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EFL university students' reflections on their joint experience of creating video clips in an oral communication course



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ABSTRACT

During recent years, EFL oral communication instruction is faced with challenges to reconsider replacing traditional and teacher-centered approaches by authentic and student-directed learning methods. The present study incorporated project-based language learning methodology in an EFL communication course in an Iranian university during one semester and elicited students' perceptions regarding its practicality, efficiency, advantages, and disadvantages at the end of the course. To serve that end, 20 students who had enrolled in the course and collaboratively created the video clip projects during the term were invited to participate in two separate but identical semi-structured focus group interviews at the end of the course and the interview data were analyzed inductively to evaluate the efficiency of the projects from student perspectives. Overall, the findings indicated that the approach was welcomed by the learners, who expressed favorable attitudes towards incorporation of this innovative instructional method into the course as it improved their communication skill as well as other skills such as interpersonal, autonomy, planning, organization, time management, team working, creativity, imagination, and giving and taking criticism skills in a supportive, friendly, and exciting environment. Drawing on the positive views expressed by the participants, it can be concluded that L2 practitioners should regard this approach as a viable alternative or a complement to the teacher-centered methods currently performed in EFL oral communication courses.

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1. Introduction

EFL learners normally consider their success in language learning to relate to the ability to use English fluently in their communications ([Richards & Renandya, 2002](#)). However, due to being exposed to the dominant form-focused and rote learning methods, many EFL students enter universities lacking conversational competence despite several years of English education during their secondary schooling ([Jamshidnejad, 2010](#)). Oral communication courses at many universities thus aim to improve L2 communication skills in both academic and non-academic situations. To address this, some practitioners utilize prescribed course books and formulaic, decontextualized activities that do not address their students' needs and fail to develop their spoken English skills ([Kayi, 2006](#)). Thus there is a disconnect between the stated ideal—the course objectives which encourage students' L2 speaking proficiency—and practice ([Choomthong, 2014](#)). At most, the students may be involved in free discussion and role playing activities whose topics are chosen by the lecturers or the students themselves. Yet, as [House \(2012\)](#) claims, it is difficult to see how such activities can lead to improvement in the L2 learners' oral skills. According to [Amiryousefi \(2017\)](#), such traditional language teaching methodologies and inauthentic, mechanical, and cliché learning materials demotivate EFL learners in oral communication classes and most of the time they become reluctant to actively participate in class activities as they find them boring. Unfortunately, most if not all EFL communication courses in Iranian universities have been limited to such methodologies over the years even though all of the scholars admit the need for shifting to a more student-centered, authentic, and goal-oriented pedagogy

([Jamshidnejad, 2010](#); [2020](#); [Safari Moghaddam & Ghafournia, 2019](#)). Since motivation is critical to successful foreign language learning, these methods fail to encourage learners to speak fluently and comprehensibly in the target language, even after several years of training ([Wachob, 2006](#)). Having said that, the current study tried to examine the use of Project-based Language Learning in the Iranian context, focusing on students' perceptions regarding its practicality and usefulness in a one-semester EFL oral communication course.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Project-based Language Learning

Project-based language learning (PBL) is a flexible, dynamic, and constructivist instructional learning methodology which entails a social learning experience where the students work in groups, share knowledge, learn from each other, support each other, and take control of their learning activities in their target language to enhance their communicative abilities, while the educators' role is the orchestration of the learning process ([Tamim & Grant, 2013](#)). This exploratory, purposeful, and student-centered approach encourages students to use their strengths; cooperate and interact with each other; make decisions; and integrate content, skills, and technology to perform a variety of practical activities such as creating video projects in an authentic and meaningful context to resolve a certain problem ([Beckett, 2002](#); [Beckett & Slater, 2018](#); [Mousa, et al., 2011](#)). It incorporates a group activity over an extended period of time, whereby students plan, complete and present their work relatively autonomously and is driven by the need to develop a final product ([Fried-Booth, 2002](#); [Guo, Saab, Post, & Admiraal, 2020](#); [Simpson, 2011](#)).

