



T.R.

AKDENİZ UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE

EDUCATION

MA

THESIS

**THE EFFECT OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING ON
ENGLISH PREPARATORY CLASS STUDENTS'
SPEAKING PROFICIENCY AND WILLINGNESS TO
COMMUNICATE**

Birgen ZEYBEK

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING MASTER'S
PROGRAM**

Antalya, 2025

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Supervisor:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mustafa CANER

Antalya, 2025

**T.C.
AKDENİZ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
EĞİTİM BİLİMLERİ ENSTİTÜSÜ
YABANCI DİLLER ANABİLİM DALI
İNGİLİZ DİLİ EĞİTİMİ TEZLİ YÜKSEK LİSANS PROGRAMI**

**PROJE TABANLI ÖĞRENİMİN İNGİLİZCE HAZIRLIK SINIFI
ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN KONUŞMA YETERLİLİKLERİ VE İLETİŞİM
KURMA İSTEKLERİ ÜZERİNE ETKİSİ**

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Antalya, 2025

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YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİNİN ADI:

**THE EFFECT OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING ON ENGLISH PREPARATORY
CLASS STUDENTS' SPEAKING PROFICIENCY AND WILLINGNESS TO
COMMUNICATE**

ONAY: Bu tez, Enstitü Yönetim Kurulunca belirlenen yukarıdaki jüri üyeleri tarafından uygun görülmüş ve Enstitü Yönetim Kurulunun tarihli ve sayılı kararıyla kabul edilmiştir.

.....

Enstitü Müdürü

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my esteemed advisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Caner. From the very beginning of this study, his unwavering belief in me encouraged me to persevere even during the most challenging times. His extensive knowledge and experience offered me new perspectives, and his constructive feedback enabled me to refine this thesis into its best version. Having a supervisor who is consistently present to offer guidance, whether in times of uncertainty, indecision, or when motivation is needed, is perhaps the most vital support throughout the thesis journey. For this reason, I have always felt incredibly fortunate and deeply honored to have been his student during this process.

I am sincerely grateful to my respected jury members, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gonca Subaşı and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hüseyin Kafes, for generously dedicating their time and providing valuable feedback that enhanced the quality of this study. Their insights not only helped me identify areas for improvement but also inspired new ideas and motivation for future academic endeavors. Their supportive and constructive comments, which acknowledged the effort behind this work, filled me with joy and gratitude.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my professors, Prof. Dr. Binnur İlter, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fatma Özlem Saka, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Başak Eda Azizoğlu, who guided me during the coursework phase with their profound expertise. Their contributions enlightened my academic path, broadened my perspective on the teaching profession, and motivated me to strive for higher standards in my future career.

Throughout my life, I have been fortunate to learn from exceptional English teachers, whose influence played a significant role in my decision to pursue this profession. I am deeply grateful to Tayfun Karlı, Dilek Özçeri Güner, Şaduman Öztürk, and Füsün Kuleli for illuminating my path, always believing in me, and investing their time and effort in my growth.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my colleagues and dear friends, Lecturers Ezgi Uyan, Burcu Gündoğdu, Selin Yılmaz, and Buse Erden, for their invaluable ideas and continuous support throughout this journey. I feel truly fortunate to work alongside such dedicated and supportive individuals.

My heartfelt thanks also go to my close friends Beyza Özdemir, Nur Duruk, Sitora Coşkun, Berrak Bayata, and Ayşen Dağışan Düdükçü for their unwavering friendship and for sharing in my achievements with genuine joy and enthusiasm.

In addition, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all the dedicated instructors and dear students at Antalya Bilim University who contributed to this study with their support, involvement, or inspiration in various ways. I would also like to acknowledge Research Assistant Dr. İbrahim Hakkı Tezci for his valuable efforts and kind assistance during this process.

Lastly, one of my deepest and most heartfelt thanks goes to my beloved family. I am especially grateful to my mother, Nursel Atik, my sisters, Zeliha Zeybek and Nazlı Zeybek Delier, and my father, Alim Zeybek, for always being there for me, believing in me, and supporting me unconditionally. In particular, I can never overstate the contributions of my dear mother. I am eternally grateful to you for the sacrifices you have made and for being one of the most wonderful mothers a child could ever wish for.

ABSTRACT

THE EFFECT OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING ON ENGLISH PREPARATORY CLASS STUDENTS' SPEAKING PROFICIENCY AND WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE

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Master of Arts, Department of Foreign Language Education

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June 2025, xii + 119 pages

Utilizing a mixed methods approach, the present study aims to explore the impacts of project-based learning (PBL) on English preparatory class students' speaking proficiency and willingness to communicate (WTC). It also examines feelings and perceptions toward this method. The participants were 123 students enrolled in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) preparatory program at a private university. The data collection procedure started with pre- and post-tests conducted through both institutionally administered speaking exams and the WTC Scale. Then, semi-structured individual interviews were carried out with selected participants. The findings demonstrated that PBL significantly improved participants' speaking skills and WTC. Additionally, there was a notable improvement in post-test scores of all WTC subscales. Qualitative data from participant responses supported these results. Participants stated that they made progress in various components such as fluency, spontaneity, self-correction, real-life connection, public speaking skills, and motivation, and that they experienced a decrease in anxiety. The findings may provide valuable contributions regarding the effectiveness of PBL in tertiary-level English language instruction.

Keywords: project-based learning, speaking proficiency, willingness to communicate, EFL preparatory students, mixed-methods research

ÖZET

PROJE TABANLI ÖĞRENİMİN İNGİLİZCE HAZIRLIK SINIFI ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN KONUŞMA YETERLİLİKLERİ VE İLETİŞİM KURMA İSTEKLERİ ÜZERİNE ETKİSİ

Zeybek, Birgen

Yüksek Lisans, Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Mustafa Caner

Haziran 2025, xii + 119 sayfa

Bu çalışma karma yöntem yaklaşımından yararlanarak proje tabanlı öğrenimin İngilizce hazırlık sınıfı öğrencilerinin konuşma yeterlilikleri ve iletişim kurma istekleri üzerine etkilerini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, öğrencilerin bu öğretim yöntemine yönelik duygu ve algıları da incelenmiştir. Katılımcılar, özel bir üniversitede öğrenim gören 123 İngilizce hazırlık sınıfı öğrencisinden oluşmaktadır. Veri toplama süreci, hem kurum tarafından uygulanmış konuşma sınavları hem de İletişim Kurma İsteği Ölçeği aracılığıyla gerçekleştirilen ön test ve son testlerle başlatılmıştır. Ardından, belirlenen katılımcılarla yarı yapılandırılmış bireysel görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Elde edilen bulgular, proje tabanlı öğrenimin katılımcıların konuşma becerilerini ve iletişim kurma isteği düzeylerini anlamlı şekilde geliştirdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca, ölçeğin tüm alt boyutlarında son test puanlarında dikkat çekici artışlar gözlemlenmiştir. Katılımcı yanıtlarından elde edilen nitel veriler, bu nicel sonuçları desteklemiştir. Öğrenciler; akıcılık, doğaçlama, öz-düzeltilme, gerçek yaşamla bağlantı kurma, topluluk önünde konuşma becerileri ve motivasyon gibi alanlarda ilerleme kaydettiklerini ve aynı zamanda kaygı düzeylerinde azalma yaşadıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Bu çalışma, proje tabanlı öğrenimin yükseköğretim düzeyindeki İngilizce öğretiminde etkili bir yöntem olduğuna ilişkin önemli katkılar sunabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: proje tabanlı öğrenme, konuşma yeterliliği, iletişim kurma isteği, İngilizce hazırlık sınıfı öğrencileri, karma yöntem araştırması

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- PBL** : Project-Based Learning
- e-PBL**: Electronic Project-Based Learning
- WTC** : Willingness to Communicate
- EFL** : English as a Foreign Language
- ESL** : English as a Second Language
- FLA** : Foreign Language Anxiety
- CEFR**: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
- CLT** : Communicative Language Teaching
- TBLT**: Task-Based Language Teaching
- CLL** : Cooperative Language Learning
- SLA** : Second Language Acquisition
- SPSS** : Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
- ZPD** : Zone of Proximal Development
- STEM**: Science, Technology, Engineering and Math

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

English has become the dominant global language that serves as the main tool for communication, education, and professional development. Knowing English improves chances of finding a job in a multinational organization (Niyozova, 2020). It can be regarded as a key that opens doors to foreign markets and professional advancement. Hence, education systems in different countries are based on this fact. English is frequently being used as a medium of teaching, especially in higher education. Teaching subjects in English aims to enhance learners' English proficiency, similar to how several university courses in Turkey are delivered in the same language (Richards, 2015). From accessing textbooks, research papers, and online courses to participating in global discussions, English proficiency is crucial for students desiring to excel in their educational journey.

Considering that English preparatory programs aim to equip students with the linguistic and academic competencies required for future academic and professional success, it becomes essential to examine how language teaching methods have evolved over time, as these developments have progressively emphasized oral proficiency and communicative competence as key components of effective language instruction (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Earlier methods such as the Grammar Translation Method and the Audio-Lingual Method primarily focused on written grammar and memorization techniques, often neglecting authentic spoken communication. Over time, these traditional practices gave way to more interactive and communicative approaches that prioritize fluency, interaction, and real-world language use.

The evolution of English language teaching toward more communicative approaches by including group work and integrating four skills is a consequence of several key factors. Among these, communicative competence has played a central role in redefining the goals of language instruction. Hymes (1972) introduced communicative competence by highlighting the ability to use language effectively in different social contexts. Traditional methods often give precedence to grammatical accuracy and translation mastery. Thus, they overlook the practical use of language suitable to real-life situations. Communicative approaches based on interaction help learners use language for meaningful communication rather than rote memorization.

The integrated skills approach to language learning also gained popularity following the decline of traditional methods, which support teaching skills discretely. Traditional educators were of the opinion that it is impossible to focus effectively on multiple skills simultaneously. However, the segregated-skill approach does not provide sufficient practice for future success in academic communication, language that can be used in different career contexts, or "on-the-street" interaction in the language (Oxford, 2001). The introduction of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) changed viewpoints about teaching language skills and emphasized using language for communication inside and outside the classroom. The separation of the four skills, the practice of structures, efforts to avoid errors, and imitating native speakers contrasted significantly with teaching language as a tool for communication (Hinkel, 2010).

According to Peregoy and Boyle (2005), "in natural, day-to-day experience, oral and written language uses are not kept separate and isolated from one another. Instead, they often occur together, integrated in specific communication events" (p. 120). Thus, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and its following methodological offshoots have begun to utilize integrated approaches to ensure the teaching of the four skills simultaneously (Hinkel, 2010).

With the arrival of CLT, methodologists placed emphasis on communicative needs and focused on the types of classroom activities that could be used to promote interaction, such as group work, tasks, and information-gap activities (Richards, 2006). Following this, some approaches and methods focused more on how learning occurs. One such approach is content-based teaching, which asserts that the teaching content or subject matter transforms the entire language learning process. In addition, some teaching proposals are built around instructional design. For example, task-based instruction supports the use of specially designed learning tasks as the foundation of instruction (Richards, 2006). In this context, project-based learning (PBL) is a part of task-based instruction. The minor difference between them arises from the time course. PBL usually utilizes tasks for a whole term or academic year, as it is designed as a long-term instructional model.

According to the Buck Institute for Education (2021), through project-based learning, students have the chance to work on a project for a long period of time ranging from a week to a semester that requires them to solve a real-world problem or answer a challenging question. They demonstrate their understanding by creating original products or delivering a presentation in front of an authentic audience. As a result, students master the subject matter and improve their critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Turkish higher education has increasingly adopted English as a medium of instruction. Enhancing English speaking skills is essential for academic achievement and career readiness. However, many students in English preparatory programs still struggle to speak fluently. A possible reason for this issue is their limited willingness to communicate (WTC) in English.

PBL has drawn the interest of educators as a contemporary pedagogical model in English language education. It emphasizes student-centered learning and promotes authentic and meaningful interaction (Wahyudin, 2017). PBL tasks engage learners in questioning, planning, collaborating, analyzing, evaluating, and sharing ideas (Blumenfeld et al., 1991), which contribute to the development of their communicative skills.

A learning model that provides authentic and interactive contexts is essential for promoting speaking skills (Sirisrimangkorn, 2021). PBL also contributes to building learner confidence, fostering collaboration, and increasing motivation (Puangpunsi, 2021). For these reasons, it is selected as the core instructional approach in this study, which aims to investigate its impact on students' speaking proficiency, willingness to communicate, and attitudes toward project work.

While PBL is widely associated with communicative development, its role in increasing learners' willingness to communicate, which is a key component of spoken language proficiency, has not been sufficiently explored. In particular, a limited number of studies have examined PBL's impacts on both speaking performance and WTC. This connection needs to be further explored, especially in English preparatory programs where students often feel unwilling to speak despite having the necessary language skills. Addressing this intersection is crucial for understanding the contributions of project-based instruction not only to communicative competence but also to learners' willingness to use the language in real-life contexts.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to examine the impacts of PBL on English preparatory class students' speaking proficiency and WTC. To further understand these potential impacts, it explores whether PBL contributes to communicative skill development and motivational engagement. Moreover, the study investigates students' perceptions and attitudes regarding project-based learning in language education.

1.4. Research Questions

1. To what extent does project-based language learning affect English preparatory class students' speaking proficiency?
2. To what extent does project-based language learning impact English preparatory class students' willingness to communicate?
3. What are English preparatory class students' attitudes toward project-based language learning?

1.5. Significance of the Study

A key factor that affects the successful application of PBL is students' perspectives on project work. While many global studies report positive perceptions (Sirisrimangkorn, 2021; Shin, 2018; Abuhmaid, 2020), English preparatory class students' views may vary. Even when instructional design aligns with PBL principles, differences in student attitudes can hinder implementation.

Since PBL is a dynamic approach in language education, it is important to explore students' experiences with its instructional components (Syahril et al., 2021). Understanding these experiences can inform the development of more effective and engaging PBL curricula.

Although PBL has been explored in various Turkish contexts, studies focusing on English preparatory classes are limited. Furthermore, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no study has examined the combined impact of PBL, speaking proficiency, and WTC in this educational setting. This study aims to address that gap by offering new insights into the effects of PBL in preparatory class environments.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

Although this study was conducted through a carefully structured mixed-methods approach, it also has certain limitations. One of the most apparent limitations is that a control group could not be included, as project lessons were a compulsory component of the School of Foreign Languages and all students participated in them. This situation eliminated the possibility of directly comparing project-based learning with traditional methods. If a comparative analysis had been conducted with a group of students who did not take part in the intervention, the causal strength of the findings could have been enhanced.

In addition to this, the fact that the study was conducted within the preparatory program of a single university may limit the generalizability of the findings. Different institutional structures, instructional programs, and student profiles may lead to varying results. Moreover, the qualitative findings were based solely on student perceptions; teacher comments, classroom observations, and other data sources were not included within the scope of this study. This created a partial limitation in terms of developing a multidimensional perspective.

Lastly, the scale used to measure students' WTC relied exclusively on self-reported feedback. Students' real-time participation or behavioral indicators of WTC were not directly observed. Therefore, the WTC data were based on student perceptions and were not supported by observational evidence.

Despite these limitations, the mixed-methods structure of the study and the support of solid analyses in both the quantitative and qualitative dimensions strengthened the reliability and validity of the findings. In this context, the stated limitations do not diminish the overall impact of the study but instead offer valuable implications for future research.

1.7. Definitions of Terms

Project-Based Learning (PBL): In this study, project-based learning refers to a student-centered approach in which learners complete weekly projects related to coursebook content. These projects involve group work, presentations, and real-life tasks such as preparing posters, videos, and recordings. The main goal is to help students improve their speaking skills, interact with peers, and gain confidence in communication.

Speaking Proficiency: Speaking proficiency refers to students' ability to speak clearly, fluently, and accurately in English. It is measured through pre- and post-intervention speaking tests, which include a warm-up and a task response stage. Students are assessed based on grammar, vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and content relevance using a standardized rubric.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC): Willingness to communicate means students' readiness to start a conversation in English when given the chance. In this study, it is measured with a scale developed by McCroskey and Richmond (1985, 1987), which includes different contexts (like public speaking or group work) and types of people (like strangers or friends).

Student Attitudes toward Project-Based Learning: This term refers to students' feelings and opinions about learning English through projects. Attitudes are explored through

interviews that focus on how students evaluate their progress in speaking, motivation, and classroom engagement during project lessons.

English Preparatory Program: The English Preparatory Program in this study refers to a one-year language course at a private university. It prepares students for undergraduate education and includes project-based lessons as part of regular instruction. These lessons are designed in line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and textbook units.



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The present chapter starts with the theoretical foundations of PBL (constructivism and interactionism, communicative language teaching, task-based language teaching, and cooperative language learning). Henceforth, it introduces the concepts of WTC and motivation and examines studies focusing on variables that may affect WTC. Lastly, the chapter provides an overview of the PBL method and presents studies investigating its effects on various aspects.

2.1. Theoretical Background

The project-based learning method, which constitutes the primary focus of the present study, is closely linked to theoretical foundations such as constructivism, interactionism, communicative language teaching, task-based language teaching, and cooperative language learning. All these approaches emphasize that learning occurs through active participation, collaboration, and meaningful communication. Based on these principles, project-based learning aims to enhance both speaking skills and willingness to communicate. Accordingly, this theoretical foundation offers pedagogical support for the instructional methods utilized in the study.

