

EXPLORING EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING PROJECT-BASED LEARNING FOR NEWS ITEM SPEAKING

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ABSTRACT

Speaking is a crucial component of English language learning in vocational high schools because it prepares students to communicate effectively in academic and workplace contexts. Although Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has been widely recognized for promoting active and meaningful speaking instruction, previous studies have primarily focused on its effects on students' learning outcomes, while teachers' perspectives on implementing PjBL-based News Item speaking remain under explored. This study aims to explore teachers' perceptions of PjBL and the challenges they encounter when implementing News Item speaking activities in a vocational high school context. A qualitative case study was employed involving three English teachers from a vocational high school in Cimahi who had experience implementing PjBL in News Item speaking instruction. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The findings reveal that the teachers perceived PjBL as a valuable instructional approach because it fostered student engagement, collaboration, authentic communication, and meaningful speaking practice through project-based activities. At the same time, they reported several implementation challenges, including limited instructional time, students' diverse English proficiency, technological constraints, classroom management, assessment complexity, and environmental factors affecting speaking activities. These findings indicate that teachers recognize the pedagogical value of PjBL for News Item speaking despite encountering contextual and instructional challenges. The study contributes to the literature by providing insight into teachers' perspectives on implementing PjBL-based News Item speaking in the vocational high school context.

Keywords: *News item; project-based learning; qualitative case study; speaking skills; vocational high school*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking skill is widely recognized as one of the most essential competencies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, particularly in vocational high school contexts. In SMK settings, English is not only positioned as an academic subject but also as a practical tool that supports students' future professional communication. The ability to speak English fluently and accurately enables learners to present information, interact with others in workplace situations, and respond to communicative demands in both

formal and semi-formal contexts. Among the four language skills, speaking is often considered the most demanding because it requires the simultaneous integration of linguistic knowledge, cognitive processing, and social interaction in real time.

In addition, vocational high school students are expected to develop not only general English proficiency, but also specific communicative competencies aligned with their future occupational fields. This includes the ability to present information clearly, respond to workplace communication demands, and participate in structured professional interactions.

Despite its importance, teaching speaking in EFL classrooms remains challenging. Many learners experience difficulties related to limited vocabulary, low confidence, pronunciation problems, and anxiety when performing orally in front of others. These challenges are often intensified in vocational high school classrooms where students demonstrate diverse levels of English proficiency and varying levels of motivation toward language learning. In addition, speaking instruction is frequently constrained by time limitations, exam-oriented curriculum demands, and instructional practices that still emphasize accuracy over communicative fluency. As a result, speaking activities may not always provide sufficient opportunities for meaningful and sustained oral practice.

In response to these challenges, Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has been widely recognized as an effective student-centered instructional approach that promotes active engagement and meaningful learning experiences. PjBL emphasizes learning through the completion of authentic, extended tasks that require collaboration, inquiry, and problem-solving. According to Larmer et al. (2015), effective PjBL involves sustained inquiry, real-world relevance, student voice and choice, reflection, critique, and public product. Within speaking instruction, this approach enables learners to use English in purposeful contexts rather than isolated drills, thereby promoting both fluency development and communicative confidence.

Table 1. Various PjBL Definitions

Authors	PjBL Definitions
Thomas & Yamazaki (2021)	The student-centered, project-based pedagogy that builds learners' real-world skills beyond the classroom
Beckett et al. (2020)	The desired general education approach for teaching 21st-century skills with projects
Van Lier (2006)	A nonfashionable, yet sophisticated project-based approach with "deeper foundations of educational thought" (p.xii) that is deserving of appreciation in education
Kilpatrick (1918)	A guiding project-based instructional approach that fosters life-long learning skills needed to cope with a changing society

Implementing Project-Based Language Learning (PjBL) requires educators to redesign their instructional methods within a constructivist framework (Thomas, 2000). Under this model, the teacher's primary function shifts from transmitting information to scaffolding independent student discovery. However, making the transition from a traditional, teacher-led dynamic to a student-centered environment can prove difficult for instructors accustomed to direct instruction. Ultimately, this pedagogical shift presents obstacles that may hinder the effective execution of PjBL in the classroom (Blumenfeld et al., 1994; Hertzog, 2007).