Further, social constructivism, which maintains that learners develop knowledge through interaction, collaboration, and communication among the members of the community, offers an ideal framework for PBL. This theory emphasizes the significance of the co-construction of knowledge between participants and posits that learning occurs between members of a community through meaningful interaction ([Lantolf & Thorne 2007](#)), thereby enabling learners to go beyond their individual capacities by pooling their ideas and knowledge, which in turn prompts improved performance ([Corden, 2001](#); [Nystrand, 1996](#)). In this sense, learning is a much more complex activity than the individual engagement ([Palincsar, 1998](#)) as cognition and knowledge are inherently social and are dialogically constructed and shared within a social world ([Alfred, 2002](#); [Lantolf, 2000, 2006](#)). Additionally, interaction boosts student motivation, collaborative skills, and the ability to solve the problems ([Nystrand, 1996](#)). It is argued that PBL reflects this learning theory as it encourages learners' interactions by the process of exploring, scaffolding, interpreting, negotiating, and creating products, namely through the presentation and written report required in their project work ([Grant, 2002](#)).

English-speaking learning has always been one of the greatest obstacles for EFL students ([Hedge, 2004](#)). Part of this problem in the Iranian context originates from decontextualized learning materials, aimless activities, and insufficient opportunities to speak English or to communicate with people in English ([Jamshidnejad, 2010; 2020](#); [Safari Moghaddam & Ghafournia, 2019](#)). Common class activities have some inherent limitations

and may fail to develop L2 learners' communication competence due to students' lack of background knowledge about the topic, their reluctance to participate in discussions due to concerns over making mistakes and losing face, their insufficient vocabulary to express ideas, being taciturn, and their major concern, which is passing examinations rather than mastering oral communication proficiency ([Jamshidnejad, 2020](#); [Sadeghi & Richards, 2015](#)). The situation described, while not necessarily true for each and every institution, is dominant in most EFL conversation classes in Iran. While the ideals of the students and the overall course objectives are in broad agreement, there is a gap between the theory and practical reality, and the learners' aspirations are not satisfied in the oral communication classes ([Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010](#)).

As several researchers have highlighted, though improvements have been made in recent years, conversation classes in Iranian universities and other parts of Asia such as China, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Oman, and Vietnam among others are not geared for communicatively oriented language learning for several reasons including over-reliance on form-focused activities, lack of interactive speaking environments, and exam-oriented education as well as learner anxiety, lack of self-confidence, insufficient content knowledge and linguistic resources, and inadequate practice ([Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2014](#); [Gan, 2013](#); [Hong, 2006](#); [Jamshidnejad, 2020](#); [Kroeker, 2009](#); [Talandis Jr & Stout, 2015](#); [Yen, Hou, & Chang, 2013](#); [Zhou, 2015](#)). Hence, there is a need for more student-centered, participatory, and meaningful pedagogies and tasks that can motivate students to get involved in class

activities and enhance their communicative competence in EFL settings ([Kayi, 2006](#)).

As [Dörnyei and Ushioda \(2011\)](#) have argued, several variables including task and materials design, evaluation, and even group composition can influence the learners' motivation and stimulate their interest in a learning environment. The authors have stated that to consciously generate and promote student motivation, as well as maintain motivated behavior, practitioners should provide motivational conditions in their classrooms (p.107). Others include (a) creating a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere, (b) increasing the learners' commitment, (c) making the teaching materials relevant, (d) making the learning experience inspirational and entertaining, (e) presenting tasks in a motivating way, (f) and encouraging cooperation among the learners. It is claimed that PBL has the potential to address the aforementioned challenges and can afford such an atmosphere provided that it is carefully planned, implemented, monitored, and reflected on throughout the whole process ([Beckett & Slater, 2018](#); [Spring, 2020b](#)). More precisely, appropriate training encourages learners to actively identify and design authentic projects that they prefer to work on, and to become autonomous and take the responsibility for their own learning of content knowledge and the skills required for performing their projects and presenting them to their classmates and teachers in the target language ([Stoller, 2008, as cited in Beckett and Slater, 2018, p. 1](#)). Actually, the freedom learners feel to select projects that are interesting to them and relevant to their objectives is "an excellent way to motivate students to learn and practice languages in a real context, develop their skills, trigger their

creativity, and promote teamwork" ([Gomez, 2016, as cited in Beckett and Slater, 2018, p.3](#)).