2.1.1. Constructivism and Interactionism

Constructivism and interactionism are profound theories that support the significance of interaction and active participation in learning. Vygotsky emphasizes the advancement from using language for social interaction to utilizing it as inner speech to control behavior and thought. The concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a critical element of his theory. It refers to tasks that children can carry out with guidance from more knowledgeable others but cannot perform independently (Vygotsky, 1978). Children in this zone learn to negotiate and cooperate through collaborative activities that develop cognitive and social skills.

While Piaget's theory focuses on individual cognitive development, it remains coherent with Vygotsky's ideas in its emphasis on learners' active role in constructing knowledge. Piaget argues that children learn actively by exploring and experimenting. This concept of active learning differs from traditional instruction and follows the principles of discovery learning, where students discover information and solve problems.

Interactionism is based on the idea that cognitive, linguistic, and social factors are in control of the development of an individual (Paul, 2009). Supporters of this theory see language learning as a reciprocal process. Thus, they believe that interaction with others, especially those who are linguistically advanced, fosters language skills.

Scholars like Pica (1987) and Ellis (1991) also have mentioned the importance of social connections in language learning. According to Pica (1987), social relationships promote interactional adjustments. Ellis (1991) revised the input hypothesis and noted that comprehensible input facilitates learning but is not necessary or sufficient. Hence, some modifications during negotiation should be made.

Bruner (1966) adds another perspective to these theories by highlighting the role of motivation. He argues that learning is intrinsically motivated. Consequently, educational environments that promote curiosity and the desire to learn are preferable. Bruner's ideas show the importance of creating engaging and encouraging learning experiences. Since learning requires the creation and self-organization of the learner, the teacher should act as a facilitator and make learners raise their own questions, develop their own theories, test them for validity, and support and discuss them in social circles (Fosnot & Perry, 2005).

2.1.2. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

In light of the principles of constructivism and interactionism that underline the dynamic and social nature of learning, CLT reflects the constructivist view by promoting an environment where learners negotiate meaning through an integrative approach.

Earlier language learning theories mainly focused on the knowledge of grammatical competence and considered language learning as mechanical habit formation. Good habits were created by producing correct sentences (Richards, 2006). In time, perspectives on English language teaching have changed significantly. CLT indicates that direct error correction may negatively affect WTC and prevent students from taking risks (Ma, 2009). Thus, it supports interaction's superiority to accurate utterances.

CLT's main aim for students is to make them gain communicative competence. Competence means expression, understanding, and interactive meaning-building, reflecting not only the functional use of language but also its psycholinguistic and sociocultural dimensions (Savignon, 2002). Richards (2006) stated that aspects like language use for various aims and functions, contextual linguistic choices, how to construct and comprehend texts, and

maintaining communication despite having restraints are highlighted by CLT in terms of communicative competence.

In a classroom where CLT is implemented, learners' communicative needs based on various functions constitute a framework for identifying program goals (Savignon, 2002). Interaction between the learner and other users, creating meaning collaboratively, negotiation of meaning, and learning through receiving feedback can be regarded as the main characteristics of CLT (Richards, 2006). According to these characteristics, the teacher's main responsibilities include creating situations that encourage communication, teaching different usages of language based on various social contexts, and providing activities like role play (Desai, 2015).

Unlike traditional approaches that often separate the four skills, CLT utilizes an integrated skills approach (Whong, 2013). This method determines the role of students as active participants or "class leaders" even when they have problems with language proficiency (Zhao, 2022). Furthermore, it supports the idea that students should be put in situations where they need to fill information gaps through authentic communication (Ma, 2009).

2.1.3. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Building on the foundations of CLT, TBLT promotes social interaction and learner engagement. It aims to expand the communicative approach through authentic tasks that provide learners with real-life situations and encourage meaningful language use.

Definitions of tasks vary in the literature. Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated that tasks can be regarded as language-related activities or goals, such as puzzles, reading a map and providing directions, making phone calls, writing letters, or reading instructions and constructing a toy. For Willis (1996), a task is an activity with a communicative purpose through which an outcome can be achieved. Nunan (1989), on the other hand, defined tasks as classroom work that makes learners comprehend, manage, produce, or communicate in the target language with a direct focus on meaning. Different definitions of tasks support the idea that negotiation of meaning is the essence of language use (Brandl, 2008).

Tasks are believed to stimulate communicative behavior deriving from real-life situations by facilitating language acquisition (Van den Branden, 2006).

Skehan (1998) identifies five key features of tasks in the following way:

- (a) meaning is primary, (b) learners are not given other people's meanings to regurgitate, (c) there is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world

activities, (d) task completion has a priority, and (e) the assessment of tasks is done in terms of outcome (p. 147)

According to Ellis (2003), TBLT suggests forgetting the usual classroom atmosphere and imagining a more communicative environment where learners negotiate meaning (as cited in Rodríguez-Bonces & Rodríguez-Bonces, 2010). This approach allows learners to participate fully in class as they need to consult their interlanguage resources while performing tasks (Ellis, 2009).

TBLT is often seen as a learner-centered way of teaching language (Ellis, 2018). As Long & Porter stated (1985), advanced language production, high-quality student talk, individualized instruction, a positive atmosphere, and motivated learners are some advantages of group work.

Norris et al. (2009) stated that TBLT is a learning pedagogy based on holism, experiential learning, and learner-centeredness, which corresponds with interactionist theories and supports the role of social and linguistic environments (as cited in East, 2021). In the task process, different participants can reflect different perspectives on the same situation, and this can result in meaningful discussions (Büyükkarcı, 2009). Hence, TBLT's foundation in cooperative learning, where students work together and help each other, makes it especially useful in mixed-ability classrooms (Ismaili, 2013).

2.1.4. Cooperative Language Learning (CLL)

TBLT and CLL are complementary approaches that constitute effective and engaging language learning environments. According to TBLT, the language learning process can be effective when learners work on meaningful tasks that promote authentic communication. CLL supports this idea by highlighting collaborative learning environments, which make students work together toward one common goal. Educators can help students become more competent in languages and improve their social skills by combining these methodologies.

Olsen and Kagan (1992) defined cooperative learning as “a group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others” (p. 8). According to Johnson and Johnson (1994), a task should facilitate positive interdependence and interaction, ensure individual accountability and group processing, and teach interpersonal and small-group skills to be regarded as cooperative learning.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated that creating a naturalistic setting through pair and group activities, allowing learners to develop successful learning and communication strategies, and increasing student motivation by reducing stress are the major outcomes of CLL. It aims to improve learners' critical thinking skills and communicative competence through socially structured interactive activities (Cheng, 2021). Face-to-face interaction and role interdependence provided by groups can be powerful support and encouragement for insecure students and motivate them to reach higher academic success (Zhang, 2010).

In CLL, students work on activities without direct and immediate guidance from the teacher, which may result in higher-order thinking (Cohen, 1994). Cooperative learning allows students to learn in a dynamic and creative setting, where information emerges from student interaction rather than dictation and testing (Sharan, 2010). Positive interdependence motivates students to work hard and be successful as a group at learning tasks (Jacobs et al., 1997). Unlike traditional classrooms that constitute social penalties for children, cooperatively structured classrooms provide learners with social approval and academic achievement (Daniels, 1994).

Cooperation makes individuals work to accomplish goals for the whole group. Thus, learners enhance their groupmates' learning along with their own (Johnson et al., 2013, as cited in Johnson & Johnson, 2018). In the absence of positive interactions and relationships, students cannot benefit from the guidance their peers offer as they remain detached from one another (Holt, 1993). As Cohen (1986) stated, students will regard group work as highly rewarding if they feel prepared enough and find the task challenging and interesting.

While working together, learners should acquire the social skills they need for teamwork and monitor the group's progress (Karim, 2018). The group setting facilitates interaction among the members and enables idea exchange, making learners deal with issues in ways that they had never thought of previously (Gillies, 2008).

The table below outlines three communicative teaching approaches by focusing on their main principles and classroom applications.

Table 2.1. *Summary of Approaches*

Approach	Key Concepts and Definitions	Main Characteristics and Practices
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	Promotes an environment where learners negotiate meaning through an integrative approach. Communicative competence, including psycholinguistic and sociocultural viewpoints, should be highlighted (Savignon, 2002). Direct error correction may negatively affect willingness to communicate and prevent students from taking risks (Ma, 2009).	Interaction is superior to accurate utterances. Highlights pragmatic language use, adaptation to context and participants, construction and comprehension of texts, and the maintenance of communication under constraints (Richards, 2006). The teacher's main responsibilities include creating situations that encourage communication, teaching different usages of language based on various social contexts, and providing activities like role play (Desai, 2015). Integrated skills approach should be utilized (Whong, 2013).
Cooperative Language Learning (CLL)	A group learning activity involving information exchange between learners within small groups (Olsen & Kagan, 1992). Positive interdependence, individual accountability, and group processing (Johnson & Johnson 1994). Focus on improving critical thinking and communicative competence (Cheng, 2021).	Facilitates positive interdependence and interaction (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). Ensures individual accountability and group processing (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). Teaches interpersonal and small-group skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). Creates a naturalistic setting through pair and group activities (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Contributing to learners' development in terms of learning and communication strategies (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Increases student motivation by reducing stress (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Provides activities without direct and immediate guidance from the teacher, fostering higher-order thinking (Cohen, 1994). Facilitates interaction among members and enables idea exchange (Gillies, 2008). Learners work to accomplish goals for the whole group (Johnson et al., 2013, as cited in Johnson & Johnson, 2018).

Approach	Key Concepts and Definitions	Main Characteristics and Practices
Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)	Promotes social interaction and learner engagement through authentic tasks. Tasks involve real-world activities and meaningful language use. Focus on negotiation of meaning and communicative behavior deriving from real-life situations (Brandl, 2008; Van den Branden, 2006).	Learner-centered approach, holistic and experiential learning (Norris et al., 2009, as cited in East, 2021). Encourages full participation and consultation of interlanguage resources (Ellis, 2009). Group work supports advanced language production, high-quality student talk, individualized instruction, and motivated learners (Long & Porter, 1985). Meaningful discussions through different perspectives (Büyükkarcı, 2009).

2.2. Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

People tend to talk more in certain circumstances than in others. This variation in talking behavior can be regarded as "willingness to communicate" (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). Desiring to initiate communication with another person is affected by situational constraints, such as one's mood on that day, recent types of communication with others, the perceived benefits or drawbacks of interaction, and time-related strains (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987).

The present WTC concept has stemmed from Burgoon's (1976) unwillingness to communicate study and McCroskey and Richmond's (1982) work on shyness, as stated in their later framework (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). Burgoon (1976) linked unwillingness to communicate to several psychological and social traits. These features are explained below to contextualize the evolution of the WTC framework:

Anomics: People who do not accept society's norms and values as they feel insecure, powerless, alone, and antisocial.

Anomie or Alienation: Tending to avoid communication because of the belief that communication attempts may come out badly. Mistrusting communication because of mistrusting others.

Introverts: People who have characteristic features like being quiet, timid, and shy.

Low Self-Esteem (Maladjustment): Less confident people are more likely to be maladjusted and display defensive actions.

Low Self-Esteem (Fear of Criticism): Unwillingness to communicate arises from the fear of being criticized for communication efforts.

Communication Apprehension: Anxiety that is directly associated with communication situations.

In line with these traits, McCroskey and Richmond (1987) define shyness as "the tendency to be timid, reserved, and most specifically, talk less" (p. 133). Leary (1983) also contributed to this conceptual area by introducing the construct of "social anxiety," which he described as involving both internally experienced discomfort and externally observable behavior.

WTC is influenced by a range of psychological and interpersonal variables, including what is known as communication apprehension, individuals' self-perceived communicative abilities, personality traits such as introversion and extraversion, and their level of self-esteem (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

Accordingly, an adapted version of the model introduced by MacIntyre et al. (1998) is presented below to illustrate how the identified factors interact and contribute to individuals' willingness to communicate.

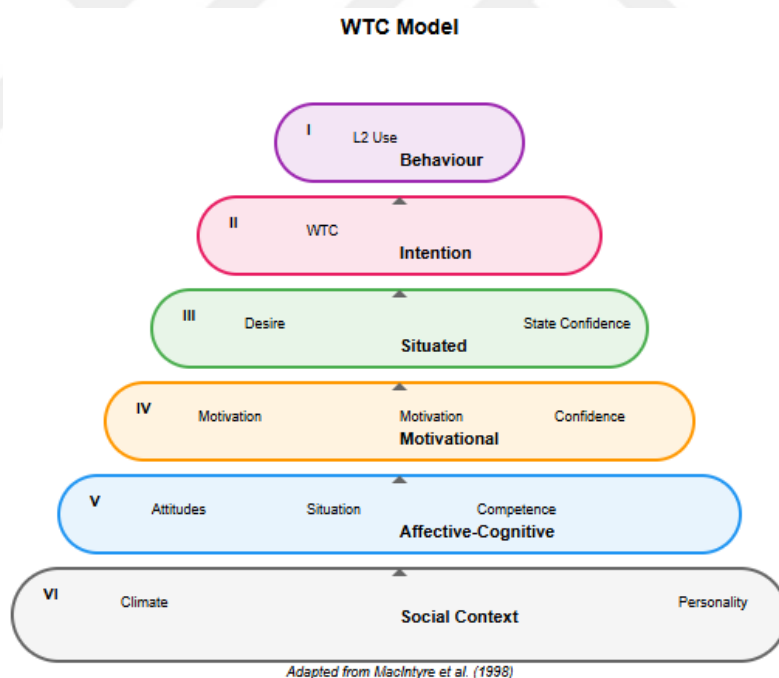


Figure 2.1. *Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing WTC*

Note. Adapted from MacIntyre et al. (1998).

MacIntyre et al. (1998) have explained different layers in this model as follows:

Table 2.2. *Layers in the Willingness to Communicate Model*

Layer	Key Points
LAYER I: Communication Behavior	Ultimate objective: To develop opportunities that increase students' eagerness to communicate.
LAYER II: Willingness to Communicate (WTC)	Enthusiasm to engage in a discussion; dependent on trust in responses and target language proficiency.
LAYER III: Situated Antecedents of Communication	Readiness to communicate with a specific individual and confidence; influenced by affiliation and perceived competence.
LAYER IV: Motivational Propensities	Key variables: Interindividual motivation, intergroup motivation, and L2 self-confidence.
LAYER V: Affective and Cognitive Context	Integrativeness and L2 proficiency affect the desire to communicate.
LAYER VI: Societal and Individual Context	Societal environment: Intergroup atmosphere; Individual context: Personality traits.

Another model proposed by MacIntyre (1994) aimed to identify willingness to communicate in the native language. According to it, there can be an increase in the level of willingness to communicate through higher perceived communicative competence and reduced communication anxiety (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996).

The following figure presents an adapted version of the simplified WTC model introduced by MacIntyre and Charos (1996), which was based on MacIntyre's (1994) original conceptual framework of WTC.

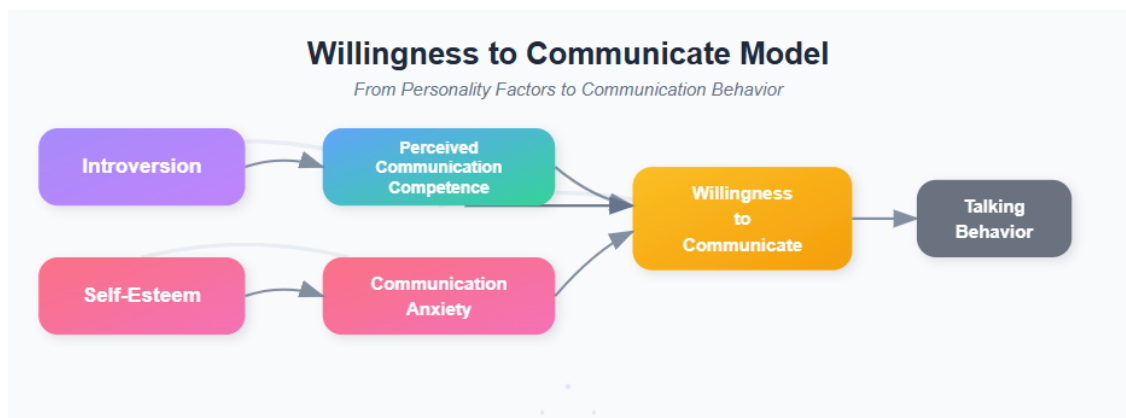


Figure 2.2. *Adapted Version of the Willingness to Communicate Model*

Note. Adapted from MacIntyre & Charos (1996).

Additionally, to summarize the main characteristics of these affective and personality-related factors that may affect learners' willingness to communicate, Table 2.3. is presented below.

Table 2.3. *An Outline of MacIntyre's Model (1994)*

Communication anxiety	Introversion	Self-Esteem
Unlike relaxed students, anxious language learners often underestimate their ability to speak (MacIntyre & Noels, 1994, as cited in MacIntyre & Charos, 1996).	Introverts do not encounter communication opportunities as often as extroverts as they are not very active socially (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990). Extroverts, on the other hand, depend on communication to foster social relations and give importance to interaction (McIntyre et al., 1999).	Self-worth, which may also be regarded as self-concept is based on one's positive or negative comments about himself/herself (Rosenberg, 1979). Since people with low self-esteem feel more vulnerable to environmental cues (Campbell & Lavalley, 1993), they are expected to be less willing to communicate (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990). A person who is good at communicating with others may not consider him/herself as such because of his/her self-esteem level (McIntyre et al., 1999). Consequently, this person would probably be unwilling to communicate regardless of existing competence (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990).

2.3. Motivation

Since learners' willingness to communicate can be affected directly by their motivation toward using the target language, it is critical to examine the role of motivation in second language acquisition.

