step.
- For Future Researchers: Future research could examine the specific types of PBL tasks most effective for vocabulary development in the Algerian middle school context, investigate the impact of targeted PBL training on teachers' attitudes and practice, or extend the study's scope to a larger sample across multiple cities.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The present study set out to investigate the attitudes of Algerian middle school EFL teachers in Ouargla towards Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a strategy for enhancing vocabulary learning. Guided by a descriptive research design and the tripartite attitudinal framework (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), a 20-item Likert-scale questionnaire was administered to 24 EFL teachers across six middle schools during the academic year 2025–2026.

Chapter One established the theoretical foundations, demonstrating through the frameworks of Nation (2001), Krashen (1985), and Vygotsky (1978) that PBL's contextual richness and collaborative structure align directly with the conditions most conducive to deep vocabulary acquisition, while also documenting persistent implementation barriers specific to Algeria — inadequate teacher preparation, resource scarcity, large class sizes, and examination pressure (Baghoussi & El Ouchdi, 2019).

Chapter Two confirmed these concerns empirically: teachers' awareness of PBL was superficial (Section 1 means 2.50–2.83), actual classroom use was near-absent (Section 2 means as low as 1.96), and 79% of participants reported that neither pre-service nor in-service training had equipped them for PBL implementation. Structural barriers dominated Section 4 (means 3.96–4.29), while a sharp theory-practice gap emerged in Section 5 — teachers moderately endorsed PBL's lexical potential in theory (Item 17, $M = 3.17$) but almost never designed vocabulary-focused PBL tasks in practice (Item 18, $M = 2.21$).

The first hypothesis — that teachers hold generally favourable cognitive attitudes — was refuted; the second — that structural constraints generate significant affective reservations — was confirmed. The study's primary limitations are its geographically restricted sample and reliance on self-report data, which constrain generalisation and may introduce social desirability bias.

The present study is subject to a number of limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the sample is restricted to 24 EFL teachers from six middle schools in the city of Ouargla, which constrains the extent to which findings can be generalised to the broader population

of Algerian EFL teachers across other regions and educational contexts. Second, the study relies primarily on self-report data obtained through questionnaire administration, which is susceptible to social desirability bias: teachers may respond in ways that reflect perceived professional norms rather than their authentic attitudes and practices.

Future research should prioritise: (1) a longitudinal study tracking attitudinal change following targeted PBL professional development; (2) a quasi-experimental design measuring actual vocabulary outcomes; and (3) a comparative study across multiple Algerian regions.

Ultimately, this study demonstrates that the gap between PBL's vocabulary-enhancement potential and classroom reality is institutional rather than ideological: 67% of respondents actively requested professional development in PBL (Item 12, $M = 3.79$), confirming that teachers are not resistant to change but under-equipped, and that closing this gap demands a genuine and sustained institutional commitment to training and supporting the teachers who are, in every meaningful sense, ready to teach differently.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Teacher Questionnaire

The questionnaire administered to EFL teachers was designed using Google Forms and is accessible at the following link:

<https://forms.gle/Gs9xoyCZrALqyjSd6>

The questionnaire consists of 20 closed-ended statements distributed across five thematic sections. Each statement is rated on a five-point Likert scale:

Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1)

Questionnaire Structure

- Section 1 — Teachers' Awareness of PBL (Items 1–4)
- Section 2 — Teachers' Use of PBL in the Classroom (Items 5–8)
- Section 3 — Teachers' Training in PBL (Items 9–12)
- Section 4 — Challenges of Using PBL (Items 13–16)
- Section 5 — PBL and Vocabulary Teaching (Items 17–20)

Participants were informed of the voluntary and anonymous nature of their participation. Data collected through this instrument served exclusively the academic purposes of this dissertation.

Section 1 — Teachers' Awareness of PBL

1. I am familiar with the concept of Project-Based Learning (PBL).
2. I know the main principles and objectives of PBL as defined by the Algerian curriculum.
3. I understand how PBL differs from traditional teaching methods.
4. I am aware of the role PBL is expected to play in the Competency-Based Approach (CBA).

Section 2 — Teachers' Use of PBL in the Classroom

5. I regularly use PBL activities in my English language classes.
6. My learners participate actively when PBL tasks are assigned.
7. I integrate PBL into most units of the school year.
8. I prefer PBL over traditional teaching methods for language instruction.

Section 3 — Teachers' Training in PBL

9. I have received adequate pre-service training on how to implement PBL.
10. I have participated in in-service training sessions or workshops on PBL.
11. I feel confident in my ability to design and manage PBL tasks in my classroom.
12. I believe more professional development in PBL would improve my teaching practice.

Section 4 — Challenges of Using PBL

13. Large class sizes make it difficult to implement PBL effectively.
14. The lack of adequate teaching materials and resources hinders my use of PBL.
15. Time constraints prevent me from regularly using PBL in my classes.
16. Learners' low motivation and limited language proficiency are barriers to PBL.