Several studies have shown that PBL can benefit L2 learners in areas such as:

- *team-working, managing conflicts, decision making, and communication skills* ([Beckett, 2002](#); [Kapp, 2010](#); [Lam, 2011](#); [Mousa, et al., 2011](#); [Neo & Neo, 2009](#); [Spring, 2020b](#)),
- *creative and critical thinking, self-management skills, autonomous learning* ([Allen, 2004](#); [Arabloo, Hemmati, Rouhi & Khodabandeh, 2021](#); [Farouck, 2016](#); [Grant, 2011](#); [Neo & Neo, 2009](#)),
- *interpersonal skills, sense of community and collaboration* ([Farouck, 2016](#); [Lou & Kim MacGregor, 2004](#); [Railsback, 2002](#)),
- *affective aspects such as improving motivation, interest and satisfaction; enhancing cognitive engagement, reducing anxiety, and boosting self-confidence* ([Beckett & Slater, 2005](#); [Farouck, 2016](#); [Fried-Booth, 2002](#); [Grant, 2011](#); [Lee, 2002](#)).

Research has also examined the effect of PBL on improving EFL learners' language proficiency. For instance, findings have suggested that the incorporation of this technique in L2 context improves the oral proficiency of the students and their communicative competence ([Kato, Spring, & Mori, 2020](#); [Spring, 2020a; 2020b](#); [Wu & Meng, 2010](#)). It also boosts the accuracy of the language structures produced by the learners ([Dooly & Sadler, 2016](#); [Spring, 2020a](#)), develops the lexical complexity of learner speech ([Torres & Rodriguez, 2017](#); [Spring, 2020b](#)), enhances student motivation and engagement ([Kato, et al., 2020](#); [Miller & Hafner, 2014](#); [Wu & Meng, 2010](#)), changes their negative attitudes and hesitance to speak English ([Torres & Rodriguez, 2017](#)), increases the fluency of

their output (Spring, 2020a; 2020b), improves their self-confidence by controlling their feelings of insecurity and anxiety (Torres & Rodriguez, 2017), encourages them to be more accountable and autonomous by assuming the roles of investigators and problem solvers (Aubrey, 2022; Dooly, 2013), and provides them a pleasant and enjoyable learning experience (Beckett, 2005; Grant, 2011).

Considering the challenges and the findings reported above, it appears that educators need to integrate relevant materials, resources (including technology), and strategies into their own practice to make their EFL courses more attractive and efficient. Therefore, extensive investigations of authentic, goal-oriented, and student-centered pedagogies such as PBL among others seem logical and necessary. The findings of such studies can provide insights into the processes and mechanisms of such approaches which in turn can help their successful implementation in EFL classes. This can ultimately contribute to enhancing EFL students' motivation and engagement, independence, self-confidence, and developing their abilities and skills in the target language communication. Indeed, this seems essential because many EFL curricula, especially in Asian countries, are moving away from form-focused and rote learning and increasingly shifting to more interactive, student-directed, and cooperative approaches, building on individual students' strengths (Kobayashi, 2006; Liu, 2016; Spring, 2020a), and it is believed that PBL has the potential to be employed as one teaching method within such a context.