Gardner and Lambert's (1972) seminal study introduced the distinction between two major types of motivation known as integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation is typically observed in individuals who wish to communicate, particularly when interacting within a respected second-language community (Gardner et al., 1976). In contrast, instrumental motivation highlights the learner's focus on the practical benefits of language mastery (Dörnyei, 1990). An individual with instrumental motivation tends to engage in language tasks with the expectation of obtaining a tangible or valuable outcome (MacIntyre et al., 2001).

According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), one's behavior is determined by intentions, influenced by personal factors (perspectives on behavior) and social factors (criteria, norms). A person who tries to act in a specific way and believes that positive outcomes will occur has an optimistic feeling toward that behavior (MacIntyre et al., 2001).

Motivation helps learners sustain effort and remain engaged throughout the language learning process (MacIntyre, 2007). Thus, it acts as the essential driving force that sparks and maintains the process of learning a second language (Dörnyei, 1998).

2.4. Studies Centered on Various Variables Affecting Willingness to Communicate

Existing literature has addressed different contextual and affective variables that may influence WTC in a second language. Gharibi (2023) examined EFL learners' perceptions of their foreign language anxiety (FLA) and explored how these perceptions relate to their WTC in the English classroom. Six upper-secondary students in Sweden were chosen based on their English teachers' assessment. Before the volunteering process, it was determined that all participants carried some level of FLA while conversing in English. The study indicated that learners' perceived FLA, larger groups, more dominant interlocutors, and complex tasks had a negative impact on their WTC in the classroom. Hence, the study highlighted the role of teachers and learners in being aware of FLA and its possible effects on WTC. Similarly, Khajavy and associates' (2018) study identifying the bond created by emotions, classroom environment, and willingness to communicate demonstrated that a positive classroom

environment promoted student and classroom level WTC. Furthermore, anxiety at the student level was recognized as the main reason for reducing WTC.

In addition to anxiety, several studies have investigated the possible impacts of self-confidence and motivation on WTC. For example, according to Yıldız's (2022) study investigating L2 WTC in Turkey with 711 preparatory school students, communication confidence and extrinsic motivation were strong predictors of willingness to communicate. Moreover, the classroom environment played an important role in increasing learners' willingness to communicate by affecting learners' motivation, ideal L2 self, beliefs, and communication confidence. Similarly, Şener (2014) found that Turkish ELT students tended to communicate in small groups consisting of friends and acquaintances. Further, self-confidence was regarded as the number one predictor of students' in-class WTC level while self-perceived communication competence and out-class WTC were linked together. In terms of motivation, Joe et al. (2017) examined how a Korean secondary school environment, self-determination theory (SDT), and L2 WTC affected each other. Findings demonstrated that meeting basic psychological necessities had a positive impact on students' WTC. Nevertheless, the study did not support the view that higher WTC is directly correlated with improved performance in formal education. The difficulty in finding authentic opportunities for language use could be the main reason.

Contextual and situational factors also have considerable influence on WTC. For instance, Cao and Philp (2006) tried to discover a relationship between learners' self-assessed WTC and behavioral WTC, and to determine the factors that may affect WTC behavior through learners' comments. Participants were students attending a university-affiliated private language institution in New Zealand. The study revealed that students' self-assessment of WTC and their classroom behavior did not match. Furthermore, the number of people in the group, being closely acquainted with interlocutor(s), and interlocutors' involvement either contributed to or reduced WTC. Learners' statements also have identified that low participation derived mainly from a lack of self-confidence. Similarly, Yashima et al. (2016) tried to investigate whether learner differences and contextual factors promote or reduce state WTC and how the communication behavior of groups can affect individual performance. Conducted with 21 students in a Japanese university, the study proposed that individual reactions could create group-level patterns. Furthermore, contextual factors, such as topic, group-level affective conditions, ambiance, and responses from other students affected self-confidence and WTC significantly.

Further support for the effect of context comes from Lubis et al.'s (2024) study. They examined students' WTC experiences while completing projects. Four Indonesian EFL students were chosen for semi-structured interviews based on specific criteria: (a) at least two years of English learning experiences, (b) completing more than two English projects through the implementation of project-based learning (PBL), (c) playing different roles during project completion: students as the leaders and students as the members. According to interviews, the study determined two key themes: (a) conversational settings, (b) particular interlocutors. The results showed that students tended to feel comfortable while completing projects as they had many opportunities to use English in various conversational situations. Furthermore, WTC appeared to depend on the interlocutor familiarity, with students feeling more engaged in projects thanks to mates with the same interests. Interestingly, leader students seemed more willing to communicate than the students who were only members.

Along with contextual and affective variables, cultural factors contribute to learners' WTC through intercultural interactions and international posture. Yashima's (2002) study, which examined L2 learning and communication within a Japanese EFL context, can be cited as a relevant example. The findings indicated that communication confidence and international posture were more powerful predictors of WTC than other components, including intergroup approach tendency, intercultural friendship orientation, interest in international vocations and activities, and interest in foreign affairs. Based on these results, Yashima has suggested that educators should design their lessons considering cultural richness and reduce student anxiety to have confident communicators in the classroom.

Several studies in the literature have also linked variations in WTC to personal variables like academic year, gender, proficiency level, and socioeconomic status (SES). For instance, Al-Amrani (2022) carried out a study to explore the difference between college-level students from different academic years in terms of their desire to communicate. Participants were English major students in higher education, specifically those in their first and fourth years (116 first-year and 88 fourth-year students). In general, there was no significant difference. Nevertheless, it can be inferred that fourth-year university students had higher WTC in English than first-year students, while first-year students felt more comfortable using English than fourth-year students across various contexts. Additionally, fourth-year students had less communication anxiety and a greater frequency of communication.

Another study by Li and Li (2022) aimed to identify the potential influence of demographic features on students' L2 WTC. A total of 1,502 tertiary-level students in

southwest China participated in the study. The findings indicated that male students' desire to communicate was superior to that of female students during activities with a meaning focus. However, the willingness of female students was higher when they were working on form-focused activities. The decrease in WTC during meaning-focused activities was mainly associated with age, as students' WTC tends to decline in such tasks as they grow older. Finally, students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds displayed greater willingness to engage in meaning-focused tasks. According to Li and Li (2022), male students' greater participation in meaning-focused tasks involving the teacher and the entire class or group may stem from their confidence while interacting with the teacher and speaking in front of others. Furthermore, the increase in female students' WTC during form-focused activities may reflect their enjoyment of communicating with a few familiar and close peers.

Darasawang and Reinders (2021) conducted a study to explore whether there is a significant relationship between students' proficiency level and their willingness to communicate. English Placement Test scores of 1,836 university-level students from Thailand were compared with their WTC levels, which were determined through a survey consisting of three parts: (a) self-perceived willingness to communicate, (b) communicative self-confidence, and (c) self-perceived L2 use. The study mainly centered on participants' WTC while communicating with friends and teachers in the English class. The findings demonstrated that language proficiency and willingness to communicate were only moderately associated. This may be because speaking involves productive skills, whereas proficiency, as typically assessed, tends to reflect receptive abilities such as vocabulary, grammar, and reading. Darasawang and Reinders attributed these results to the traditional classroom environment where studying English is limited to reading and grammar, preventing students from developing speaking competence. The results also suggested that the connection between communicative confidence and proficiency remained at a moderate to weak level.

Various studies have suggested that teacher behavior may have a role in shaping the willingness to communicate level. For instance, Zarrinabadi (2014) examined the potential impacts of teacher attitudes on students studying English Language and Literature in relation to their willingness to talk. It was found that learners' WTC was significantly influenced by factors such as subject matter, personal preferences and proficiency, awareness and error correction strategies, the time given to think and reflect before responding, and the use of both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies. Based on the study results, Zarrinabadi

emphasized that increased teacher wait time and topic familiarity contributed to more active student engagement in communication.

Finally, WTC has been regarded as a strong predictor of speaking proficiency by many studies. In an Iranian context, Valadi and associates (2015) examined how WTC affects the speaking performance of EFL learners studying at a private institute. The WTC questionnaire and a standard speaking test were applied to the participants. In addition, individual semi-structured interviews were carried out. Based on the results, learners' WTC appeared to be closely linked to their oral proficiency, whereas no significant difference was observed in relation to gender. Interviewees also reported that the following factors positively influenced their willingness to communicate: (a) interesting learning environments, (b) student-centered classes, (c) having opportunities to converse with classmates inside and outside the class, (d) texting or exchanging e-mails. Similarly, Yousefi and Kasaian (2014) conducted a mixed methods study with Iranian EFL learners to discover a possible link between willingness to communicate and speaking fluency and accuracy. Sixty participants studying English at colleges in Anzali were chosen based on their language proficiency determined through the Oxford Placement Test. Results of the study have suggested that learners' willingness to communicate played a significant role in fluency and accuracy. Yousefi and Kasaian have explained the findings by stating that learners who are eager to communicate tend to speak more. As a result, they try to make self-correction through paying attention to their speech patterns and eventually have more control over their speaking performances.

Fundamental information, including authors, publication dates, participant characteristics, study designs, and key findings of the studies discussed above, is summarized in Table 2.4. to provide a clearer and more reader-friendly comparison.

Table 2.4. *Studies Centered on Various Variables Affecting Willingness to Communicate*

Author/Year	Participants	Study Design	Main Findings
Yashima (2002)	297 Japanese EFL students	Quantitative	International posture and communication confidence emerged as primary WTC predictors over intercultural disposition.
Cao & Philp (2006)	Eight university-level learners attending a private English language institution in New Zealand	Mixed methods	Discrepancy noted between self-reported and actual WTC; peer familiarity and group dynamics significantly shaped WTC.

Author/Year	Participants	Study Design	Main Findings
Şener (2014)	274 Turkish ELT students	Mixed methods	Students preferred communication in familiar peer groups; self-confidence was the strongest in-class WTC predictor.
Yousefi & Kasaian (2014)	60 Iranian EFL learners in Anzali	Mixed methods	Learners' WTC played a significant role in fluency and accuracy.
Zarrinabadi (2014)	Fifty undergraduate students of English Language and Literature	Qualitative	WTC was influenced by both teacher actions and student-driven factors, such as wait time, topic familiarity, reflection before speaking, and learners' efforts to self-monitor and correct their own speech.
Valadi et al. (2015)	70 intermediate-level EFL learners (Iran)	Mixed methods	Learners' WTC was strongly associated with speaking proficiency, while gender showed no significant effect. Participants highlighted several supporting factors, including interactive learning environments, student-centered tasks, peer communication opportunities, and informal digital exchanges.
Yashima et al. (2016)	21 Japanese university students	Mixed methods	Individual reactions created group-level patterns. Furthermore, contextual factors, such as topic, group-level affective conditions, ambiance, and responses from other students affected self-confidence and WTC significantly.
Joe et al. (2017)	381 Korean secondary school students	Quantitative	Basic psychological needs positively influenced learners' WTC. Nevertheless, it was found that higher WTC may not result in better performance in formal educational settings.
Khajavy et al. (2018)	1,528 secondary school students (Iran)	Quantitative	Positive classroom climate enhanced WTC both individually and collectively; student anxiety was a principal inhibitor.
Darasawang & Reinders (2021)	1836 Thai university students	Quantitative	Language proficiency had a moderate correlation with WTC; communicative confidence showed a weak association with proficiency scores.
Yıldız (2022)	711 preparatory school students in Turkey	Quantitative	Communication confidence and extrinsic motivation were significant WTC predictors; classroom setting influenced L2 self and motivation.
Li & Li (2022)	1502 university students in southwest China	Quantitative	WTC varied across gender and task types: males favored meaning-focused, females favored form-focused tasks; SES positively influenced WTC levels.
Al-Amrani (2022)	116 first year and 88 fourth year English major students	Quantitative	Senior students reported higher WTC and lower anxiety; freshmen were more relaxed in diverse communication settings.
Gharibi (2023)	Six upper-secondary students in Sweden	Qualitative	Foreign language anxiety, dominant peers, and task complexity suppressed WTC. Awareness of emotional barriers was emphasized.
Lubis et al. (2024)	Four Indonesian EFL students	Qualitative	Project-based tasks enhanced WTC; students leading the task showed higher engagement, with peer familiarity being a supporting factor.

2.5. Project-Based Learning (PBL)

Project-based learning is a methodology that builds teaching and learning on projects. Definitions of projects vary in literature. Fleming (2000) defined projects as learning experiences through which students may feel more engaged in their courses of study because of their interest in topics. In his review of PBL resources, Thomas (2000), on the other hand, highlighted the role of projects in answering questions, fostering autonomous environments, and resulting in visible outcomes.

According to Cárdenas (2016), project topics should reflect the interests and needs of the classroom while being directly connected to real life. Some examples of relevant topics may include parties, food, sports, countries, inventions, governments, neighborhoods, fears, reading, teenagers now and then, people, celebrations, religion and churches, airports, love, and life. As students work on these topics, they form new ideas and present their understanding by engaging in activities such as collections, portfolios, designs, research projects, plans or proposals, simulations, excavations, construction, service, and audits (Fleming, 2000).

Based on a synthesis of previous models, Simpson (2011) has summarized the four main steps of PBL as follows:

Step 1 - Starting the project: The first stage of project work includes finding a topic that is engaging and relevant to the students. To help with process visualization, the teacher can utilize guiding questions. Later, students can create their outline by deciding on responsibilities. Each team member should offer advice and assistance, which is crucial for a successful outcome.

Step 2 - Developing the project: At this stage, students conduct research either individually, in pairs, or as a group to answer their driven questions. After the research, they note down the findings.

Step 3 - Reporting to the class: This stage consists of presentations and getting feedback from others on the improvements and outputs. The whole procedure is assessed so that students recognize the problems that may hinder project completion and solve them.

Step 4 - Assessing the project: The last stage includes product evaluation that can be carried out by an individual student, a group of students, a teacher, or someone outside the class. This stage necessitates students to use and demonstrate their current knowledge and abilities.

Finally, PBL's main themes can be summarized in the following way based on Larmer et al. (2015)'s study.

Table 2.5. Main Themes of PBL

Theme	Details
Skills Developed	Students gain skills like applying knowledge to the real world, solving problems, answering challenging questions, and designing quality products through good projects.
Importance of 21st Century Skills	Critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication are some of the skills that people need in different environments, such as school and college, workplace, and community. Project-based learning provides opportunities to enhance these kinds of skills.
Critical Thinking and Engagement	Students cannot gain critical thinking skills if they feel isolated from the subject matter. Instead, their main focus should be answering questions related to math, science, history, English, and the arts by thinking critically.
Authenticity in Projects	A project can be regarded as authentic as it necessitates real-world connection, has a profound impact on others, and responds to students' concerns and interests.
Motivation and Engagement	Authenticity makes learners engaged in project work. Students become motivated over time as they feel like they are working on something that matters.
Student Autonomy	Students have the freedom to generate the questions they want, choose the sources they will utilize, state opinions about tasks, and determine their roles as team members while they are working on projects. This freedom leads to a more positive classroom atmosphere by boosting student engagement.
Reflection and Identity Development	At every stage of project work, teachers and students should comment on the learning process and the changes they have observed in learners' identities.
Feedback and Guidance	Instructors should teach students how to give and receive constructive peer feedback to ensure smooth processes and qualified products. Learners can be guided through rubrics and models.
Social Learning Dimension	Since students create tangible products and share them publicly, the social dimension of learning becomes prominent during project work. Traditional classrooms are deprived of this opportunity because of limited idea exchange.

2.6. Project-Based Language Learning (PBL)

According to Ferry (2022), entirely academic curriculums, grammar-driven textbooks, and language exercises focusing on form hinder college-level L2 learners from coming out of their shells. Language programs based on this model cannot successfully combine language and content learning. Thus, there is a need for language instructors to adopt groundbreaking approaches like project-based language learning. PBL can be defined as a social approach that integrates language and content learning and necessitates planning, researching, analyzing and synthesizing data, and giving oral or written feedback through comparisons and justification (Slater et al., 2006). In line with this, solving a real-world problem while considering its cultural and linguistic premises and providing reflection are key characteristics of PBL (Ferry, 2022).

Swain et al. (2002) states that English language learners can improve their communication and comprehension skills through well-planned collaborations and interactions. These collaborations, carried out within the context of specific content and purposes, view English as the primary source that constructs meaning and put student engagement in various activities at the center of the language learning process (O'Brien et al., 2014). Unlike traditional classrooms, PBL supports and motivates reluctant students to produce utterances through active engagement (Kagan, 1995). Additionally, it enables students to take responsibility for their learning, have the freedom to make decisions about the learning process, and be in the leading position (Evensen & Hmelo, 2000). English language learners with negative experiences may specifically benefit from these types of advantages (Olsen, 2010).

PBL's context, which includes real-world problems and authentic solutions, may contribute to second language development through academic language usage, L2 accuracy with regard to syntax, vocabulary, and increased metacognitive awareness (O'Brien et al., 2014). In this regard, Stoller (2006) highlights the integration of all four skills during project work. While reading and analyzing the materials related to the topic and trying to find solutions to problems by creating the project, students can improve their reading and communicative skills at the same time (Dharmayanti & Joni, 2021).