Hertzog (2007) highlighted this instructional shift in a study on U.S. educators moving from traditional methods to interactive, project-based teaching. Her research identified several obstacles to successful implementation, specifically the friction between strict curriculum mandates and teachers' reluctance to relinquish classroom control. Supporting this, Blumenfeld et al. (1994) noted that instructors adopting PBL for the first time often fall back on familiar instructional habits. Consequently, as Grant and Hill (2006) emphasized, transitioning to student-centered learning depends on teachers actively understanding and embracing this methodology. Ultimately, an educator's self-perception and underlying knowledge strongly dictate how effectively they carry out their role (Baker, 2011).

Guiding project-based learning effectively requires sufficient PBL training (Habók & Nagy, 2016; Holm, 2011). Furthermore, Thomas and Schneider (2021) stressed that using technology in isolation is inadequate; instead, teachers require training in technology-assisted PBL (TAPBL) that blends technical tools with pedagogical theory. Comprehensive TAPBL training is thus essential for meaningful technology integration in project-based classrooms.

One speaking activity that aligns strongly with the principles of PjBL is the production of News Item texts in oral form. News Item speaking tasks require students to report events, organize information systematically, and deliver messages in a formal spoken style similar to professional news broadcasting. This activity naturally fits the PjBL framework because it allows students to engage in a complete production cycle, starting from selecting newsworthy events, researching information, writing scripts, practicing delivery, and presenting final news performances in the form of videos or simulations. Through this process, students are not only practicing speaking skills but also developing collaboration, creativity, and digital literacy.

The News Item genre itself requires learners to organize information in a logical sequence, apply formal register, and deliver messages with clarity and accuracy, which makes it particularly suitable for developing structured speaking competence.

The relevance of News Item speaking activities becomes even more significant in vocational high school contexts (SMK), where English learning is expected to prepare students for workforce communication. In SMK classrooms, speaking tasks are ideally designed to reflect real-world professional situations such as presentations, reporting, and workplace communication. News Item projects, particularly in the form of newsroom simulations, provide authentic opportunities for students to practice structured speaking, role distribution, and public speaking performance. This aligns with the vocational orientation of SMK education, which emphasizes practical and applied competencies rather than purely theoretical knowledge.

Several studies have examined the implementation of Project-Based Learning in speaking instruction. Research such as We (2020) indicates that PjBL contributes positively to students' speaking ability and confidence by providing collaborative and meaningful learning environments. In addition, Pertiwi and Nurhayati (2024) report that teachers generally perceive PjBL as an effective approach that enhances student engagement, collaboration, and speaking confidence. Other studies have also highlighted that PjBL supports Student-Centered Learning principles by promoting autonomy, active participation, and experiential learning opportunities. However, these studies tend to focus primarily on general speaking instruction or non-specific language genres such as procedure or descriptive texts.

In vocational education contexts, English instruction is also expected to align with the development of soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving,

which are essential for students' future employability. Therefore, instructional approaches that integrate language learning with collaborative and task-based activities are considered particularly relevant in supporting both linguistic and non-linguistic competencies.

Moreover, there is still limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on how teachers experience the implementation of PjBL in genre-based speaking instruction, particularly in the Indonesian vocational education context where classroom realities may differ significantly from general EFL settings.

Although existing literature consistently highlights the benefits of PjBL, several similarities and differences can be observed across previous studies. A common similarity is the consistent finding that PjBL improves student engagement and speaking performance by providing meaningful and interactive learning experiences. Most studies also agree that PjBL encourages collaboration and increases student motivation in language learning. However, differences emerge in terms of research focus and context. Many previous studies concentrate on general high school or tertiary education settings, while fewer studies specifically address vocational high schools, where curriculum demands and learner needs differ significantly. In addition, most research tends to focus on student outcomes, while teacher-related experiences, particularly perceptions and classroom challenges, remain less explored. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to specific speaking genres such as News Item, which requires formal register use and structured oral reporting.