Hence, it seems logical to conduct research exploring the feasibility and the potential of integrating PBL in EFL classes in general and

oral communication classes in particular by eliciting students' perceptions of engaging in this approach. The findings can be very informative as they help researchers examine the advantages and disadvantages of this pedagogy from the learners' perspective and make necessary modifications to make it more inspiring for them to actively participate in class activities and improve their communication skills efficiently. This study, therefore, attempted to shed light on how EFL university students reacted to the incorporation of PBL, namely video-clip creation, into their oral communication course and sought to answer the following research question:

- *What are Iranian EFL students' opinions regarding the effects of collaborative creation of video-clip projects on their communication and language skills as well as motivating their engagement in an English communication class?*

▼. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The present research was embedded in an English oral communication course at a medium sized private university in Iran. The course lasted for 15 weeks with the students meeting for three hours each week. Altogether, 20 students enrolled in the course, three male and seventeen female students. They were freshman English Translation bachelors and shared Persian as their native language. The age of the learners ranged from 20 to 26 years, the majority being 20. Before attending the university, these students had studied English in high school for four years and were considered "lower-intermediate learners" based on the results of the paper-based TOEFL test they took at the beginning of the course/study (their TOEFL scores ranged from ۴۷۷ to ۵۱۲).

From the outset of the course all students were informed that they would be required to form groups of two or three, choose topics, write conversation scripts for their topics, rehearse their scripts, and video record their performances cooperatively during the semester. The details of the projects were discussed as follows:

- Groups of two or three students should be formed to create three video clips between three to five minutes during the term;
- Themes/topics should be authentic and relevant to real-life situations and the course content;
- The clips should be accurate and error free in terms of structure, vocabulary, and pronunciation;
- Group members should use their strengths to support and help their partners;
- The videos should look natural and fluent;
- Recoded videos should have high quality to be played in the class.

After explaining the purpose of the projects, many students showed great interest in it. Following the researcher's briefing, the students autonomously formed seven two-member and two three-member groups. Each group had to prepare and record three video clips on their chosen topics during the course. The total number of 27 videos were made and played in class during the term. From the beginning of the course, each group was informed as to when their particular videos would be needed, and it was expected that these videos would be finished and got ready to view by their scheduled date. The representative of each group was required to submit to the instructor a copy of their video at least one day before it was to be shown, and the video clips of two different groups were played

each week. The lecturer watched them in advance and downloaded the videos in order to be played in the class.

Each week, about ninety minutes of the class time were allocated to playing and evaluating two scheduled video clips. That is, first each video was played twice while the students watched it and took notes about its strengths and weaknesses based on the criteria provided at the beginning of the course. Then, all students were encouraged to provide oral comments and express their opinions in terms of (1) the attractiveness and relevance of the topic and content of the videos to the course objectives; (2) the accuracy of structures; (3) the appropriateness of the terms and expressions used by the actors/actresses; (4) the accuracy of pronunciation, tone, stress, and intonation of the participants; (5) the fluency, authenticity, and spontaneity of the performances; (6) the coordination between the group members; and (7) duration of the videos and time management. Finally, after playing each video for the third time and pausing it when needed, the lecturer offered evaluations and formative feedback for the video which was played. He also provided all students with mini-lessons and practical tips on how to improve the quality of future videos with regard to their fluency, accuracy, and authenticity. In order to motivate students to support each other in every stage of the creation process and to encourage active participation, all students in the same group were given the same scores; that is, each group was evaluated as a unit so that group members had to assist each other and use each other's strengths to create better end-products and obtain higher scores.

3.2. Data Collection Instruments

Two focus group interviews were used to collect data from the students at the end of the course. Focus groups enable researchers to have access to a wide range of participants at the same time (Given, 2008). The interviewees may share common characteristics/experiences and interact with each other on a given topic or theme (Griffie, 2012). More precisely, in this type of interview, the respondents discuss a particular issue and their views emerge, providing insights that might not otherwise have been available in an individual interview (Cohen, et al., 2018). Eventually, insights and data may be used to generate hypothesis(es).