2.7. Studies Centered on PBL and Its Effects on Various Aspects

2.7.1. The Impact of Project-Based Learning on Speaking Skills and Communicative Competence

Several studies focus on the impact of project-based learning on speaking skills and communicative competence (Amer, 2022; Firdaus & Septiady, 2023; Hoesny et al., 2024; Jariah et al., 2024; Nguyen & Le, 2024; Shi et al., 2024; Sirisrimangkorn, 2021; Becerra-Posada et al., 2022). Amer's mixed-methods study (2022) examined the impact of using PBL to improve the oral skills of prospective tour guides. Twelve second-year students studying in the Tour Guidance department participated in the study. They took an oral pre- and post-test, and their satisfaction with the PBL program was questioned. The results revealed a statistically meaningful improvement in students' fluency scores when comparing the pre-test and post-test outcomes. In the pre-test, participants felt reluctant, shy, and could not communicate in English. In the post-test, they spoke fluently and gave quick answers. Pronunciation scores also improved. In the pre-test, participants could not express themselves as they mispronounced most of the words. In the post-test, there was progress in pronunciation thanks to oral presentations and recordings of native speakers. As for grammar, although most participants used incorrect tense and wrong forms at first, they utilized the correct tense during their discussions, oral projects, recording videos, and presentations. In terms of vocabulary, a significant difference was detected between pre- and post-test performance. In the pre-test, participants did not use new vocabulary items to convey their ideas. In the post-test, they could use vocabulary from the sessions, and their vocabulary usage varied as they made searches to collect data for their projects. They seemed confident, willing to share their ideas, and involved in various life situations. Finally, there was a statistically significant difference between content scores. In the pre-test, some participants could not answer the questions since they found them challenging to understand. They gave irrelevant answers. During the post-test, they could converse according to the topic, create role plays, and participate in various oral activities related to the topics.

Similarly, Firdaus and Septiady (2023) carried out a mixed-methods study to find a possible correlation between project-based learning and students' speaking skills. The participants were 35 university students studying in the accounting program (English). Quantitative data was collected through a one-group pre-test and post-test design (pre-experimental), while interviews were conducted, and observation sheets were completed to obtain qualitative data. The post-test results indicated that students who made use of project-

based learning got higher grades than those who had not been familiar with it yet. In addition to speaking skills, project-based learning was also found to be effective in terms of enhancing teamwork, problem-solving skills, communication, creativity, and innovation.

Supporting these findings, Hoesny et al. (2024) conducted a quantitative study (quasi-experimental with pre-test and post-test) to examine the combination of PBL and digital tools and how this combination affects speaking performance. The participants were 80 Electronic Engineering students studying English as part of their program. Changes in grammar, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and pronunciation were observed to finalize the study. Results indicated that integrating digital technology into PBL enhanced speaking performance significantly in terms of grammar, comprehension, and vocabulary. However, changes in fluency and pronunciation aspects were not significant.

Examining project-based learning in secondary education, Jariah et al.'s (2024) descriptive qualitative research investigated participant teachers' implementation methods of project-based learning for speaking activities and their impact on students' speaking skills. Participants were two English teachers and their eleventh-grade students. Students' performances were evaluated based on pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension (Brown, 2000). An observation checklist was utilized to collect data regarding the implementation of project-based instruction. Additionally, lesson plans and final scores from speaking projects were analyzed to assess the contribution of project activities to students' spoken language development. The results showed that project-based learning had a favorable impact on students' speaking performances. Although none of the students reached the 'excellent' level in pronunciation, 96% of the performances were rated as 'good'.

Expanding on these findings, Nguyen and Le (2024) conducted a mixed-methods study with 250 non-English majoring grade 10 students to discover the effects of PBL on speaking ability and learners' views on the benefits and challenges of PBL activities. Many data collection tools ranging from survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to observations and oral tests were employed. All participants completed the questionnaires designed for general students. Approximately 70 participants constituted the experimental and the control group. All the members from the former took part in the PBL activities and answered questionnaires. In addition, nearly one-third of this experimental group participated in the semi-structured interviews. The study results indicated that thirty-five non-English 10th-grade students significantly enhanced their English-speaking skills thanks to receiving PBL lessons for two months. The most notable improvement was in vocabulary usage, while the least was

in grammar. Through projects that circle around authentic questions and problems, students had the chance to communicate in a more engaging and meaningful context. This resulted in advanced vocabulary. Project work also provided students with 21st-century skills, such as applying knowledge to real-world scenarios, communication, problem-solving, teamwork and collaboration, and critical thinking. Nonetheless, the data demonstrated challenges like presenting outcomes, sharing roles during group work, deciding on the final product, and time management.

Shi et al.'s (2024) mixed-methods study investigated the impact of project-based learning on the public speaking performance of EFL students at a Chinese university, as well as their perceptions of project-based instruction. Sixty participants took part in the study. Quantitative data were collected through a pretest–posttest design. The experimental group received instruction through project-based learning strategies, while the control group followed conventional instructional approaches. Following the intervention, a post-test was administered to assess any improvement in public speaking performance. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted after the post-test to obtain qualitative data. Findings indicated that students in the experimental group demonstrated significantly greater improvement in English public speaking performance compared to the control group. Furthermore, interview data revealed positive attitudes toward the integration of project-based learning into classroom instruction.

Similarly, Sirisrimangkorn (2021) conducted a study with tertiary-level EFL students to analyze the effectiveness of project-based learning in improving students' spoken language proficiency. In addition, learner perceptions of implementing projects in the form of presentations were explored. Data were collected through speaking examinations, questionnaires, interviews, and the instructional application of project-based learning pedagogy. The participants were 31 second-year Business English students. Pre- and post-test comparisons suggested that delivering presentations within a project-based class significantly improved learners' speaking performance. Furthermore, qualitative results revealed that students held positive views toward project-based learning and presenting their work. According to the study, communicative tasks in project classes supported learners' speaking development and encouraged authentic language use.

Finally, Becerra-Posada et al. (2022) conducted a qualitative study with a pre-service EFL teacher and 32 eighth graders to investigate the effects of project-based learning on communicative competence and self-confidence. Data collection tools were video classroom observations, student focus interviews, and student diaries. Participants worked on a project

about food and nutrition for six weeks. The study results demonstrated that project work improved students' communicative competence and self-reliance through creating opportunities for meaningful communication. Students' self-confidence improved significantly, which was particularly notable given that many of them initially felt anxious about making mistakes or being ridiculed during project work.

2.7.2. Project-Based Learning and Motivation, Autonomy, and Willingness to Communicate

Existing literature highlights the positive impact of project-based learning on motivation, autonomy, and willingness to communicate (Awamleh, 2024; Nguyen, 2020; Dinda & Septiana, 2024; Farouk, 2016). In this respect, Awamleh's quantitative study (2024) examined the role of e-project-based learning (e-PBL) in enhancing female students' academic achievement and motivation. Additionally, it questioned the learners' changing attitudes and perceptions about the obstacles. Participants were 38 female psychology students taking the "Autism" course. Data were collected using an achievement test, a card for evaluating e-projects, a motivation measure, and a measure of attitudes toward e-PBL. The results demonstrated that female students' academic achievement and motivation significantly improved thanks to e-PBL. Similarly, there were significant differences in attitudes after becoming familiar with the method. Finally, female students mostly identified external obstacles, such as a need for a highly qualified teacher, technical capabilities, and the huge content of the curriculum.

In the same vein, Nguyen's (2020) correlational research focused on the relationship between project-based learning and Japanese learners' motivational development and autonomous engagement. A total of 31 university students studying at the Department of Foreign Languages and having completed five Japanese language courses called Japanese Language I-V were the participants. A Likert-type questionnaire was applied to collect data. The first part of the scale consists of questions related to personal information, while the second and third parts aim to identify student motivation and autonomy during project work. In addition, students expressed their opinions and evaluated their development in the last part. The study results indicated that project work positively affected student motivation, created a comfortable learning environment, and boosted learner autonomy (there was still a need for instructor help). The students, on the other hand, stated their favorable opinions about project work and its effect on improving receptive and productive skills.

Moreover, Dinda and Septiana (2024) researched the effects of project-based learning on motivation and engagement in English among eleventh-grade students. The study employed a quantitative approach (non-experimental quasi-regression). The findings showed that using project-based learning with eleventh-grade students in an English language education context significantly enhanced both motivation and interest in learning.

According to some researchers, project-based learning can also be directly associated with students' willingness to communicate. In this context, Farouck's (2016) qualitative study explored the instructional strategies employed in PBL, the associated language skills fostered in project classes, and the influence of this approach on EFL university students' WTC. Participants worked in pairs to perform fieldwork activities related to their selected topics. Subsequently, they engaged in jigsaw communicative tasks, presented their projects, and gave and received feedback through an online rubric and forum. They also competed in a speech contest to enhance self-confidence and decrease anxiety. Study findings demonstrated that PBL ensured independent learning. In addition, it allowed students to acquire language skills with advanced words and more complex grammar structures that could not be reached through instructors or coursebooks. Finally, students stated that doing interviews, making presentations, and answering questions in English lowered their anxiety and enhanced their WTC in English.

2.7.3. Learners' and Teachers' Perceptions of Project-Based Learning

There are various studies exploring learners' and teacher's perceptions of project-based learning to help with qualified implementation (Boardman & Hovland, 2022; Zheng, 2022; Mutanga, 2024; Puangpunsi, 2021; Habók & Nagy, 2016; Ruslan et al., 2022). Boardman and Hovland (2022) compared the perceptions of secondary-level students with disabilities in English language arts, in comparison with their peers without disabilities through their qualitative study. Thirty-six 9th-grade students participated in the study and were interviewed after completing projects as well as at the school year's conclusion. The only difference between the two groups was the desire for scaffolded learning and teachers addressing individual needs. Based on the similarities, themes like authenticity, collaboration, choice, and learning emerged. Students from both groups expressed optimism about their experiences in relation to authenticity. They stated that creating something for a real audience is significant. Similarly, a large number of students in both groups viewed collaborative projects as enjoyable, as they allowed them to receive support from peers. A similar number of students claimed that working on projects as a group enhanced their collaboration skills. In addition, both groups of students liked the idea of having various choices offered to them thanks to PBL's free

environment. They noted choosing topics and texts, bringing their own ideas to the class, and working at their own pace as positive aspects. Finally, learning from varied perspectives, including those of classmates and global topics, was stated as an advantage of PBL in both groups.

Similarly, Zheng's (2022) mixed-methods study investigated the opinions of young Chinese learners attending a rural school regarding the use of project-based learning. Participants were three English teachers and 102 Grade 6 Chinese EFL learners. To examine teachers' instructional methods and techniques in project classes, classroom observations were conducted, and semi-structured interviews were held. The qualitative findings revealed six essential aspects: collaboration, authenticity, academic challenge and accomplishment, project leadership, reflection, and public product. In the next phase, a questionnaire covering all six aspects was administered to participants. Based on participant responses, collaboration, authenticity, academic challenge and accomplishment, project leadership, and reflection were regarded as strong aspects of project-based learning. However, the only aspect rated less positively was the public product.

In higher education contexts, similar findings emerged. Mutanga (2024) examined university students' attitudes and experiences in PBL through a qualitative study with 30 undergraduate students in the information technology department. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with them. The results indicated that there is a big difference between theoretical knowledge and practical application, which may be bridged by PBL. In addition, the students stated that PBL boosted their autonomy by ensuring greater control of the learning process. In the study, collaboration was regarded as an essential element of PBL, having both positive and negative sides. While it promoted teamwork and idea sharing, PBL also created challenges like coordinating schedules and workloads. Finally, ongoing assessment and timely feedback were given as crucial advantages of PBL, resulting in quality projects.

Likewise, Puangpunsi (2021) conducted a mixed-methods study to investigate students' views on PBL and its efficiency in developing English and 21st-century skills. Participants were 104 university students who were majoring in agricultural science and took an English course as a requirement for their degree. The study pointed out that PBL played a significant role in improving English and 21st-century skills. Most of the participants stated that PBL helped them gain teamwork skills and flexibility. Furthermore, it enriched their sense of responsibility by making them more active and autonomous. Overall, the majority of the students seemed satisfied with the integration of PBL in their English class.

Teachers' perspectives on project-based learning were also examined. Through their quantitative study, Habók and Nagy (2016) aimed to examine teaching methods that are mostly preferred and utilized in various contexts and teachers' ideas about PBL. To address the potential effects of school type, 32 teachers teaching Years 1–4, 42 teaching Years 5 to 8 at primary level, and 35 teachers employed in vocational and/or vocational secondary institutions participated in the study. Among the participants, there were 34 beginners with 10 or fewer years of practice, 30 experienced teachers having 11 to 20 years of professional experience, and 44 experts who had more than 21 years of practice. A survey consisting of 15 items and various parts was applied to collect data. The main findings can be explained as follows:

1. Teachers who utilize PBL in their classes perceived themselves as facilitators, while teachers in traditional classrooms regarded the main role of the teacher as an educator.
2. PBL highlighted learner activities and a good atmosphere, whereas games, ICT tools, and good results were viewed as less important.
3. In traditional classrooms, learner activity, a good atmosphere, and varied methodology seemed crucial.
4. Unlike PBL, traditional classrooms emphasized evaluation processes.
5. According to PBL, student involvement in evaluation (mostly orally) is a must.

Finally, the emotional aspect of PBL was studied by Ruslan et al. (2022). They investigated 29 university students' feelings while completing projects for their online speaking class. The students were asked to record roleplays, which necessitated them to work individually or in groups. An open-ended questionnaire was applied to evaluate the application of PBL in an online speaking class in light of students' comments. Based on Pekrun's work (2006), affective, cognitive, motivational, and expressive aspects were questioned. The results suggested that students found the process both exciting and challenging depending on particular circumstances. They felt excited when they were satisfied with their accomplishments. Meanwhile, they experienced negative feelings like frustration, discomfort, and unpleasantness because of disappointing results. However, these negative feelings sometimes improved motivation to learn, as most students felt the urge to perform better to prevent future mistakes. Finally, students also desired perfection because they cared about the result the most.

2.7.4. Project-Based Learning and Its Role in Improving Life and Productive Skills

Researchers recognized project-based learning for its role in improving life and productive skills. In this respect, Wahbeh et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative study to examine

the impacts of PBL on students' life skills. Observation, semi-structured interviews, and documents of the teacher and students were utilized as data collection tools. Participants were 80 grade 6 students studying in an Arabic language class. They prepared a project taken from their Arabic language book by working in groups ranging from 6 to 10 members. The topic of the project was child labor, and students were asked to run a campaign to inform people about the dangers of this issue. Groups were assigned various tasks, such as conducting interviews with working children, playing plays, and writing short stories and poetry. The study results showed that PBL improved life skills in the language classroom by providing an environment that encouraged students to collaborate, communicate, show appreciation, and determine strengths and capabilities. Furthermore, it positively affected student engagement and motivation and ensured sustainable education.

Similarly, Aldobekhi and Abahussain (2024) explored the impacts of PBL on productive skills through mixed-methods study with first-year university students. Pre- and post-tests, semi-structured interviews, and participant observations were employed as data collection tools. Over 10 weeks, the researcher worked with students on PBL activities. Six participants preferred writing projects, and six selected speaking projects according to their lowest pre-test scores. Based on quantitative results, students' writing and speaking scores significantly increased after using PBL. Additionally, qualitative findings revealed that PBL improved students' willingness to complete speaking activities, oral communication skills, active listening, and vocabulary knowledge. However, confusion about project work, information sources, and design were reported as challenges.

The studies examined are summarized in Table 2.6. in a structured manner to highlight their scopes, sample characteristics, and main findings.

Table 2.6. *Studies Centered on PBL and Its Effects on Various Aspects*

Author/Year	Participants	Study Design	Main Findings
Habók & Nagy (2016)	109 teachers	Quantitative	PBL teachers saw themselves as facilitators; traditional classrooms emphasized evaluation.
Farouck (2016)	EFL university students	Qualitative	PBL ensured independent learning, facilitated complex language acquisition, reduced anxiety, and increased WTC.
Nguyen (2020)	31 university students (Foreign Languages, Japanese I-V)	Quantitative (Correlational)	Increased motivation, autonomy, and positive opinions on PBL's effect on receptive/productive skills.
Wahbeh et al. (2021)	80 Grade 6 Arabic students	Qualitative	PBL promoted life skills, collaboration, engagement, and sustainable education.
Sirisrimangkorn (2021)	31 Business English university students	Mixed Methods	Presentations in PBL improved speaking skills; students had positive opinions about PBL.
Puangpunsi (2021)	104 Agricultural Science university students (English course)	Mixed Methods	PBL enhanced English proficiency, teamwork, flexibility, and learner responsibility.
Boardman & Hovland (2022)	36 9th-grade students (with/without disabilities)	Qualitative	Students valued authenticity, choice, collaboration, and diverse perspectives in PBL.
Zheng (2022)	3 English teachers & 102 Grade 6 Chinese EFL learners	Mixed Methods	PBL fostered collaboration, authenticity, intellectual challenge, and reflection; "public product" received mixed reactions.
Becerra-Posada et al. (2022)	Pre-service EFL teacher & 32 eighth graders	Qualitative	PBL enhanced communicative competence, self-reliance, and confidence.
Amer (2022)	12 second-year Tour Guidance students	Mixed Methods	Significant improvements in fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and content usage.
Ruslan et al. (2022)	29 university students	Qualitative	PBL was both exciting and frustrating, but challenges fueled motivation for improvement.
Firdaus & Septiady (2023)	35 Accounting Department Students (English)	Mixed Methods	Higher speaking scores, improved teamwork, problem-solving, communication, creativity, and innovation.
Shi et al. (2024)	60 Chinese university EFL learners	Mixed Methods	PBL group showed significant speaking progress; students held positive attitudes toward PBL.
Nguyen & Le (2024)	250 non-English 10th-grade students	Mixed Methods	Notable vocabulary gains; least improvement in grammar. Provided 21st-century skills but posed challenges in teamwork and time management.