This gap becomes more evident when considering the complexity of implementing PjBL in News Item speaking activities within vocational education settings. News Item tasks require students to master both linguistic features and performance skills, including pronunciation, intonation, and formal delivery style. At the same time, teachers are expected to manage project-based instruction that involves planning, monitoring, assessing, and facilitating student collaboration. In SMK contexts, these demands are often complicated by time constraints, heterogeneous student abilities, limited technological resources, and environmental factors that affect speaking performance.

Based on this gap, there is a need for a more focused investigation on how

English teachers perceive and experience the implementation of PjBL in News Item speaking instruction, particularly in vocational high schools. While previous studies have provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of PjBL and its general application in speaking classes, there is still limited understanding of how teachers interpret its pedagogical value and how they navigate the practical challenges during implementation in real classroom contexts. Understanding teachers' perspectives is crucial because they play a central role in designing, adapting, and sustaining instructional practices in the classroom.

The novelty of this study lies in its specific focus on teachers' perceptions and challenges in implementing Project-Based Learning for News Item speaking activities within a vocational high school setting. Unlike previous research that primarily emphasizes student learning outcomes or general PjBL applications, this study concentrates on a genre-specific speaking activity (News Item) and situates it within the vocational education context. Furthermore, it provides a more detailed understanding of how teachers manage both pedagogical and operational challenges while implementing student-centered, project-based speaking instruction. This contributes to a more contextualized understanding of PjBL in EFL speaking pedagogy.

Unlike previous studies that primarily investigated students' learning outcomes, this study specifically explores teachers' perceptions and implementation challenges in

Project-Based Learning for News Item speaking within Indonesian vocational high schools.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using a qualitative case study design. A qualitative approach was chosen to explore and interpret the meanings teachers assign to their experiences in implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL). The case study design enabled an in-depth examination of a bounded system defined by place, time, and activity, focusing on the implementation of PjBL in News Item speaking activities and the challenges faced by teachers. The study followed the perspective of Creswell and Creswell (2018), which emphasizes case studies as a means of obtaining detailed understanding within real-life educational contexts.

Research Setting

The research was conducted in one vocational high school (SMK) in Cimahi, West Java, Indonesia. The setting was selected because PjBL-based News Item speaking activities had been implemented in English classes, particularly at the eleventh-grade level.

Participants

The participants consisted of three active English teachers (Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and Teacher 3) who had experience implementing Project-Based Learning in News Item speaking instruction. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) teaching English at the eleventh-grade level, (2) having implemented PjBL for News Item speaking activities, and (3) having assigned students to produce news-based speaking projects such as videos or performances. No minimum teaching experience was required; selection was based on direct involvement in the implementation of the project.

Research Instruments

The main instrument of the study was the researcher, supported by a semi-structured interview guide. The interview questions were designed to obtain in-depth information regarding teachers' implementation of PjBL and the challenges they encountered. Initially, 40 questions were developed based on Project-Based Learning principles (Larmer et al., 2015) and five dimensions of Student-Centered Learning (SCL). The instrument was then refined through qualitative screening procedures adapted from Saldaña (2021), resulting in 22 final interview questions organized around SCL dimensions: constructivism, experiential learning, cognitivism, students' well-being and humanism, and student motivation.

Data Collection

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews with the three participating teachers. The interviews focused on two main aspects: the implementation of PjBL in News Item speaking activities and the challenges encountered during its application. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim to ensure accurate data representation.

Interviews were conducted in a quiet setting within the school environment to ensure participants' comfort and minimize interruptions. Each session was guided flexibly,

allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences in detail while maintaining alignment with the research objectives.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. The analysis involved six stages: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. The analysis process was also supported by data condensation and organization procedures adapted from Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). Themes were developed based on recurring patterns related to PjBL implementation and teacher challenges.