Overall, the two group interview sessions combined lasted for one hour and fifty-three minutes and concentrated on a range of issues regarding the participants' views on the integration of PBL, namely the creation of video clips in their English oral communication class. The questions addressed issues such as (1) the students' perceived advantages, disadvantages, and challenges of choosing topics, writing and preparing conversations for the chosen topics, acting, and video recording, (2) the interviewees' reactions to the efficiency of the projects in terms of improving their English oral communication and other skills, and (3) the participants' sentiments about the class atmosphere, motivation, self-confidence, cooperation, and participation.

After gaining the permission of the interviewees to record their responses, the sessions were audio recorded using digital recording equipment. To minimize possible impact of the researcher on students' attitudes, the participants were assured that their responses would have no effect on their end-of-term scores.

Participants were also made aware that data elicited from them would be treated in the strictest confidence, and any information gathered would be used for research purposes only. Finally, by agreeing not to publicize their names and identities, the participants were reassured of their anonymity and confidentiality. Thus, in reporting the findings, pseudonyms are used to sustain confidentiality and protect the participants' identities. During the interviews, the students showed no hesitation in answering the questions and responded to the questions in an open and straightforward manner. These efforts aimed to minimize potential researcher/lecturer impact on students' responses.

3.3. Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed inductively and the coding procedures involved open coding and axial coding as proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998).

- First, the interview recordings were transcribed by the researcher.
- Next, during the open coding phase, the transcriptions were read recursively and the data were broken down, examined, and compared, so that patterns and major themes could be identified.
- Axial coding involved categorizing the data around the themes and putting the data back together in new ways after open coding by making connections between a theme and its sub-themes.
- Finally, a further analysis was conducted to count the frequency of each theme and representative statements expressed by the participants were extracted to support, illustrate, and clarify each theme.
- To ensure the reliability of the procedure and the findings, the themes were verified by

sharing the data with an experienced colleague who then provided similar coding, after which the inter-coder reliability was measured and found to be highly reliable (Fliess' Kappa =0.83). Disagreements in coding were resolved through discussion, and if required, the preliminary set of themes was further refined.

4. Findings

In general, all students expressed favorable attitudes towards creating the video clips, playing them in class and evaluating and being evaluated by their peers as part of the course requirements. Their responses formed four major themes: "Unique Learning Experience," "Fostering Educational Skills," "Inspiring and Motivating," and "Supportive Class Atmosphere." In the subsequent sections, these themes will be discussed and evidence to support them will be provided using original, key quotations from representative responses.

4.1. Unique Learning Experience

The great majority of the learners (17 students) claimed that the experience was exceptional, claiming that the learning benefits of the activity were numerous. These learners emphasized that the projects improved their listening and speaking skills, pronunciation (intonation, stress, tone), word usage, and form and structure of their conversations. The following comments support this notion and provide insight about how they felt about the activity:

The projects were very efficient to improve our oral communication and listening and speaking skills. While preparing and creating the videos, we were aware that we would be evaluated by our classmates. So, we were very careful, double-checked everything including our

pronunciation and the authenticity of our conversation which were very helpful. (Katie)

Rose and Catherine, who were teammates, expressed similar views. Catherine acknowledged that:

The evaluations, comments, and corrections were invaluable. Such activities are unforgettable as they made us be more careful. Watching conversation videos which are normally played in oral communication classes are not as effective as making and playing them ourselves. The projects helped us pay extra attention to the details which were normally ignored in conversation classes. It was sort of learning by doing.

Two other participants (Jack and Margaret) valued the efficiency of their experience explicitly. As Jack remarked:

It was our first experience. We learnt a lot of lessons from our performance which can be used in the future including self-correction. Indeed, watching our own videos helped us find our weaknesses and try to improve them even if they were not highlighted by our peers in the class. It helped us focus more on body language, genuineness, and spontaneity while conversing.