Author/Year	Participants	Study Design	Main Findings
Hoesny et al. (2024)	80 Electronic Engineering students	Quantitative	Digital PBL enhanced grammar, comprehension, and vocabulary, but fluency and pronunciation remained unchanged.
Jariah et al. (2024)	Two English teachers & 11th-grade students	Descriptive Qualitative	PBL improved speaking skills, though pronunciation excellence was rare (96% rated "good").
Awamleh (2024)	38 female Psychology students (Autism course)	Quantitative	e-PBL improved academic achievement, motivation, and attitudes, though external challenges existed.
Dinda & Septiana (2024)	11th-grade students	Quantitative (Non-experimental quasi-regression)	PBL significantly boosted motivation and interest in learning.
Mutanga (2024)	30 IT undergraduates	Qualitative	PBL improved autonomy and collaboration, but challenges included coordination and workload management.
Aldobekhi & Abahussain (2024)	First-year university students	Mixed Methods	PBL improved writing, speaking, WTC, active listening, and vocabulary but presented challenges in project planning.

As shown in Table 2.6., none of the reviewed studies simultaneously investigated both speaking proficiency and willingness to communicate within the context of English preparatory classes and employed a quasi-experimental mixed-methods design. The present study aims to address this gap by focusing on these two corresponding dimensions in a rarely studied context.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the study's research design, participants, and data collection instruments. It also explains how the data were collected and analyzed.

3.1. Research Design

In this study, all students in the preparatory program were enrolled in project-based lessons. Random participants were selected from this population to examine changes in speaking skills and willingness to communicate. Since there was no control group and all participants were exposed to the same learning process, the study can be considered quasi-experimental. According to Campbell and Stanley (1963), in natural social environments where the researcher has control over measurement (when and to whom) but lacks full control over exposure procedures (when and to whom of exposure and randomization), the research design is quasi-experimental (as cited in Shadish et al., 2002).

Building on this framework, the study's quantitative part was carried out through a one-group pretest-posttest design. This design is one of the most convenient methods to explore the impact of the independent variable (project-based learning) on the dependent variables (speaking proficiency and willingness to communicate). Fraenkel et al. (2012) stated that one-group pretest-posttest design necessitates a single group to measure or observe before and after receiving a treatment.

The following figure illustrates the structure of the research design applied in this study.

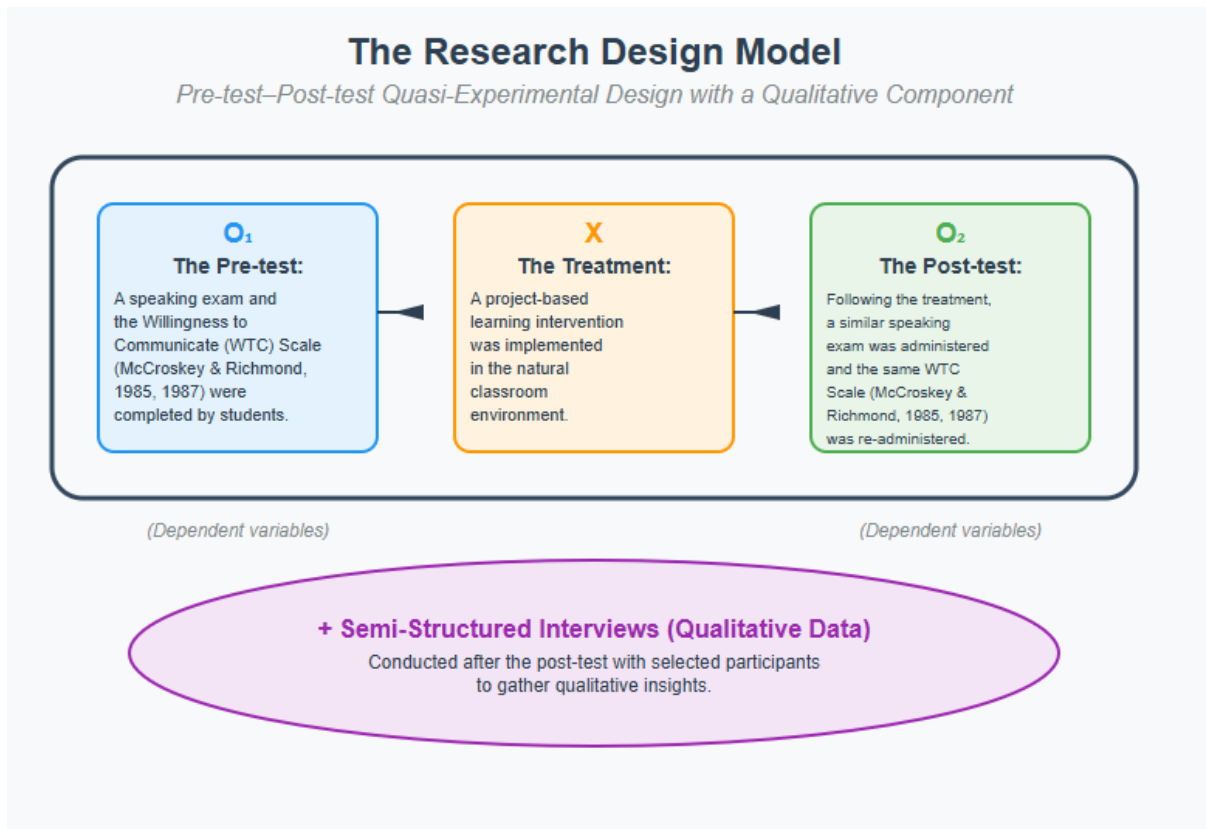


Figure 3.1. *Research Design of the Current Study: One-Group Pretest-Posttest Model with Qualitative Component*

Note. Adapted from Fraenkel et al. (2012).

To complement the findings and gain deeper insights, this study also utilized an explanatory sequential design. First, speaking exam scores and responses to the Willingness to Communicate Scale (McCroskey & Richmond, 1985, 1987) were collected. Then, semi-structured interviews were analyzed to support the quantitative findings. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), the explanatory sequential design is a mixed methods approach where the researcher starts data collection with quantitative data and continues with qualitative phases to clarify numerical information. Qualitative findings help with detailed explanations. Thus, the name of the design demonstrates how qualitative information supports quantitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

In this context, the research was conducted in the following stages:

Table 3.1. Research Implementation Stages

Stage	Processes
Pre-Test	Participants took a speaking exam carried out by the relevant School of Foreign Languages and completed the Willingness to Communicate Scale (McCroskey & Richmond, 1985, 1987) before becoming familiar with project-based learning.
Intervention Phase	All participants were included in the project-based learning process. Various projects were completed and presented in the natural classroom environment to improve participants' speaking skills and willingness to communicate. Each week, students collaboratively worked on a different project task closely related to the coursebook themes. They produced materials such as posters, PowerPoint slides, videos, or audio recordings and presented them every Friday. As part of the process, they were asked to rehearse, exchange peer feedback, and incorporate the grammar and vocabulary items explicitly covered in class.
Post-Test	Following the intervention process lasting approximately 28 weeks, students took another speaking exam, which was similar to the previous one and was implemented by the relevant School of Foreign Languages. They also completed the Willingness to Communicate Scale (McCroskey & Richmond, 1985, 1987) again.
Qualitative Data Collection	After the post-test, semi-structured individual interviews were carried out with some selected participants. These interviews were utilized to examine participants' views on the project-based learning environment and their experiences.

3.2. Participants and Sampling

One hundred twenty-three students enrolled in the School of Foreign Languages at a private university in the Mediterranean region voluntarily participated in the study. Data were collected from 59 male and 64 female participants. Due to its practicality in terms of effort, cost, time, and operation (Golzar et al., 2022), the convenience sampling method was selected to be utilized. "A convenience sample is a group of individuals who (conveniently) are available for study" (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 99). Prior to the study, participants were informed in detail about the procedures and asked for their written consent.

According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the results of the placement test they took after being admitted to the university, the

participants' English proficiency levels in the pre-test phase of the Willingness to Communicate Scale (McCroskey & Richmond, 1985, 1987) and the speaking exam varied as A1, A2, and B1. Nonetheless, participant improvements through different modules caused a change in mastery levels. They ranged from A2 to B2 in the post-test phase of the speaking exam.

There was a great deal of variety in the participants' departments. Hence, they were categorized to provide a reasonable representation of the different fields. Two primary groups were specified: STEM majors and Verbal majors. The STEM group consisted of participants from Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Computer Engineering, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Industrial Engineering, Architecture, Interior Architecture and Environmental Design, and Construction Technology. 68 of the total participants belonged to this category. The Verbal majors group, on the other hand, included 55 students from Business Administration, Economics, Political Science and International Relations, Psychology, Tourism Management, and Gastronomy. A detailed breakdown of participant departments is presented in Appendix-1.

The following tables provide descriptive information about the participants' demographics, academic fields, and previous English learning experiences.

Table 3.2. *Participant Demographics*

Variable	Category	Number of Participants
Gender	Male / Female	59 / 64
Proficiency Level	A1 / A2 / B1	55 / 27 / 41
Total Participants		123

Table 3.3. *Categorization of Participants by Academic Field*

Category	Number of Participants
STEM Majors	68
Verbal Majors	55

Table 3.4. *Distribution of English Learning Experiences*

English Learning Experience	Number of Participants
Only school-based education	94
Media exposure	5
Formal language courses	18
International experience	2

Certified language programs	1
Social interaction	1
Multiple exposure methods	1
Academic English programs	1

3.3. Data Collection Instruments

The present study's data were collected through three main instruments: institutionally administered speaking tests, the Willingness to Communicate Scale (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987), and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data for this study were collected through the first two instruments, which were applied before and after the intervention to discover potential changes in participants' speaking skills and willingness to communicate. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants after the post-test phase to examine participants' views and experiences related to project-based learning.

3.3.1. Institutionally Administered Speaking Tests

In this study, institutionally administered speaking tests were utilized as one of the quantitative data collection instruments. These tests were applied as a pre-test at the beginning of the study and a post-test after the intervention. Although the questions in the pre-test and post-test were different, the administration procedures for both exams were planned and implemented consistently to ensure high reliability and validity.

The speaking tests were carried out using the questions selected from the question pool prepared and approved by the Testing Office of the relevant School of Foreign Languages. These tests were designed to assess students' speaking skills and measure the learning outcomes stated in the syllabus.

Institutionally administered speaking tests consisted of two main sections. The first part, often referred to as the warm-up stage, was planned to help students adapt to the exam environment and feel more comfortable. Student responses provided during this phase were not evaluated, as the warm-up was excluded from the scoring process. The questions posed to the students at this point were general and focused on personal information. Some examples of these questions include the following: “What are your hobbies?”, “Can you tell me about your family?”, and “What is your favorite book and why?”. The main aim of the warm-up phase was to provide a smooth transition to the actual exam questions and reduce students’ anxiety levels.

In the next part, known as the task response stage, students were asked a random question that included details related to the course content covered during the educational period. Each student had the right to change the question once. However, they were not allowed to return to the first question after making this change. Before they started responding, students were given one minute period for thinking and note-taking. Afterward, they were expected to speak for at least 2 minutes. If the students had difficulty responding or made long pauses, the teacher asked them predetermined follow-up questions to provide continuance.

The speaking test for B2 level students had a different structure designed to assess their advanced ability to state opinions on various topics. Students were responsible for answering two different questions in this format:

One opinion question: Students were expected to express their own opinions on a given topic and support them with clear reasoning and relevant examples to justify their ideas.

One statement question: Students were expected to respond to a given statement by expressing their personal views and supporting them with clear reasoning and examples. The statement was randomly provided to each student.

3.3.2. The Willingness to Communicate Scale

The Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Scale, developed by McCroskey and Richmond (1985, 1987), was used in the quantitative data collection phase of this study. Since some participants might have had difficulty understanding certain items in English, the scale was administered in a bilingual format. A Turkish translation was provided alongside each original item. This approach was intended to ensure clarity and reduce the need for students to rely on online translation tools, which could have introduced inconsistencies in meaning. The goal here was to help participants engage with the scale content more comfortably and accurately. The bilingual version of the scale, as administered to participants, is provided in Appendix-2.

The scale was obtained from the official website of McCroskey (2007), where it is clearly stated that all materials and instruments published there are freely available for academic and research use if proper citation is given. Based on this openly shared policy, no additional permission was requested for the use of the scale in the present study. A screenshot of this statement is included in Appendix-3 to ensure transparency.

Based on Burgoon's (1976) "unwillingness to communicate" construct, the WTC Scale was originally developed by McCroskey and Richmond (1985) to examine an individual's desire to begin communication. Their subsequent study (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987) enhanced the theoretical foundation of WTC and provided extensive information related to its distinctive features. Unlike previous methods that tried to utilize feelings of introversion, anxiety, alienation, and self-concept as means of observing communication behavior, the WTC Scale was designed to directly measure respondents' tendency to approach or refrain from communication (McCroskey, 1992).

Designed as a probability-estimate scale, the WTC Scale contains 20 items, eight of which are fillers and not scored (McCroskey, 1992). The remaining 12 scored items are categorized under two different domains: communication contexts (public speaking, meetings, small groups, interpersonal conversation) and types of receivers (strangers, acquaintances, friends) (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). Additionally, McCroskey and Richmond (1987) stated that a total of 7 subscores can be generated by using the scale, and the total WTC score can be computed through the subscores based on receiver types. Considering context-based subscores, items 3, 14, and 20 are related to the public speaking context; items 6, 11, and 17 are related to meetings; and items 8, 15, and 19 represent group discussions. Similarly, in terms of receiver-based subscores, items 3, 8, 12, and 17 indicate communication with strangers; items 4, 11, 15, and 20 indicate communication with acquaintances; and items 6, 9, 14, and 19 indicate communication with friends. The complete format of the WTC Scale, along with its scoring instructions (McCroskey, 1992), can be found in Appendix-4.

3.3.3. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted after the intervention and the post-test phase. This timing allowed participants to express their opinions after they had experienced the learning and assessment processes as a whole. Fifteen participants volunteered to take part at the interview stage. Each session lasted approximately five minutes and was held in a quiet environment. All conversations were audio-recorded with the participants' permission. Since the participants were native Turkish speakers, the questions were prepared and administered in Turkish. The collected data were then translated into English during the analysis process. This approach helped ensure a stress-free and comfortable atmosphere, which can be regarded as a form of linguistic comfort and symbolizes the idea that participants and researchers can share and interpret data effortlessly when their native language is utilized (Younas et al., 2021).

Semi-structured interview questions were generated based on the principles of PBL and the construct of WTC. Open-ended items were preferred as they enabled clearer and more in-depth expression of the changes in learning experiences, willingness, and speaking skills.

The interview protocol was developed by reviewing the relevant literature and submitted for expert review in terms of content and scope. After receiving expert opinion, the protocol was finalized. In its final version, it included five open-ended questions. These questions aimed to explore students' general opinions about project-based learning, the specific gains they experienced, and the impact of the process on their English-speaking skills, communication motivation, and public speaking performance. A summary of the questions and their aims is provided in Appendix-5.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

This study was carried out using an explanatory sequential design, which necessitates collecting quantitative and qualitative data sequentially. Approval from the institutional ethics committee was obtained before initiating data collection to comply with ethical research standards, along with all relevant institutional permissions (see Appendix-6). Quantitative data were collected in the first phase. These findings were later supported by qualitative data. The data collection procedure was structured in the following way.

3.4.1. Quantitative Data Collection Procedure:

The quantitative data of the study were collected based on a one-group pretest-posttest design. Data were gathered at two separate points to reveal the impact of project-based learning on participants' speaking proficiency and willingness to communicate in English.

3.4.1.1. The Pre-test Application

Before the intervention, all participants took a speaking test, which was designed and administered by the relevant School of Foreign Languages. In the same pre-intervention phase, they also completed the Willingness to Communicate Scale (McCroskey & Richmond, 1985, 1987).

3.4.1.2. Intervention Phase

Participants completed various projects in the natural classroom environment provided by the relevant School of Foreign Languages. Those projects were structured based on proficiency levels and planned in a way that supports speaking skills. Students carried out collaborative tasks that are compatible with the thematic content of their coursebooks. New projects were assigned every Friday, and all related materials were submitted one day before the presentation day. Presentations were held weekly, also on Fridays.

During the implementation process, students prepared various materials such as posters, PowerPoint presentations, videos, or audio recordings. Project planning involved researching the assigned topic, dividing responsibilities among group members, and making use of the key language targets while designing the final product. The teacher played a monitoring and facilitating role throughout the process by assigning project topics, forming groups, and examining vocabulary and grammar use. Prior to presentations, students were asked to inform the teacher about the linguistic items they had used, and notecards were checked to ensure that no full-sentence transcriptions were used.

Presentation sessions were conducted in a formal setting. Mobile phones were collected, and both students and the teacher made comments based on peer and teacher feedback forms. Immediately after the presentations, the instructor announced the grades and provided oral feedback. This systematic procedure provided an opportunity for peer interaction, rehearsal, and purposeful communication. Thus, it contributed to the development of grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and public speaking skills (Harmer, 2007).

The following table includes sample projects carried out during the intervention process. In this table, only some selected projects were presented. A detailed list of all projects that were carried out and their content can be found in Appendix-7. Additionally, to obtain a clearer picture of how project lessons were structured and delivered, contextual and instructional details are provided in Appendix-8.