Transcription was carried out immediately after each interview to maintain data accuracy and reduce memory bias. Initial codes were generated inductively from the data, allowing themes to emerge naturally from participants' narratives rather than being imposed by predetermined categories.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was ensured through the use of thick description to enhance credibility and transferability. The researcher provided detailed contextual explanations and direct quotations from participants to represent their experiences accurately. In addition, continuous self-reflection and peer debriefing were conducted throughout the research process to minimize bias and maintain consistency in data interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

These strategies were consistently applied throughout the research process to ensure that the findings accurately reflect participants' experiences rather than researcher interpretations. Continuous reflection was conducted to maintain neutrality and minimize potential bias during data interpretation, particularly in the process of theme development from interview data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical procedures were strictly applied throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by using pseudonyms (Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3, and SMK X). Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. The study also ensured non-maleficence by avoiding disruption to teachers' professional duties and school activities. All collected data were stored securely and used solely for academic purposes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section presents the findings organized according to the research questions. The data analysis resulted in two main findings corresponding to: (1) teachers' perceptions of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in News Item speaking activities, and (2) challenges encountered in its implementation.

Teachers' Perceptions of PjBL in News Item Speaking Activities

The findings indicate that all participating teachers generally perceived Project-Based Learning (PjBL) as a positive and meaningful instructional approach for teaching News

Item speaking in vocational high school contexts. Rather than being viewed as a conventional teaching method, PjBL was understood as a learning framework that supports active student participation and more meaningful speaking practice. The following table contains the Thematic Analysis Coding of the study.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis Coding

No.	Name	Time/Place	Transcript	Category	Theme
1.	Teacher (1 T1)	May 21 st , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi.	Authentic PjBL involves an in-depth investigation process, starting from a driving question, exploration of real-world problems, collaborative work... to producing a final product.	Definition of Authentic PjBL	Conceptual Understanding of PjBL & SCL
2.	Teacher 2 (T2)	May 21 st , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi.	Project-Based Learning means when we enter the classroom, the students practice directly... the practical process takes a whole day or several meetings where all students are directly involved.	Process-Oriented Learning by Doing	Conceptual Understanding of PjBL & SCL
3.	Teacher 3 (T3)	May 22 nd , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi.	PjBL is a learning method where students are given a problem, then they solve it by producing a tangible real product.	Problem-Solving & Product Output	Conceptual Understanding of PjBL & SCL
4.	T1	May 21 st , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi.	PjBL is a direct embodiment of Student-Centered Learning... Students take full control of their projects.	Student Autonomy in Learning	Conceptual Understanding of PjBL & SCL
5.	T2	May 21 st , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi.	Actually, both are the same and sustainable... PjBL automatically becomes part of SCL because the students practice it themselves.	Interconnectedness of PjBL and SCL	Conceptual Understanding of PjBL & SCL
6.	T3	May 22 nd , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi.	The relationship is very close because both place students as the center of learning, while the teacher only acts as a facilitator.	Teacher as Facilitator	Conceptual Understanding of PjBL & SCL
7.	T1	May 21 st , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi.	Through this News Item project where they have to produce a news video, students do not only learn English theory, but also practice confidence, pronunciation, fluency, and teamwork.	Speaking Skills & Character Building	Pedagogical Benefits in Vocational Context
8.	T2	May 21 st , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi.	Students are also required to speak more clearly... This PjBL is important in SMK, especially since vocational students are prepared to work immediately after graduation.	Communicative Competence for Career	Pedagogical Benefits in Vocational Context