The interviewees also called the approach novel as it engaged them beyond the conventional physical classroom settings. Most of them stated that they worked very hard and it took them six to eight hours to find a good topic and write a suitable script for it, 10 to 15 hours preparing, practicing, and filming their conversations, and two to five hours editing their clips. As Alex noted:

The course was different and it was valued. The videos were made out of the class time and this involved us even more. Other students of the university heard about our

activities and followed us and our uploaded videos on social media (Telegram) with great interest. That was awesome.

Ashley commented that:

We spent a lot of time searching in the internet and sources like YouTube to find a suitable topic and conversation scripts. But the negative point was that most videos were not original. That is, we searched the net, chose a conversation and duplicated it. I think even the duplication was very helpful as we learnt new terminologies, expressions, etc. that we internalize them and will never forget them.

Ashley's view, however, was not shared by many students including Elizabeth, Isabel, Camellia, Rose, and Michael. For example, Elizabeth stressed that *"duplicating the conversations was impossible even if we wanted to. We used sources to get some ideas. Then we modified them and created our own videos."*

On the contrary, a few students reported challenges they had preparing and making the videos. Rose, for instance, complained that *"I'm a professional, one of my partners (Catherine) is a full-time mom and the other (Maria) does not live nearby. So, it was hard to find a convenient time to meet and practice."* Alice also mentioned that *"the university security did not allow us to use the campus as the location of our videos which was so annoying."* Finally, Margaret and Emily asserted that *"we had to pay some money to a fast food restaurant to book a table for making one of our video clips."*

4.2. Fostering Educational Skills

All of the participants confirmed that the projects boosted their language learning, interpersonal, self-regulation, and higher order skills including planning, organization, and time management, their ability to cooperate and work

on a team, their creativity and imagination, and their comfort with giving and taking criticism. As Clara remarked, *"We had never had such an experience before. By involving in the projects we learnt planning, organization, and time management."* Clara's view was also confirmed by Jack. Similarly, Rose emphasized that *"We learnt team working and cooperation. We practiced sharing responsibilities and supporting each other. We learnt respecting our partners and not imposing our ideas on our teammates."* Her opinion was also approved by Catherine, Alex, and Isabel. Yet, there was one three-member group in which two of its members complained about the third for being uncooperative and unaccountable. Besides, one participant, Gloria, commented that *"It was difficult at the beginning, but as we noticed that all videos had some weaknesses one way or another and none of them were perfect. We were ready to hear our classmates' comments and criticisms. Indeed, we practiced how to criticize and take criticism during the course gradually."* Aidyn and Margaret supported her remarks.

Finally, Camellia commented that:

Giving the students freedom to choose their own topics, texts, and contexts was amazing. It enhanced our creativity, autonomy, and imaginations. We discussed different ideas and options with our partners for hours to reach an agreement. Imposing no restrictions on the students encouraged us to think about varied and different issues. We all thought of making a distinctive product.

Several other participants, including Ashley, Julia, Lora, and Michael, agreed on this point.

4.3. Inspiring and Motivating

More than half of the interviewees agreed that the projects were both motivating and inspiring,

and thus they tried not to miss any of the classes. Aidyn, for instance, expressed that *“the projects were very motivating. We tried not to miss watching, evaluating, and comparing our classmates’ videos with ours. It was fun and attractive and we tried to learn new points from our peers.”* Gloria asserted that *“Every week as I watched the videos, I took notes, used the ideas, and learnt something new which inspired my partner and I in creating our own clips.”* Julia, Margaret, Michael, and Camellia endorsed this view. Michael, for example, claimed that *“I enjoyed the projects. I’m normally a shy and introverted person and am passive in other classes and miss most of them. The projects encouraged me to be very active both in my group and in the class. The class wasn’t boring at all.”*