Table 3.5. Sample Projects

Project Title	Level	Main Task	Key Language Focus	Project Theme/Context
Interviews Across Generations	A1	Interviewing young and old people and shooting a video	Grammar: • Present simple tense • Positive, negative statements and questions Vocabulary: • Daily routine	Daily routines
A Day in a City Park	A2	Reviewing some famous city parks in the world (Central Park in New York City, Hyde Park in London, etc.) and designing a city park with an original poster.	Grammar: • Simple Present Tense Vocabulary • benefit • amusing • common • laughter • outdoors • situation • nature • area	City Parks
Happiest and the Least Happy Countries	B1	Presenting about a country from the top five happiest or the least happy countries.	Grammar: • Modals Vocabulary: • Poverty • Necessity • Decent • Prevent • Disease • Common • Attitude • Occur • Consist of	Happiness

3.4.1.3. Post-test Application

After the intervention lasting approximately 28 weeks, participants took another speaking test, which was similar to the first one, and completed the WTC Scale (McCroskey & Richmond, 1985, 1987) once again.

3.4.1.4. Speaking Test Assessment

Speaking tests were evaluated using the criteria that were established based on CEFR standards. The evaluation was carried out by experienced instructors specializing in the field and affiliated with the relevant School of Foreign Languages. Moreover, objectivity and inter-rater reliability were ensured.

The scoring procedure was guided by the rubric entitled *Holistic Speaking Exam Criteria*, which was developed by the relevant Testing Office. The rubric assessed student performance based on several components, including content relevance, grammatical accuracy and range, use of target vocabulary, fluency and consistency, pronunciation, and effective communication. Each criterion was defined within a 0–20-point scale to maintain consistency and standardization during the assessment process. The full version of the rubric can be found in Appendix-9.

3.4.2. Qualitative Data Collection Procedure

To discover students' views of project-based learning and gather feedback about their learning experiences, the qualitative component of the study was conducted. After the post-test phase, a group of students who had both volunteered and regularly attended the project-based lessons were identified as eligible participants. From this group, 15 participants were randomly selected for interviews.

Participants were informed that the data they provided during semi-structured interviews would be kept confidential. There were six females and nine males with various proficiency levels (A2, B1, B2). The interviews were conducted at different intervals over two weeks, and in Turkish to ensure a natural and comfortable environment. Each interview lasted approximately 5 minutes and was audio-recorded.

3.5. Data Analysis

3.5.1. Quantitative Data Analysis

The current study was conducted to explore whether participants' willingness to communicate and speaking test scores improved after implementing project-based lessons. For coding and statistical analysis, the quantitative data collected through the paper-based administration of the Willingness to Communicate Scale and speaking tests were transferred to Microsoft Excel and then to IBM SPSS software. In the initial stage of the study, descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the pre-and post-test scores from both the subscales and the overall score of the Willingness to Communicate Scale, along with the results of the speaking test. In the next phase, the pre-and post-test mean scores were compared.

Before conducting comparative tests of means between groups, the distribution of scores across all subscales was examined with respect to the independent variables at different time points. There are several methods that can be utilized when determining whether a dataset follows a normal distribution. As suggested by the first method, hypothesis-based tests, such as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) and Shapiro-Wilk (S-W), are commonly used to evaluate normality. The p-values obtained from these tests were evaluated, and distributions that showed a p-value greater than 0.05 were assumed to follow a normal distribution (Bryman & Cramer, 2001).

One additional way of checking for normality involved reviewing skewness and kurtosis scores to see if they were within the range of -2 to +2 (George & Mallery, 2010). Distributions that matched this range were generally seen as normal. In this case, a further check was carried out by calculating Z values, which were obtained by dividing each coefficient by its standard error. If these Z scores happened to fall between -2.58 and +2.58, then the data was taken to meet the normality assumption (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Any distribution that matched at least two of these three criteria was taken as suitable for further analysis. As a result of this step-by-step process, all relevant datasets were seen to fulfill the required assumptions. Since the design involved only two time-based measurements and the data satisfied the assumption of normality, the dependent samples t-test was applied.

3.5.1.1. Standardization and Objectivity in Speaking Performance Assessment

To ensure both internal and external validity in the speaking tests, several precautions were taken. First of all, even though the pre-test and post-test involved different questions, they followed the same procedures to maintain standardization. Students were asked questions based

on the units covered during the modules, and the exam conditions were the same in both applications. These precautions helped reduce the testing effect and made more accurate measurement possible. Following the formal procedures of the School of Foreign Languages in the study, random performance videos were selected and evaluated by all the instructors at the relevant level to ensure standardization during the scoring process. Moreover, the tests were independently assessed by two different raters, and inter-rater reliability was ensured. During the scoring process, the instructors used a predetermined holistic rubric.

3.5.1.2. Reliability Analysis of the WTC Scale

The reliability of the WTC Scale was examined at both the subscale and overall scale levels. Cronbach's alpha coefficients and composite reliability (CR) values for each subscale of the WTC Scale were calculated for both the pre-test and post-test.

Table 3.6. presents the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability coefficients calculated for each subscale and the total score of the WTC Scale in both the pre-test and post-test phases.

Table 3.6. *Reliability Coefficients of the WTC Subscales and Total Score*

Subscore	Cronbach's Alpha Pre-test	Cronbach's Alpha Post-test	Composite Reliability Pre-test	Composite Reliability Post-test
Group discussion	0.66	0.65	0.71	0.72
Meetings	0.86	0.82	0.81	0.79
Interpersonal conversations	0.65	0.54	0.72	0.69
Public speaking	0.71	0.67	0.73	0.73
Stranger	0.80	0.75	0.87	0.85
Acquaintance	0.78	0.68	0.86	0.82
Friend	0.76	0.66	0.86	0.82
Total WTC Score	0.90	0.86	0.91	0.89

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the group discussion subscale was calculated as 0.66 in the pre-test and 0.65 in the post-test. The composite reliability (CR) values for this subscale were 0.71 and 0.72, respectively. These values indicate a moderate level of internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the meetings subscale were notably high,

calculated as 0.86 in the pre-test and 0.82 in the post-test. The composite reliability (CR) values also indicate a high level of reliability, with scores of 0.81 for the pre-test and 0.79 for the post-test. While the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the interpersonal conversations subscale was 0.65 in the pre-test, it decreased to 0.54 in the post-test. As for the composite reliability (CR) values, they were 0.72 in the pre-test and 0.69 in the post-test. A sufficient level of internal consistency was observed in the public speaking subscale, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.71 in the pre-test and 0.67 in the post-test. The composite reliability (CR) values remained at 0.73 in both the pre-test and post-test, indicating that this subscale demonstrates a consistent structure.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the stranger subscale was 0.80 in the pre-test and 0.75 in the post-test. The composite reliability (CR) values, on the other hand, were 0.87 and 0.85, respectively, reflecting high reliability. Similarly, in the acquaintance subscale, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were determined as 0.78 in the pre-test and 0.68 in the post-test, while the composite reliability (CR) values were calculated as 0.86 and 0.82, respectively. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the friend subscale were reported as 0.76 in the pre-test and 0.66 in the post-test. As for the composite reliability (CR) values, they were 0.86 and 0.82, respectively. These results indicate that the measurement was generally reliable.

For the overall structure of the WTC Scale, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were notably high, calculated as 0.90 in the pre-test and 0.86 in the post-test. The composite reliability (CR) values, on the other hand, were 0.91 and 0.89, respectively. These values suggest that the overall structure of the scale demonstrates strong internal consistency and serves as a reliable measurement tool.

3.5.2. Qualitative Data Analysis

The findings obtained through the third research question were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method. The data collected for the study were based directly on participant experiences. Thus, this analysis method was thought to be compatible with the data. The analysis was carried out in six main steps: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

While determining the themes of the study, participant statements were consulted as the main source, and an inductive approach was adopted. Based on this approach, the schemas and codes were not predetermined, and the themes were created by considering the points

mentioned during the semi-structured interviews. The main aim of the analysis process was to reflect participant experiences transparently by including direct responses rather than personal interpretation. In this regard, it may be argued that the analysis was carried out at the semantic level. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. To gain familiarity with the data, the transcriptions were read multiple times, and initial notes regarding the analysis process were taken.

All data were analyzed in detail to identify meaningful expressions and generate codes. The coding process was done manually, and each code was associated with related pieces of data. Through similar codes or those that could be associated with one another, groups were formed and potential themes were identified. Priority was given to the representational power, similarity in meaning, and direct connection with the research question. Accordingly, the first attempt to determine themes was made.

The themes that were obtained were compared with the entire dataset, especially the coded segments. Themes that showed similarity were combined, some were renamed, and the scope and limits were clearly identified. To enhance the reliability of the thematic analysis, the coding and the theme development process was shared with the research advisor. The advisor reviewed the codes and thematic structures, and mutual agreement was reached on the final categorization of the themes. During this process, internal consistency and distinguishability were highlighted. Related subthemes were identified for the finalized themes. The findings under each theme were supported by relevant subthemes and illustrative code examples.

At the report stage, themes were presented in an organized way in the findings section. Each theme was supported by relevant subthemes, tables, and direct excerpts. Thus, participant opinions strengthened the thematic analysis. Additionally, thematic maps were constructed for each theme, and the thematic relationships were presented visually.

During the analysis, using excerpts from various participants and keeping the analysis comprehensive were considered crucial points. The anonymity of the participants was ensured, and all excerpts were presented anonymously.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

4.1. Quantitative Findings

This section presents the quantitative findings related to the impact of project-based learning on participants' speaking proficiency and willingness to communicate. The findings were obtained by comparing the pre- and post-test scores from the speaking tests administered by the relevant School of Foreign Languages and from the Willingness to Communicate Scale (McCroskey & Richmond, 1985, 1987). The analysis results are presented under different headings based on the research questions.

4.1.1. First Research Question: Results of the Speaking Tests

To what extent does project-based language learning affect English preparatory class students' speaking proficiency?

Based on the quantitative findings obtained from the speaking tests, this subsection discusses the impact of project-based learning on students' English-speaking skills. A comparison was made between the participants' pre-test and post-test scores, and the significance of the difference was evaluated via a paired samples t-test.

4.1.1.1. Descriptive Statistics of Speaking Tests

The speaking test was scored on a scale ranging from 0 to 20. The average speaking test scores for the pre-test and post-test were recorded as $M = 14.31$, $SD = 2.04$ and $M = 15.94$, $SD = 2.22$, respectively. This finding demonstrates that there was an overall increase in students' speaking proficiency. The number of participants was 123 for both pre-test and post-test.

Descriptive statistics related to the speaking test are summarized in Table 4.1., including the minimum and maximum scores, means, and standard deviations for both test administrations.

Table 4.1. *Descriptive Statistics for the Speaking Test*

Measurement	Time	<i>N</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Speaking Test	Pre-Test	123	8.50	20.00	14.31	2.04
	Post-Test	123	10.50	20.00	15.94	2.22

4.1.1.2. Paired Samples *t*-Test Results for the Speaking Test Scores

The impact of project-based learning on students' speaking proficiency was examined through a paired samples *t*-test. The average speaking test score of the participants was $M = 14.31$, $SD = 2.04$ in the pre-test and $M = 15.94$, $SD = 2.22$ in the post-test. The difference was found to be statistically significant, $t(122) = 14.12$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.28$, $r = .82$. This finding indicates that there was notable progress in participants' speaking proficiency.

Table 4.2. presents the paired samples *t*-test results comparing students' speaking test scores before and after the implementation of project-based learning.

Table 4.2. Paired Samples *t*-Test Results for the Speaking Test Scores

Measurement	Time	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t(df)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>
Speaking Test	Pre-Test	123	14.31	2.04	$t(122) = 14.12$	$p < .001$	1.28	.82
	Post-Test	123	15.94	2.22				

4.1.2. Second Research Question: Results of the WTC Scale

To what extent does project-based language learning impact English preparatory class students' willingness to communicate?

Through quantitative findings, this section focuses on the impact of project-based learning on English preparatory class students' willingness to communicate in various situations. The findings were obtained through the comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores calculated based on the WTC Scale, which consists of seven subscales and was developed by McCroskey and Richmond (1985, 1987). First, the descriptive statistics related to the subscales and the overall WTC score are presented. Then, to test the effect of the project-based intervention, the results of the paired samples *t*-test are reported.

4.1.2.1. Descriptive Statistics of the WTC Scale

When the descriptive statistics of the WTC Scale were examined, significant increases were observed in all subscores and the overall score. Each related subscale was evaluated on a scale ranging from 0 to 100. Both the pre-test and post-test included the same number of participants, which was 123.

In the group discussion subscale, the average score was $M = 70.72$, $SD = 18.66$ in the pre-test, and it increased to $M = 87.11$, $SD = 10.84$ in the post-test. The average pre-test score

in the meetings subscale was $M = 57.97$, $SD = 26.60$, rising to $M = 78.79$, $SD = 18.04$ after the intervention. In the interpersonal conversations subscale, the pre-test and post-test scores were $M = 69.76$, $SD = 19.31$ and $M = 83.94$, $SD = 13.93$, respectively, indicating a similar improvement. A comparable increase was also observed in the public speaking subscale, where the average score rose from $M = 67.29$, $SD = 21.37$ to $M = 85.72$, $SD = 12.69$.

In the stranger subscale, the average score increased from $M = 56.72$, $SD = 22.71$ in the pre-test to $M = 77.21$, $SD = 15.99$ in the post-test. In the acquaintance subscale, the pre-test mean was $M = 69.22$, $SD = 20.44$, and it increased to $M = 86.59$, $SD = 11.95$ following the intervention. As for the friend subscale, the average score improved from $M = 73.36$, $SD = 18.80$ in the pre-test to $M = 87.89$, $SD = 10.82$ in the post-test.

The overall WTC score was calculated as $M = 66.43$, $SD = 18.15$ in the pre-test and $M = 83.89$, $SD = 11.13$ in the post-test. This finding indicates that participants' willingness to communicate improved considerably at a general level.

Table 4.3. summarizes the descriptive statistics for each subscale and the overall score of the WTC Scale in both the pre-test and post-test phases.

Table 4.3. *Descriptive Statistics of the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Scale*

Subscale	Time	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Group Discussion	Pre-Test	123	15.00	100.00	70.72	18.66
	Post-Test	123	58.33	100.00	87.11	10.84
Meetings	Pre-Test	123	0.00	100.00	57.97	26.60
	Post-Test	123	25.00	100.00	78.79	18.04
Interpersonal Conversations	Pre-Test	123	10.00	100.00	69.76	19.31
	Post-Test	123	10.00	100.00	83.94	13.93
Public Speaking	Pre-Test	123	13.33	100.00	67.29	21.37
	Post-Test	123	41.67	100.00	85.72	12.69
Stranger	Pre-Test	123	0.00	100.00	56.72	22.71
	Post-Test	123	35.00	100.00	77.21	15.99
Acquaintance	Pre-Test	123	15.00	100.00	69.22	20.44
	Post-Test	123	37.50	100.00	86.59	11.95
Friend	Pre-Test	123	15.00	100.00	73.36	18.80
	Post-Test	123	57.50	100.00	87.89	10.82
Overall WTC Score	Pre-Test	123	15.00	100.00	66.43	18.15
	Post-Test	123	53.33	100.00	83.89	11.13

4.1.2.2. Paired Samples *t*-Test Results for the WTC Scale

The paired samples *t*-test results for the pre-test and post-test scores from the context subscales of the WTC Scale revealed statistically significant differences across all subscales. Based on the findings, the post-test scores were found to be significantly higher than the pre-test scores for each subscale. These results indicate that the implementation process was effective in enhancing participants' willingness to communicate.

In the group discussion subscale, the post-test mean score ($M = 87.11$, $SD = 10.84$) was significantly higher than the pre-test score ($M = 70.72$, $SD = 18.66$), $t(122) = 12.54$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.14$, $r = .63$. Similarly, in the meetings subscale, the post-test mean ($M = 78.79$, $SD = 18.04$) was found to be significantly higher than the pre-test mean ($M = 57.97$, $SD = 26.60$), $t(122) = 13.30$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.20$, $r = .76$.

A comparable increase was observed in the interpersonal conversations subscale, where the post-test score ($M = 83.94$, $SD = 13.93$) was significantly greater than the pre-test score ($M = 69.76$, $SD = 19.31$), $t(122) = 11.37$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.03$, $r = .70$.

Likewise, in the public speaking subscale, the post-test mean ($M = 85.72$, $SD = 12.69$) significantly exceeded the pre-test mean ($M = 67.29$, $SD = 21.37$), $t(122) = 12.44$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.13$, $r = .64$.

Collectively, these findings indicate that the intervention had a strong and positive impact on participants' willingness to communicate.

Paired samples *t*-test results for the context-related subscales of the WTC Scale are presented in Table 4.4. to show the pre- and post-test comparisons.

Table 4.4. Paired Samples *t*-Test Results for the Context Subscales of the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Scale

Subscale	Time	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t(df)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>
Group Discussion	Pre-Test	123	70.72	18.66	$t(122) = 12.54$	<.001	1.14	.63
	Post-Test	123	87.11	10.84				
Meetings	Pre-Test	123	57.97	26.60	$t(122) = 13.30$	<.001	1.20	.76
	Post-Test	123	78.79	18.04				
Interpersonal Conversations	Pre-Test	123	69.76	19.31	$t(122) = 11.37$	<.001	1.03	.70
	Post-Test	123	83.94	13.93				
Public Speaking	Pre-Test	123	67.29	21.37	$t(122) = 12.44$	<.001	1.13	.64
	Post-Test	123	85.72	12.69				

The paired samples *t*-test results on the receiver subscales of the WTC Scale showed that participants' willingness to communicate improved significantly. Post-test scores were consistently higher than pre-test scores across all subscales.