No.	Name	Time/Place	Transcript	Category	Theme
9.	T3	May 22 nd , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi.	Students proved to be much more enthusiastic and excited when asked to do hands-on practice making video projects... This characteristics of direct practice highly reflects the learning needs in SMK.	Student Engagement & Practical Needs	Pedagogical Benefits in Vocational Context
10.	T1	May 21 st , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi.	...I allow them to make a rough draft in Indonesian first to secure the substance and the news flow... After it is logical, they translate it into the English script.	L1 Scaffolding in Writing Process	Instructional Scaffolding & Inquiry
11.	T2	May 21 st , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi.	...initially, I provide examples of news broadcasts from CNN or from the completed work of other classes. The example is used so students know the format....	Modeling from Real-World Exemplars	Instructional Scaffolding & Inquiry
12.	T3	May 22 nd , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi.	I deliberately freed up the news topics so that students could bring up stories that are relevant to their daily lives....	Contextual Inquiry & Freedom of Topic Choice	Instructional Scaffolding & Inquiry
13.	T1	May 21 st , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi.	Consultation & Revision Session: I check their scripts to correct errors in grammar, cohesion, and vocabulary choices.	Formative Feedback on Scriptwriting	Instructional Scaffolding & Inquiry
14.	T3	May 22 nd , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi.	Consultation session, giving feedback, and script revision regarding grammar aspects or diction appropriateness before the shooting process.	Formative Feedback on Scriptwriting	Instructional Scaffolding & Inquiry
15.	T1	May 21 st , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi.	...I free the groups to divide tasks fairly... students who lean toward technical aspects can take roles as video editors or cameramen but must still contribute to writing.	Differentiated Role Assignment	Inclusive Classroom & Differentiation
16.	T2	May 21 st , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi.	Students who are behind the scenes must still master the material and understand the content of the news being made.	Inclusive Accountability	Inclusive Classroom & Differentiation
17.	T3	May 22 nd , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi.	...I chose an approach by forming random groups so that there would be an equalization of abilities, so that students with higher abilities could help motivate their peers....	Heterogeneous Grouping (Peer Tutoring)	Inclusive Classroom & Differentiation
18	T1	May 21 st , 2026, at one of the	The biggest challenge is time management. Classroom hours are often limited, while	Time Constraint Challenges	Pedagogical & Technical Challenges

No.	Name	Time/Place	Transcript	Category	Theme
		vocational high schools in Cimahi	PjBL requires quite a long time starting from research, scriptwriting, to editing.		
19.	T2	May 21 st , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi	...often constrained by inadequate room facilities at school, so students often do the video take outside the school.	Spatial & Facility Limitations	Pedagogical & Technical Challenges
20.	T3	May 22 nd , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi	...the upload process takes a long time due to unstable internet signals... the limited number of student laptops makes the data transfer process time-consuming....	Technological & Connectivity Barriers	Pedagogical & Technical Challenges
21.	T1	May 21 st , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi	Assessment is comprehensive, divided into Group Scores (creativity, generic structure, cohesion) and Individual Scores (pronunciation, intonation, fluency...).	Balanced Holistic & Individual Assessment	Assessment Framework in PjBL
22.	T2	May 21 st , 2026, at one of vocational high schools in Cimahi	...for non-speaking roles, I confirm with the group leader regarding their activeness and contributions behind the camera....	Assessing Non-Speaking Contributions	Assessment Framework in PjBL
23.	T3	May 22 nd , 2026, at one of the vocational high schools in Cimahi	I also differentiate the assessment between students who do direct voice-over (non-dubbing) and students who use dubbing techniques.	Form-Based Speaking Assessment Criteria	Assessment Framework in PjBL

A key perception shared by all participants is that PjBL increases student engagement in speaking activities. Teachers observed that students tend to be more active, motivated, and willing to participate when speaking tasks are integrated into project-based learning rather than traditional classroom presentations. One teacher stated, “Students become more active and interested when they are given a project to work on rather than just speaking in front of the class” (Teacher 1). This suggests that PjBL creates a more interactive learning environment that encourages participation beyond individual performance.

Collaboration was also identified as an important benefit of PjBL. Teachers explained that News Item speaking projects require students to work in groups, which involves dividing tasks, discussing ideas, and preparing scripts together. Teacher 2 noted, “They work in groups, so they learn how to share tasks and help each other in preparing the news video.” This collaborative process was seen as particularly relevant in vocational education, where teamwork skills are considered essential for students’ future careers.

Another perception highlighted by teachers is that PjBL provides authentic speaking practice. Through News Item tasks, students simulate real-world news reporting activities, which allow them to use English in a more structured and meaningful way. Teacher 3 explained, “The students are not only practicing speaking, but they are also

acting like real news reporters.” This indicates that PjBL helps bridge classroom learning with real-life communication contexts.

In addition, teachers perceived that PjBL contributes to students’ speaking confidence. Students who are initially shy or hesitant tend to become more confident after repeated practice within their groups. Teacher 1 stated, “Students who are usually shy become more confident after practicing several times with their group.” This shows that confidence development occurs gradually through collaborative preparation and repeated rehearsal.