4.4. Supportive Class Atmosphere

Some of the respondents (8 learners) expressed that they were pleased with their experience of attending this course and being involved in creating video clips in a supportive, friendly, and exciting environment which furthered especially their self-confidence. For example, Clara stated that *“the projects helped us establish a supportive and understanding relation within groups and friendly and healthy competition between groups. We all tried hard for a common goal which was making quality clips in a pleasant atmosphere and I think this made our class an unforgettable experience.”* A similar sentiment was expressed by Jack, Michael, and Julia. As Julia stressed, *“I enjoyed the class. The none-threatening and stress-free class atmosphere improved my self-confidence. As a shy student, I felt my confidence improved over time especially as I had the opportunity to comment on my classmates’ videos.”* Several other students including Margaret, Katie, Emily,

and Alice endorsed this view as they felt participating in the activities enhanced their self-confidence.

5. Discussion

The practicality of integrating PBL, video creation project, has been under-investigated in EFL contexts, especially in oral communication classes where prescribed, routine, and decontextualized activities bore learners, and their failure to achieve oral proficiency often frustrates them. Adopting this approach in an Iranian university EFL oral communication course during a semester generated noteworthy results. Indeed, the theoretical claims of PBL documented in the literature such as establishing inspirational, supportive, and attractive learning environment; improving English language learning skills such as lexical and grammatical knowledge as well as oral communication skills; enhancing interpersonal and self-regulating skills such as team working, planning, organization, time management, and autonomy; developing higher order skills including creativity, critical thinking, and evaluation; and boosting motivation, and self-confidence ([Farouk, 2016](#); [Fried-Booth, 2002](#); [Lam, 2011](#); [Neo & Neo, 2009](#); [Spring, 2020a](#)) seemed to be echoed by the comments from the majority of the participants in this study. However, some organization challenges were also identified that can be sorted with careful preparation, planning, and training considering the characteristics of L2 learners as well as the features of the context where PBL is implemented.

Moreover, at the end of the course almost all of the students were clearly impressed with the outcome. As [Amiryousefi \(2017\)](#) argued, language learning environments must be inviting and motivating. Our students’ attitudes confirm

how integrating an innovative, authentic pedagogy like PBL into an oral communication course in a friendly, stress-free atmosphere can inspire participants. It can encourage them to become enthusiastic learners who actively cooperate with their peers not only in the process of creating their own video projects, but also in evaluating the videos created by the members of other groups. Indeed, the projects in this study helped learners cultivate greater intrinsic motivation to improve their oral communication skill. All students, even those who made few contributions to English classroom oral tasks, expressed great interest in contributing to creating videos with their teammates.

Further, as some of the participants expressed, PBL as a collaborative learning approach can form security and supportive atmosphere among learners and increase their self-confidence, which is congruent with [Torres and Rodriguez \(2017\)](#). The participants' responses revealed that being involved in PBL as a student-centered pedagogy successfully created a less threatening learning environment compared with teacher dominant settings. It provided opportunities for more cooperative and collaborative learning activities for building skills by sharing information and meaningful interactions with peers. More precisely, individual students' participation in performing their roles and using their strengths and abilities to complete the projects gave them a sense of value and fulfilment which consequently enhanced their motivation, self-confidence, and contentment.

Additionally, our findings support the case that PBL promotes learning by doing, and it enables students to develop language skills along with real-life skills ([Farouck, 2016](#); [Foss et](#)

[al., 2007](#); [Railsback, 2002](#)). The interviewees indicated that the opportunity to create video clips allowed them to use different sources and practice a variety of learning strategies to achieve their language goals practically and communicatively. Therefore, participants felt that the projects enhanced their lexical and syntactic knowledge as well as their oral communication proficiency, which mirrors the results of studies such as [Kato, Spring, & Mori \(2020\)](#), [Torres and Rodriguez \(2017\)](#) and [Spring \(2020b\)](#). The participants also maintained that engaging in the projects boosted their interpersonal skills. Hence, the advantages of PBL as a goal-oriented instructional method are beyond EFL learning contexts and learners can extend their acquired skills such as teamwork, accountability, planning, organization, time management, and creativity to other educational and non-educational settings and get prepared for real-life situations.