In the stranger subscale, the post-test mean score ($M = 77.21$, $SD = 15.99$) was significantly higher than the pre-test score ($M = 56.72$, $SD = 22.71$), $t(122) = 14.07$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.27$, $r = .70$.

A similar pattern was observed in the acquaintance subscale. The post-test mean ($M = 86.59$, $SD = 11.95$) was significantly greater than the pre-test mean ($M = 69.22$, $SD = 20.44$), $t(122) = 12.93$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.17$, $r = .69$.

In the friend subscale, the mean score increased from the pre-test ($M = 73.36$, $SD = 18.80$) to the post-test ($M = 87.89$, $SD = 10.82$), and this difference was also statistically significant, $t(122) = 12.27$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.11$, $r = .73$.

Taken together, these results indicate that participants became more willing to communicate with both people they already knew and those they were less familiar with.

Table 4.5. presents the paired samples *t*-test results for the receiver-based subscales of the WTC Scale, comparing students' willingness to communicate with different types of interlocutors before and after the intervention.

Table 4.5. Paired Samples *t*-Test Results for the Receiver Subscales of the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Scale

Subscale	Time	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t(df)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>
Stranger	Pre-Test	123	56.72	22.71	$t(122) = 14.07$	$< .001$	1.27	.70
	Post-Test	123	77.21	15.99				
Acquaintance	Pre-Test	123	69.22	20.44	$t(122) = 12.93$	$< .001$	1.17	.69
	Post-Test	123	86.59	11.95				
Friend	Pre-Test	123	73.36	18.80	$t(122) = 12.27$	$< .001$	1.11	.73
	Post-Test	123	87.89	10.82				

The paired samples *t*-test results for the overall WTC score revealed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The overall score increased from $M = 66.43$, $SD = 18.15$ in the pre-test to $M = 83.89$, $SD = 11.13$ in the post-test. This improvement was statistically significant, $t(122) = 15.66$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.42$, $r = .74$. These

results indicate that the intervention process significantly enhanced participants' willingness to communicate.

Table 4.6. demonstrates the results of the paired samples *t*-test for the overall score of the WTC Scale, comparing participants' general willingness to communicate before and after the intervention.

Table 4.6. *Paired Samples t-Test Results for the Overall Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Score*

Subscale	Time	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t(df)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>
Overall Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Score	Pre-Test	123	66.43	18.15	$t(122) = 15.66$	$< .001$	1.42	.74
	Post-Test	123	83.89	11.13				

4.1.3. Comparative Interpretation of the Quantitative Results for RQ1 and RQ2

The findings obtained within the scope of the study demonstrate that project-based learning had a significant impact on both students' speaking skills and their willingness to communicate. Based on the WTC Scale data, the overall WTC score increased significantly in the post-test (pre-test: 66.43 ± 18.15 ; post-test: 83.89 ± 11.13 ; $t(122) = 15.66$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.42$, $r = .74$). A similar change was observed in the speaking test results. There was a significant improvement in students' post-test average speaking scores as a result of the intervention (pre-test: 14.31 ± 2.04 ; post-test: 15.94 ± 2.22 ; $t(122) = 14.12$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.28$, $r = .82$). When both measurement tools are considered together, it becomes clear that project-based learning enhanced students' speaking performance and their willingness to communicate in multiple dimensions. The consistency between the findings suggests that the intervention was systematically and effectively structured.

Table 4.7. presents a detailed summary of the paired samples *t*-test results for both the WTC Scale and the speaking test scores, highlighting the statistical significance and effect sizes observed after the intervention.

Table 4.7. Paired Samples *t*-Test Results for the WTC Scale and Speaking Test Scores

Measure	Time	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t(df)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>
Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Scale	Pre-Test	123	66.43	18.15	<i>t</i> (122) = 15.66	< .001	1.42	.74
	Post-Test	123	83.89	11.13				
Speaking Test	Pre-Test	123	14.31	2.04	<i>t</i> (122) = 14.12	< .001	1.28	.82
	Post-Test	123	15.94	2.22				

Finally, additional analyses revealed that participants' initial proficiency levels determined by the placement test (A1, A2, B1) did not lead to a statistically significant difference in their development. Regardless of their starting level, all participants showed measurable improvement in both speaking proficiency and willingness to communicate. This result suggests that the intervention was equally effective across varying proficiency levels and strengthens the generalizability of the process to a broader range of student profiles.

4.2. Qualitative Findings

4.2.1. Third Research Question: Students' Attitudes Toward Project-Based Learning

What are English preparatory class students' attitudes toward project-based language learning?

This chapter aims to present the qualitative findings related to the third research question, which aims to reveal English preparatory class students' attitudes toward project-based learning (What are English preparatory class students' attitudes toward project-based language learning?). Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, and they were structured around five questions that investigate students' general perceptions of project-based learning, the characteristics they gained during the process, the changes in their speaking skills, their motivation to use English outside the class, and their presentation and oratory skills. After the thematic analysis, five main themes were identified: Language Development through Experiential Learning, Cognitive and Emotional Growth, Motivation and Real-Life Application, Social Interaction and Leadership, and Public Speaking and Presentation Skills. Accordingly, project-based learning is effective not only in terms of language outcomes but also in enhancing students' confidence, willingness to use English outside the class, and

public speaking skills. Each main theme that emerged as a result of the thematic analysis is presented below along with its subthemes and student expressions. Furthermore, the related interview question(s) for each theme are specified. For detailed thematic coding and extended analysis, see Appendix-10.

The table below outlines the key qualitative findings derived from thematic analysis. It includes the main themes and subthemes, representative codes, frequency counts, and the corresponding interview questions.

Table 4.8. *English Preparatory Class Students' Perceptions of Project-Based Learning*

Main Theme	Subtheme	Code Examples	Frequency (f)	Source Interview Question(s)
Language Development through Experiential Learning	Vocabulary Enrichment via Discovery	Research-based vocabulary learning, independent term search	10	Q1
	Speaking Fluency and Naturalness	Speaking without long pauses, smooth speech production	12	Q1, Q3
	Pronunciation and Prosodic Awareness	Improved pronunciation, stress and intonation control	8	Q1, Q3
	Strategic Language Use	Use of fillers, self-correction during speaking	6	Q3
Cognitive and Emotional Growth	Confidence Building and Overcoming Anxiety	Reduced anxiety, increased self-confidence in communication, speaking despite nervousness	14	Q1, Q2
	Organized Study Habits	Planning, responsibility, meeting deadlines	8	Q2

Main Theme	Subtheme	Code Examples	Frequency (f)	Source Interview Question(s)
Motivation and Real-Life Application	Assessment-Based Motivation	Learning encouraged by grading, seeing grading as supportive	4	Q1
	Integration of English into Daily Life	Using English in real-life contexts, spontaneous foreigner interaction	13	Q4
	Reduction of Initial Hesitations	Speaking without overthinking, overcoming fear	8	Q4
Social Interaction and Leadership	Peer Collaboration and Social Growth	Group work, mutual support, interpersonal communication	8	Q1, Q2
	Leadership and Active Participation	Taking initiative, managing group work	6	Q2
Public Speaking and Presentation Skills	Confidence in Presentation Skills	Eye contact, voice control, audience management	13	Q5
	Technical and Organizational Improvement	Visual support, structured content preparation (slides, posters)	11	Q5
	Natural Flow and Spontaneity in Speech	Improvisation ability, non-memorized natural speaking	9	Q5

4.2.1.1. Language Development through Experiential Learning

This theme reflects the multidimensional changes in students' language development through the experiential learning opportunities offered by project-based learning. Based on participant responses, the most frequently emphasized improvements were observed in speaking fluency and vocabulary enrichment. These findings were categorized under four

subthemes: Vocabulary Enrichment via Discovery, Speaking Fluency and Naturalness, Pronunciation and Prosodic Awareness, and Strategic Language Use. The conceptual map below (see Figure 4.1.) and the thematic table (see Table 4.9.) systematically present the codes, frequency counts, and related interview questions for this theme.

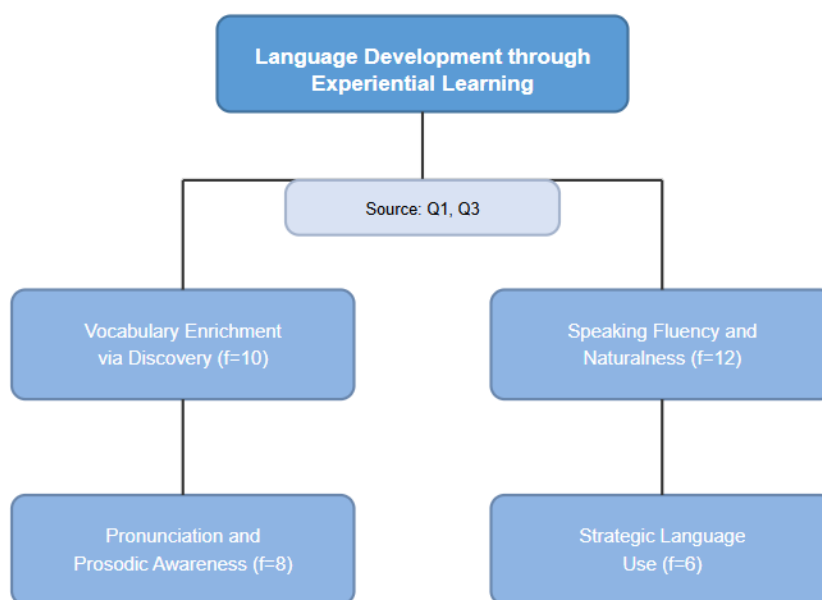


Figure 4.1. *Language Development through Experiential Learning*

Table 4.9. *Language Development through Experiential Learning*

Subtheme	Code Examples	Frequency (f)	Source Interview Question(s)
Vocabulary Enrichment via Discovery	Research-based vocabulary learning, independent term search	10	Q1
Speaking Fluency and Naturalness	Speaking without long pauses, smooth speech production	12	Q1, Q3
Pronunciation and Prosodic Awareness	Improved pronunciation, stress and intonation control	8	Q1, Q3
Strategic Language Use	Use of fillers, self-correction during speaking	6	Q3

Students emphasized that their language skills improved as they became familiar with project-based learning and gained authentic, meaningful experiences. Ten participants indicated that, unlike traditional approaches based on memorization, project-based learning helped them with long-term vocabulary retention by encouraging independent research (n=10). The following participant excerpts illustrate this point:

P5: "Each project session allows me to learn different words."

P4: "If I don't know a word, I search for it through translations and online sources."

Students' speaking fluency and naturalness also increased as a result of the project lessons. Twelve students indicated that they could produce smoother speech and communicate more fluently after the intervention (n=12). P4 commented, "Projects and presentations made me speak fluently, without long pauses."

Eight students observed progress in pronunciation and prosodic features, especially stress and intonation (n=8). P8 said, "I am better at stress and intonation. I used to speak flatly." This excerpt suggests that project work was effective in terms of supporting students' mechanical and expressive language use.

Moreover, six students indicated that they developed more strategic language approaches through the use of fillers and self-correction techniques (n=6). P9 reflected, "I sometimes make mistakes while speaking, but I immediately correct them myself."

4.2.1.2. Cognitive and Emotional Growth

This theme demonstrates the impact of project-based learning on students' cognitive and emotional growth. Based on the analysis of the participants' responses, findings were categorized into two subthemes. The most frequently emphasized dimensions were confidence building and overcoming anxiety, followed by the development of organized study habits. The conceptual map prepared within this framework (see Figure 4.2.) and the thematic table (see Table 4.10.) present the obtained codes, frequencies, and related interview questions holistically.

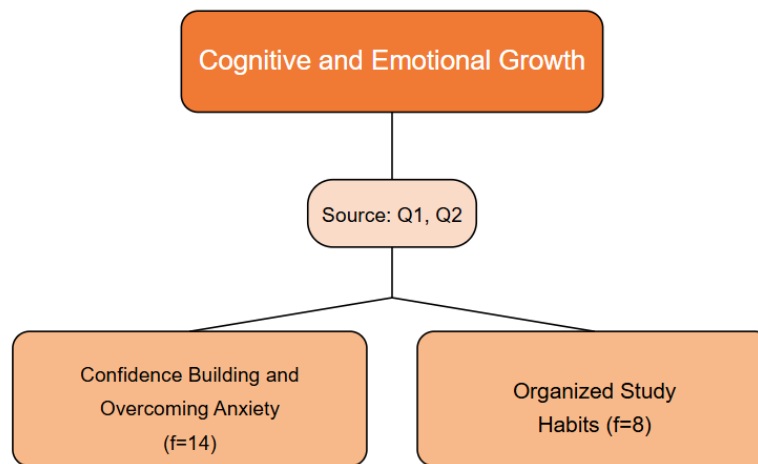


Figure 4.2. *Cognitive and Emotional Growth*

Table 4.10. *Cognitive and Emotional Growth*

Subtheme	Code Examples	Frequency (f)	Source Interview Question(s)
Confidence Building and Overcoming Anxiety	Reduced anxiety, increased self-confidence in communication, speaking despite nervousness	14	Q1, Q2
Organized Study Habits	Planning, responsibility, meeting deadlines	8	Q2

Participants mentioned cognitive and emotional improvements derived from project-based learning practices. Responses from fourteen participants demonstrated that their speaking anxiety decreased significantly. Furthermore, it was replaced by confidence over time (n=14). For instance, P15 mentioned, "At the initial stages, we had a lot of nervousness. Now, we don't have this feeling as we got used to the process and made improvements."

While most of these statements were directly related to reduced anxiety, some participants, who were considered part of this group as well, shared that even though the fear did not disappear completely, they still participated in group tasks and delivered presentations. Continued exposure and practice helped these students manage this fear. P3 explained, "We try to speak despite our nervousness. It contributes to us in terms of confidence over time."

Finally, eight students mentioned that they developed organized study habits, such as time management and meeting deadlines (n=8). To illustrate, P7 stated, "I was not a planned person before. However, with the help of projects, deadlines, and the preparation process, I learned to prepare on time."

4.2.1.3. Motivation and Real-Life Application

This theme reflects the effect of project-based activities on students' motivation and their tendency to use English beyond the classroom. Data collected through semi-structured interviews were grouped into three subthemes. The most frequently emphasized subtheme was the integration of English into daily life, followed by the reduction of initial hesitations and assessment-related motivation. The related conceptual map (see Figure 4.3.) and thematic table (see Table 4.11.) illustrate the codes, frequency data, and the interview questions from which these findings were derived.

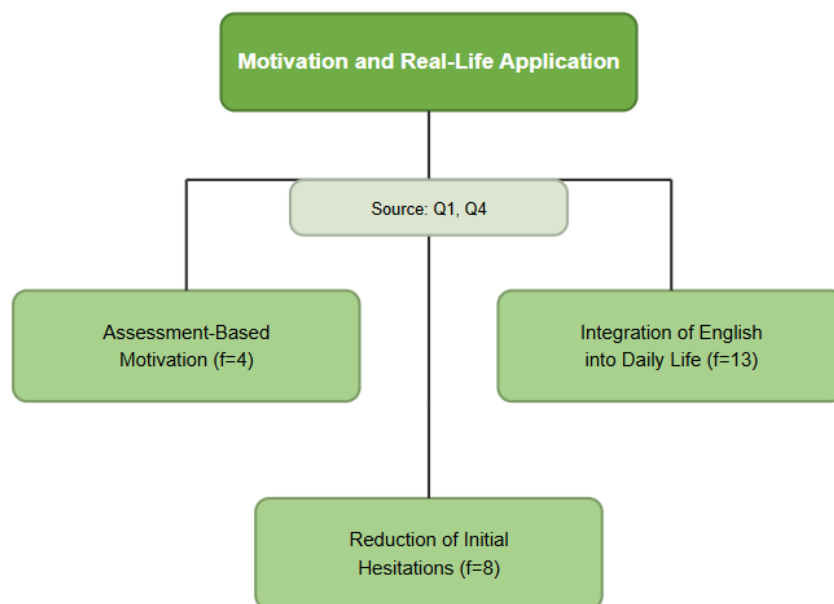


Figure 4.3. *Motivation and Real-Life Application*

Table 4.11. *Motivation and Real-Life Application*

Subtheme	Code Examples	Frequency (f)	Source Interview Question(s)
Assessment-Based Motivation	Learning encouraged by grading, seeing grading as supportive	4	Q1
Integration of English into Daily Life	Using English in real-life contexts, spontaneous foreigner interaction	13	Q4
Reduction of Initial Hesitations	Speaking without overthinking, overcoming fear	8	Q4

Four participants noted that they regarded assessment and grading processes as motivators rather than sources of stress (n=4). As P15 stated, “Teachers give grades for the project. This naturally creates a need to learn.”

Furthermore, thirteen students reported that they started using English outside the classroom, particularly in real-life situations, which created a strong sense of confidence (n=13). Below are example quotations from participants:

P10: “There was a foreign guy who needed help at the gym. Before he said anything, I initiated the conversation in English.”

P7: “Last week, I was at a mall. A piece of paper dropped from a tourist’s pocket. I immediately intervened.”

The reduction of initial hesitation was another point emphasized by students. Eight participants, such as P13, reflected that they were now able to speak with foreigners at school without overthinking (n=8): “At the beginning of the school year, we would only say hello as we exaggerate the difficulty of talking to them. Now, we can talk about everything.”

4.2.1.4. Social Interaction and Leadership

This theme discusses social interaction skills and leadership-based participation patterns within the project-based intervention process. The findings, structured based on qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews, were grouped into two subthemes. Among these, peer collaboration and social growth were mentioned most frequently, followed by leadership

and active participation. The related conceptual map (see Figure 4.4.) and the thematic table (see Table 4.12.) reflect the identified codes, frequency counts, and the interview questions associated with the theme.