Overall, although teachers emphasized different aspects of PjBL, all participants agreed that it creates a more meaningful and supportive environment for teaching News Item speaking compared to traditional speaking instruction.

Challenges in Implementing PjBL in News Item Speaking Activities

Despite the positive perceptions, the implementation of PjBL in News Item speaking activities presents several challenges experienced by teachers in classroom practice.

The most frequently mentioned challenge is limited instructional time. Teachers explained that PjBL requires multiple stages such as planning, drafting, practicing, and presenting. However, classroom time is often insufficient to accommodate all these stages effectively. Teacher 2 stated, “The time is not enough because PjBL needs preparation, practice, and presentation stages.” As a result, teachers often need to simplify or adjust project implementation.

Another challenge is students’ heterogeneous English proficiency levels. Teachers reported that differences in students’ abilities affect group performance, where more proficient students tend to dominate tasks while lower-proficiency students rely on their peers. Teacher 3 explained, “In one class, there are students with very different abilities, so some groups progress faster than others.” This condition requires teachers to provide continuous monitoring and support during group activities.

Technological constraints also emerged as a significant issue. Since News Item projects often involve video production, not all students have equal access to appropriate devices for recording and editing. Teacher 1 noted, “Not all students have proper devices for recording and editing their videos.” This limitation affects the consistency and quality of student project outcomes.

Classroom management was also identified as a challenge. Teachers reported difficulties in monitoring multiple groups simultaneously during project work. Teacher 2 stated, “It is difficult to monitor all groups at the same time during project work.” This indicates that PjBL increases teacher workload, especially during the production phase.

In terms of assessment, teachers experienced difficulties in evaluating individual student performance within group-based speaking projects. Teacher 3 explained, “It is not easy to assess each student’s speaking performance in group projects.” This shows the complexity of balancing group work with individual accountability in speaking assessment.

Environmental factors were also mentioned as affecting speaking activities. Teachers noted that classroom conditions are not always supportive for speaking practice, especially in terms of noise and general learning atmosphere. Teacher 1 stated, “Sometimes the classroom environment is not supportive for speaking activities.”

Overall, these challenges are interconnected and reflect both pedagogical and contextual limitations in implementing PjBL in vocational high school speaking instruction.

Discussion

Teachers' Perceptions of PjBL in News Item Speaking Activities

The findings indicate that teachers perceive Project-Based Learning (PjBL) as an effective instructional approach that enhances student engagement, collaboration, authenticity, and speaking confidence in News Item speaking activities. This perception aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through active participation and social interaction rather than passive reception.

The observed increase in student engagement reflects the core principle of PjBL as highlighted by Larmer et al. (2015), who argue that meaningful learning occurs when students are involved in sustained inquiry and authentic tasks. In this study, teachers noted that students became more active when speaking activities were embedded in project-based tasks. This suggests that engagement in speaking instruction is closely related to the level of task authenticity and student involvement in the learning process.

Collaboration, as reported by teachers, also reflects the social dimension of learning emphasized in constructivist theory. Group-based News Item projects require students to negotiate meaning, share responsibilities, and co-construct knowledge. This supports the idea that language learning is not an individual cognitive process but a socially mediated activity. Similar findings were reported by Pertiwi and Nurhayati (2024), who found that PjBL enhances student collaboration and participation in speaking classes.

The perception of authenticity in speaking practice further highlights the relevance of PjBL in bridging classroom learning with real-world communication. News Item speaking tasks simulate real news reporting activities, allowing students to practice structured and purposeful communication. This aligns with Richards (2008), who emphasizes that speaking instruction should reflect meaningful communication rather than mechanical repetition.

In addition, the improvement in students' speaking confidence can be interpreted through the lens of experiential learning. Repeated practice, peer interaction, and gradual exposure to public speaking situations allow students to reduce anxiety and build confidence over time. This supports previous research (We, 2020), which found that PjBL contributes to increased speaking confidence through collaborative and supportive learning environments.

Overall, the positive perceptions of teachers suggest that PjBL is not only a pedagogical strategy but also a transformative approach that reshapes speaking instruction into a more interactive and meaningful learning process, particularly in vocational high school contexts.