Some pedagogical implications can be drawn from the findings of the study. First, PBL is an efficient instructional technique which helps EFL learners improve their L2 oral communication by involving them in meaningful construction of knowledge through interaction. Second, PBL can provide EFL learners with sufficient opportunities to practice and use the language communicatively and authentically. Third, through PBL instructional environment, the students cooperate to take control of their own learning and the instructors stimulate autonomous learning by orchestrating their performance and providing feedback and support when required. This can lead to enhanced student engagement and active participation compared to routine, decontextualized activities performed in traditional oral communication classes.

This study recommends that curriculum developers, administrators, and educators make changes in their overall approach to create an ideal atmosphere for more attractive and efficient oral communication courses. Most EFL students' failures to improve oral communication skills are due to overused, habitual, and decontextualized teaching approaches and practices which demotivate learners ([Amiryousefi, 2017](#); [Jamshidnejad, 2020b](#)). As several scholars have emphasized, the English oral communication curriculum design should be meaningful, authentic, relevant, and inspiring for EFL students ([Farouck, 2016](#); [Mousa et al., 2011](#); [Talley & Hui-Ling, 2014](#)). In other words, to advance the EFL learners' oral skills, a series of reforms are needed, especially regarding educational policies which prioritize the curricula, syllabuses, and teaching methods that integrate student-centered, goal-oriented, contextualized pedagogies and challenging practices such as PBL in oral communication courses in EFL university settings.

However, in order to implement this approach in educational contexts effectively, preparations and sound pedagogical strategies are crucial ([Aubrey, 2022](#); [Poonpon, 2011](#); [Railsback, 2002](#)). Students should clearly understand the objectives, the process, the rules and norms, the quality and the quantity of the end-product, and the assessment criteria of the projects. As well, group composition is an influential factor in the success or failure of PBL. The level of cohesiveness among the group members can affect the individual learners' commitment to participate in the activities. Students should be advised to form groups in which members get along with each other, can contact each other and meet without difficulty,

and can cooperate to achieve common goals. Uncooperative and fragmented groups demotivate their members and they easily become ineffective ([Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011](#)). Members also need to know about their roles and responsibilities in their groups and the resources they may need to use. Practitioners are also an essential part of the success of the projects. They may need to brainstorm and weigh the possibility of performing potential project ideas with the learners, facilitate their decision-making process, coach, and give them feedback throughout the implementation process, examine their progression and address their ambiguities and misunderstandings, support them in selecting resources, and monitor group members' activities and sort conflicts between them when required. Ultimately, the learning environment should be friendly and supportive to encourage the students to respond positively to group work and actively involve in the course projects.

6. Conclusion

The present study investigated Iranian EFL learners' perceptions on incorporating PBL into their oral communication class. The data revealed that as a novel learning experience, the video clip creation project was well received by the participants. They asserted that it produced positive effects on their oral communication abilities, enhanced their educational skills, and increased their motivation and engagement in a pleasant and supportive environment. Because of the participants' enthusiastic views, EFL practitioners should consider this learning approach as a viable alternative or a complement to other class activities currently performed in EFL oral communication settings. However, no single set of research findings should be considered readily generalizable to all teaching

contexts without considering the local sociocultural context and the unique particularities of each educational setting. It should also be noted that even though measures were taken to elicit the participants' honest views during the interviews, it is possible that they ended up saying what they thought the researcher preferred to hear. So, caution must be made in interpreting the findings. Future studies can incorporate other forms of PBL into oral communication classes and seek the EFL students' reflections. They can also explore the effects of those projects on the communication skills of the learners in terms of fluency, accuracy, and complexity using more quantitative measures such as pre- and post-tests. Further research might also examine if the positive outcomes reported in this study are also confirmed by participants with different socio-cultural and educational backgrounds as well as various proficiency levels across different courses, contexts, and situations.

7. References

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