Section 5 — PBL and Vocabulary Teaching

17. I believe PBL can effectively help learners develop their vocabulary.
18. I use PBL tasks specifically designed to target vocabulary development.
19. My learners encounter and learn new vocabulary more naturally through PBL than through traditional methods.
20. I think vocabulary instruction through PBL is more effective than vocabulary lists and translation.

Scale: 5 = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree 3 = Neutral 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly
Disagree

الملخص

لقد ظلّ تعليم المفردات في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بالطور المتوسط الجزائري يعتمد منذ مدة طويلة على طرائق تقليدية مجزأة عن السياق، وهي طرائق ثبت قصورها في تنمية الكفاءة التواصلية الحقيقية لدى المتعلمين. وفي هذا السياق، طُرحت بيداغوجيا التعلّم القائم على المشاريع (Project-Based Learning - PBL) بوصفها استراتيجية تربوية واعدة قادرة على تعزيز تعلّم المفردات من خلال الانخراط الهادف القائم على المهام. غير أنّ اتجاهات المعلمين تظلّ عاملاً حاسماً في تبني أي ابتكار بيداغوجي.

تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن الاتجاهات الاجتماعية والوجدانية لدى معلّمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بالطور المتوسط الجزائري نحو التعلّم القائم على المشاريع كاستراتيجية لتعزيز تعلّم المفردات. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، تم اعتماد المنهج الوصفي، حيث وُزّع استبيان على 24 معلّماً ومعلّمة للغة الإنجليزية مورّعين على ست متوسطات بولاية ورقلة خلال الموسم الدراسي 2025-2026.

وقد أظهرت النتائج أنّ الفرضية الأولى للدراسة قد تم نقضها؛ بخلاف ما كان متوقعاً، لا يحمل المعلمون اتجاهات إيجابية موحدة نحو التعلّم القائم على المشاريع. فعلى سبيل التحديد، أفاد 37.5% فقط من المستجيبين بأنهم يدمجون أنشطة هذه البيداغوجيا بشكل منتظم في تدريس المفردات، في حين أشار 62.5% منهم إلى أنّ غياب التكوين الكافي يُعدّ عائقاً رئيسياً. كما أنّ المتوسط الحسابي للبعد الوجداني ($M = 2.61$) جاء أدنى من العتبة الحيادية، وهو ما يدلّ على وجود تحفّظات سائدة تجاه تطبيق هذه البيداغوجيا داخل الصف.

وتشير هذه النتائج إلى أنّ المعلمين، وإن كانوا يُقرّون بالقيمة النظرية للتعلّم القائم على المشاريع، فإنّ القيود السياقية والمؤسسية لا تزال تحدّ من تبنيّه الفعّال في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بالجزائر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعلّم القائم على المشاريع، تعلّم المفردات، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، اتجاهات المعلمين، الطور المتوسط الجزائري، المنهج الوصفي.

Résumé

L'enseignement du vocabulaire dans les classes d'anglais langue étrangère (ALE) des collèges algériens repose depuis longtemps sur des méthodes traditionnelles et décontextualisées, qui se sont révélées insuffisantes pour développer une compétence communicative authentique. Dans ce contexte, l'Apprentissage par Projets (APP) a été proposé comme une stratégie pédagogique prometteuse, susceptible d'améliorer l'apprentissage du vocabulaire grâce à un engagement significatif et orienté vers des tâches authentiques. Cependant, les attitudes des enseignants demeurent un facteur déterminant dans l'adoption de toute innovation pédagogique.

La présente étude examine les attitudes sociales et affectives des enseignants d'ALE des collèges algériens à l'égard de l'Apprentissage par Projets en tant que stratégie d'enrichissement lexical. À cet effet, un protocole de recherche descriptif a été adopté et un questionnaire a été administré à 24 enseignants d'ALE issus de six collèges de la wilaya de Ouargla au cours de l'année scolaire 2025–2026.

Les résultats révèlent que l'hypothèse initiale est infirmée : contrairement aux attentes, les enseignants ne manifestent pas des attitudes uniformément favorables envers l'APP. Plus précisément, seuls 37,5 % des répondants ont déclaré intégrer régulièrement des activités d'APP dans leur enseignement du vocabulaire, tandis que 62,5 % ont cité la formation insuffisante comme obstacle majeur. Les moyennes obtenues pour la dimension affective ($M = 2,61$) se situent en dessous du seuil neutre, ce qui témoigne de réserves prévalentes quant à la mise en œuvre en classe.

Ces résultats suggèrent que si les enseignants reconnaissent les mérites théoriques de l'APP, les contraintes contextuelles et institutionnelles continuent d'entraver son adoption efficace dans les classes d'ALE algériennes.

Mots-clés : Apprentissage par Projets (APP), apprentissage du vocabulaire, ALE, attitudes des enseignants, collège algérien, méthode descriptive.