Challenges in Implementing PjBL in News Item Speaking Activities

Despite its pedagogical benefits, the implementation of PjBL presents several challenges that reflect structural and contextual limitations in EFL classrooms.

The issue of limited instructional time can be understood in relation to curriculum constraints commonly found in vocational education. PjBL requires multiple stages of learning, including planning, drafting, rehearsal, and presentation. However, time limitations restrict the depth of implementation, which may affect the overall quality of learning outcomes.

Heterogeneous student proficiency levels present another significant challenge. From a pedagogical perspective, this reflects the difficulty of applying uniform instructional strategies in diverse classrooms. While PjBL promotes collaborative learning, differences in language ability may lead to unequal participation among group

members. This issue has also been highlighted in previous studies, where stronger students tend to dominate group tasks while weaker students become passive participants.

Technological constraints further highlight the inequality of learning resources in vocational school contexts. Since News Item projects often involve video production, access to digital tools becomes essential. However, disparities in device availability limit students' ability to fully participate in project completion. This suggests that successful implementation of PjBL requires not only pedagogical planning but also adequate technological support.

Classroom management challenges indicate the increased cognitive and organizational load placed on teachers during PjBL implementation. Teachers are required to monitor multiple groups simultaneously while also providing guidance and feedback. PjBL increases teacher workload, particularly in managing group-based learning activities.

Assessment complexity is another important issue, as teachers must evaluate both group outcomes and individual speaking performance. This creates tension between collaborative learning principles and individual accountability. Without clear assessment frameworks, evaluating speaking performance in group projects becomes challenging and may reduce assessment reliability.

Environmental factors, such as classroom conditions and noise levels, also influence the effectiveness of speaking activities. Speaking requires a supportive and low-anxiety environment; however, external disruptions may reduce students' willingness to participate actively. This indicates that contextual factors play a crucial role in determining the success of speaking instruction.

Overall, these challenges suggest that while PjBL is pedagogically valuable, its implementation requires careful consideration of contextual constraints in vocational high school settings.

Overall Implications of the Study

The findings of this study highlight several important implications for EFL speaking instruction in vocational high schools. First, PjBL has the potential to transform speaking classrooms into more interactive and student-centered environments. However, its success depends on teachers' ability to manage instructional complexity, particularly in terms of time allocation, group coordination, and assessment design.

Second, the study emphasizes the importance of institutional support in implementing PjBL effectively. Adequate technological resources, flexible curriculum planning, and supportive learning environments are necessary to maximize the benefits of project-based speaking instruction.

Finally, the study reinforces the importance of teacher agency in adapting instructional approaches to classroom realities. Teachers play a critical role in balancing pedagogical ideals with practical constraints, ensuring that learning objectives are still achieved despite implementation challenges.

CONCLUSION

This study explored EFL teachers' perceptions of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and the challenges they encountered in implementing News Item speaking activities in a vocational high school context. The findings indicate that teachers generally perceive PjBL as a beneficial instructional approach that enhances student engagement, promotes collaboration, supports authentic speaking practice, and builds students' speaking confidence. However, the implementation of PjBL is also accompanied by several

challenges, including limited instructional time, diverse student proficiency levels, technological constraints, classroom management difficulties, assessment complexity, and environmental factors.

The main contribution of this study lies in providing a context-specific understanding of how PjBL is experienced by EFL teachers in News Item speaking instruction within vocational high school settings. Unlike previous studies that predominantly focus on student learning outcomes, this research highlights teachers' lived experiences in managing both pedagogical benefits and practical constraints in implementing project-based speaking activities.

Practically, the findings suggest that successful implementation of PjBL requires careful instructional planning, particularly in managing time allocation, designing appropriate group structures, ensuring access to learning technologies, and developing more systematic assessment strategies. Teachers also need institutional support to address environmental and resource-related limitations that may affect speaking performance.

Future research is recommended to further investigate PjBL implementation in different educational contexts and with a larger number of participants. In addition, quantitative or mixed-method studies may be conducted to examine the impact of PjBL on specific speaking performance indicators, as well as to develop more effective assessment models for project-based speaking tasks.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this work the authors used ChatGPT in order to help the writers to translate the manuscript. After using this tool/service, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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