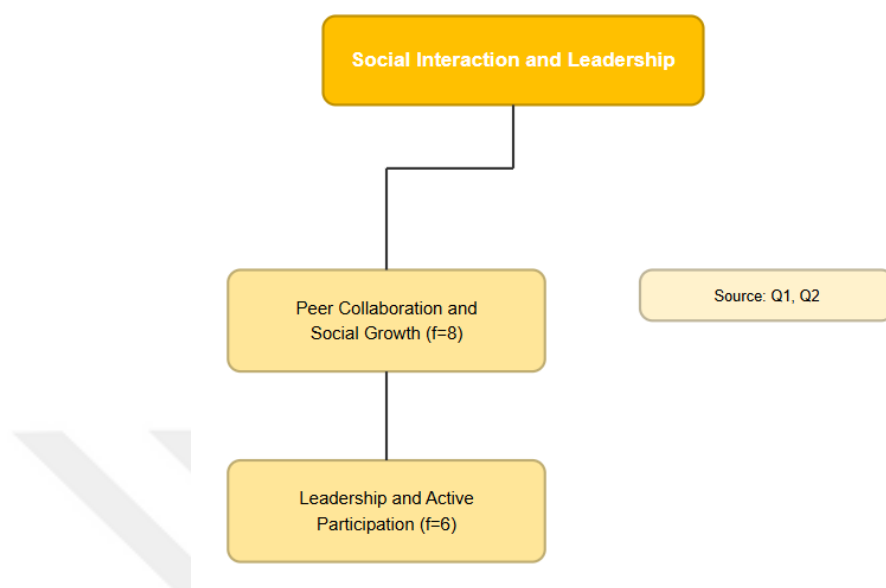


Figure 4.4. *Social Interaction and Leadership*

Table 4.12. *Social Interaction and Leadership*

Subtheme	Code Examples	Frequency (f)	Source Interview Question(s)
Peer Collaboration and Social Growth	Group work, mutual support, interpersonal communication	8	Q1, Q2
Leadership and Active Participation	Taking initiative, managing group work	6	Q2

Eight students mentioned that collaborating with friends helped them improve (n=8). They felt more comfortable while using English in different communication contexts as a result of group work. The following participant excerpts illustrate this point:

P6: "I got used to both the effort and being a part of a group."

P11: "We get the chance to speak with our friends in English."

Moreover, six students stated that they acted as leaders during projects by taking responsibility and managing group tasks (n=6). P12 commented, "I can say that it also strengthened my leadership qualities."

4.2.1.5. Public Speaking and Presentation Skills

This theme addresses the changes in students' presentation and public speaking skills as a result of the project-based intervention. The findings obtained from the fifth interview question were structured around three subthemes. The most frequently emphasized subtheme was confidence in presentation skills, followed by improvements in technical and organizational preparation, and the development of natural flow and spontaneity in speech. The conceptual map below (see Figure 4.5.) and the thematic table (see Table 4.13.) clearly represent the codes related to student experiences, the frequency of patterns, and the focus points of the data.

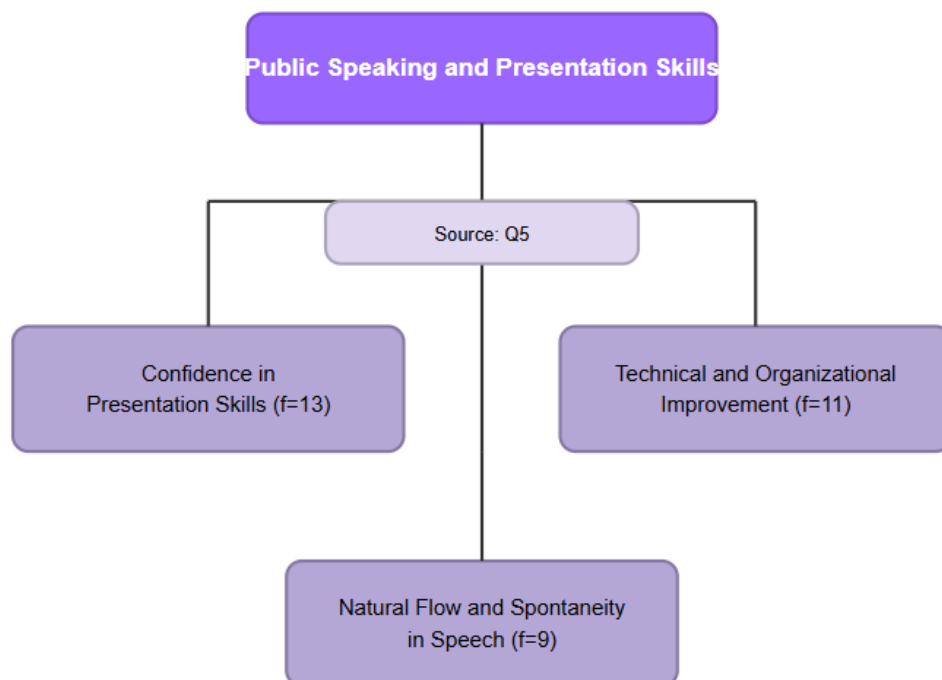


Figure 4.5. Public Speaking and Presentation Skills

Table 4.13. *Public Speaking and Presentation Skills*

Subtheme	Code Examples	Frequency (f)	Source Interview Question(s)
Confidence in Presentation Skills	Eye contact, voice control, audience management	13	Q5
Technical and Organizational Improvement	Visual support (slides, posters), structured content preparation	11	Q5
Natural Flow and Spontaneity in Speech	Improvisation ability, non- memorized natural speaking	9	Q5

Regarding the responses of various participants, project-based learning had a significant impact on public speaking and presentation skills. Thirteen students stated that their anxiety gradually decreased and that they could make more effective presentations through eye contact, voice control, and audience management (n=13). For instance, P2 said, "Before project lessons, I was afraid to speak in front of others. Now, I can make eye contact and manage my voice successfully."

Developing technical presentation skills was another notable point mentioned by eleven students (n=11). In this regard, P9 noted, "While preparing presentations, I no longer use irrelevant or unnecessary texts. I learned how to support my presentations with visuals and relevant grammar topics."

Finally, nine students stated that they gained spontaneity and that their performances became more natural after abandoning memorization (n=9). P6 explained, "My first presentations were based on memorization. These days, I feel better and more confident."

4.2.1.6. Summary and Overall Interpretation of the Qualitative Themes

The evaluations made based on five main themes demonstrated that project-based learning positively affects sensory, social, and cognitive abilities, along with language development. Based on students' responses, they did not remain passive and became active learners. This situation helped them with speaking fluency, vocabulary learning, stress and intonation, pronunciation, and strategic language use. The findings also indicate that the

intervention was effective in terms of managing anxiety, helping students become more planned through time management, and enhancing their willingness to use English in daily life.

The interview data further revealed that project-based learning was influential in terms of promoting social interaction and infusing leadership roles into learners by paving the way for a cooperative learning environment. Students started to improvise, made better eye contact, and learned how to manage their voices, especially as a result of improvements in their public speaking skills. Preparing effective presentations and designing high-quality posters were also notable advancements related to technical and computer skills.

Taken together, the project-based learning method supported students with multidimensional outcomes and made learning more purposeful. These results suggest that it is an effective approach that can be utilized in English language teaching programs of preparatory classes.

4.3. Synthesis of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

This section compares the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative parts of the study. The aim is to show how the results support each other or point to different directions. The table below presents the main outcomes from each strand to make the comparison easier and to provide a clearer picture of the overall results.

Table 4.14. *Comparison Table of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings*

Key Domain	Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Findings	Level of Support
Speaking Proficiency	Pre- to post-test scores increased significantly (14.31 → 15.94, $p < .001$)	Participants reported improved fluency, naturalness, and self-correction	Strong correspondence
Pronunciation & Accuracy	Test scores reflect general proficiency	Noted development in pronunciation, vocabulary selection, and structure use	Indirect support
Overall Willingness to Communicate	Overall WTC score increased significantly (66.43 → 83.89, $p < .001$)	Participants felt more confident, willing, and active in communication	Strong correspondence
Speaking with Strangers	'Stranger' subscale: 56.72 → 77.21 ($p < .001$)	Described communicating with strangers in real-world settings (e.g. with tourists)	Real-life linked
Public Speaking	'Public speaking' subscale: 67.29 → 85.72	Reported improvement in eye contact, improvisation, and voice control in presentations	Direct correspondence

Key Domain	Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Findings	Level of Support
Group Communication	'Group discussion' subscale: 70.72 → 87.11	Highlighted gains in group interaction, collaboration, and responsibility-taking	Strong correspondence
Speaking with Acquaintances & Friends	Increases in 'Friend' and 'Acquaintance' subscales ('Friend': 62.38 → 81.63, 'Acquaintance': 65.94 → 84.41, both $p < .001$)	Found more opportunities to speak English with peers and classmates	Strong correspondence
Real-Life Integration	WTC items reflect everyday communication scenarios	Emphasized how projects were transferable to real-life situations	Thematic match
Motivation & Engagement	Not directly measured, but WTC increase suggests intrinsic motivation	Expressed that the lessons were motivating and engaging	Indirect, unmeasured
Reduced Anxiety	WTC gains can imply reduced anxiety	Said they initially felt anxious but became more comfortable speaking	Thematic match
Organizational Skills	Not quantitatively measured	Reported improvements in planning, time management, and project organization	Additional, unmeasured gain

When they are evaluated together, the quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that project-based learning has a significant and consistent impact on students' speaking proficiency and motivation. The considerable improvements observed in students' speaking scores and the points they highlighted during the semi-structured interviews (such as fluency, accurate structure use, confidence in public speaking, and increased opportunities for social interaction) strongly correspond with one another. The Willingness to Communicate Scale directly includes real-life scenarios, and this supports the reliability of the data obtained. Qualitative findings such as talking with foreigners, being active in group discussions, and feeling more comfortable while communicating with classmates are in direct correspondence with the WTC subscales. Even though the outcomes related to taking responsibility and finding the projects meaningful were not measured quantitatively in a direct way, they still provide evidence about the holistic impact of the process. All quantitative and qualitative findings show the strong potential of project-based learning in language learning.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter offers an in-depth interpretation of the research results, outlines key conclusions derived from the data, and proposes directions for future investigations.

5.1. Discussion

This section discusses the research findings based on the research questions and the previously reviewed literature. It evaluates the quantitative and qualitative results to explain the overall impact of project-based learning on English preparatory class students.

5.1.1. The Impact of Project-Based Language Learning on Students' Speaking Proficiency

The primary purpose of this research question was to examine the contribution of project-based learning to English preparatory class students' speaking proficiency. Considering the pedagogical outcomes of PBL and its inherent link to CLT, it was expected that this approach would support participants' speaking development by offering authentic communicative settings. Both statistical results and students' reflections suggested that project lessons contributed positively to various dimensions of spoken English. The following section discusses these findings in relation to the relevant literature.

The quantitative analysis based on the comparison of speaking test results before and after the project lessons revealed statistically significant improvement. The mean score increased from 14.31 ($SD = 2.04$) in the pre-test to 15.94 ($SD = 2.22$) in the post-test, supported by a large effect size ($d = 1.28$). This difference indicates that the intervention contributed not only to students' sentence structure and lexical knowledge, but also to more complex aspects of speaking, such as fluency, interaction, and coherence.

The qualitative findings provide further support for the improvement participants experienced. During the semi-structured interviews, students mentioned that they became more competent in speaking. The areas they referred to were grouped under the theme Language Development through Experiential Learning. Participants frequently emphasized vocabulary improvement as an outcome of project lessons. According to their statements, the preparation phase encouraged them to actively search for unfamiliar words, which helped them retain new

vocabulary more effectively. This finding is in line with Nguyen and Le (2024), who also observed that engagement with real-world project content supported students in acquiring a broader range of vocabulary. Similarly, Amer (2022) found that learners' lexical range and word usage improved substantially as a result of the vocabulary search process conducted during project-based data collection.

Another frequently mentioned outcome was the improvement in speech fluency and naturalness. Students stated that they did not experience prolonged pauses and were able to deliver smoother speech after the project lessons. The supportive design of the tasks, which encouraged continuous oral participation and included regular feedback, appeared to reduce the duration of pauses during speaking. Similarly, Jariah et al. (2024) highlighted fluency as one of the key areas of student improvement. Although some earlier studies, such as Hoesny et al. (2024), reported less consistent findings regarding fluency, the context and nature of the projects implemented in the current study may have contributed more effectively to improvements in these areas.

Additionally, students stated that they gained greater awareness of pronunciation and prosodic features. Thanks to regular presentation practice, they became more attuned to stress and intonation patterns. A further finding reported by Amer (2022) also concerned similar progress in pronunciation. This progress was attributed to the use of recorded materials and increased familiarity with oral tasks. In the present study, learners who paid close attention to how they sounded during project presentations and made consistent efforts to monitor and refine their speech made such improvements.

Another notable area of improvement was strategic language use. Several students reported that they began using fillers to sustain the flow of speech and employed self-correction strategies to compensate for mistakes. Instead of stopping or switching to their native language, they continued speaking in English even when facing communication gaps. This indicates that students began to apply basic communication strategies that supported their interaction in authentic speaking contexts. Similarly, Sirisrimangkorn (2021) highlighted that communicative activities embedded in project-based lessons encouraged learners to engage in more authentic language use during oral tasks.

When taken together, these results indicate that PBL holistically supported students' speaking development. It was effective not only in terms of measurable performance, as reflected in test scores, but also in facilitating practical language use. The findings are consistent with a growing body of literature suggesting that project-based learning is an effective

instructional strategy for enhancing speaking performance through authentic and learner-centered contexts (Nguyen & Le, 2024; Becerra-Posada et al., 2022). In the present study, PBL enabled students to use English meaningfully, build communicative confidence, and develop the interactional skills necessary for active participation in oral tasks.

5.1.2. The Impact of Project-Based Language Learning on Students' Willingness to Communicate in Varied Contexts

The second research question investigated how project-based language learning influenced English preparatory class students' willingness to communicate in both academic and social contexts. Since WTC is often shaped by a combination of emotional and situational factors, it was anticipated that the interactive and participatory nature of PBL would create a more encouraging environment for learners to express themselves in English. Findings from both the quantitative and qualitative phases supported this view. After the intervention, students appeared more willing to use English in a variety of situations, including classroom tasks and informal interactions.

The quantitative findings revealed significant increases in all seven subscales of the WTC Scale, as well as the overall WTC score. The total mean score rose from 66.43 ($SD = 18.15$) in the pre-test to 83.89 ($SD = 11.13$) in the post-test, with a large effect size ($d = 1.42$). All context-related dimensions, such as group discussions, meetings, interpersonal conversations, and public speaking, showed meaningful improvements. For instance, the public speaking subscale rose from $M = 67.29$ ($SD = 21.37$) to $M = 85.72$ ($SD = 12.69$), while the group discussion score increased from $M = 70.72$ ($SD = 18.66$) to $M = 87.11$ ($SD = 10.84$). Similarly, participants' willingness to communicate with different types of receivers improved considerably. In the stranger subscale, for example, the post-test score rose significantly from $M = 56.72$ ($SD = 22.71$) to $M = 77.21$ ($SD = 15.99$), with a large effect size of $d = 1.27$.

Qualitative findings supported these statistical results and revealed the factors behind such improvement. One of the most frequently stated student reflections was the decrease in speaking-related anxiety. Many students indicated that their nervousness about speaking gradually reduced thanks to regular exposure to oral tasks and collaborative activities. Initially, students found speaking in front of others challenging, but getting used to the process helped them manage this feeling and gain more confidence. Even students who continued to feel some degree of nervousness indicated that project lessons enabled them to participate more actively over time. These experiences suggest that project-based instruction provided students with

direct and frequent opportunities to speak in front of others, which gradually helped them overcome the obstacles related to communication.

This is consistent with Gharibi's (2023) findings, which emphasized that foreign language anxiety played a role in decreasing WTC during complex tasks, especially in large group settings. In this respect, the project work in the present study may have offered a more secure and supportive learning environment and encouraged greater student involvement throughout the process. Similarly, Khajavy et al. (2018) emphasized that a positive classroom atmosphere can foster willingness to communicate, both individually and collectively among students.

Beyond anxiety reduction, students also highlighted their increased willingness to use English in everyday life settings. Several participants shared experiences of having conversations in English with foreigners in public places, such as gyms or shopping malls. These spontaneous moments of communication suggest that students began putting what they had learned through project-based lessons into practice. Contextual factors such as topic familiarity and interlocutor dynamics have also been identified in the literature as strong predictors of WTC (Cao & Philp, 2006; Yashima et al., 2016). In these studies, learner engagement and participation seemed to increase when there was meaningful interaction with familiar peers. This pattern was also observed in the present findings, as several participants stated that they felt more comfortable using English when interacting with peers in collaborative group settings.

Another point mentioned by participants was a reduction in hesitation when interacting with less familiar individuals. According to student excerpts, they tended to avoid conversations with foreign classmates or tourists due to overthinking and fear of making mistakes before taking part in project lessons. However, this tendency decreased as they became more comfortable expressing themselves, and they started having conversations in more diverse interpersonal contexts. This finding is consistent with the increases observed in the "stranger" and "acquaintance" subscales of the WTC Scale. According to Şener (2014), learners feel more comfortable speaking with close peers, and self-confidence is directly related to in-class WTC. Yıldız (2022) also supports this view by noting that communication confidence and extrinsic motivation contribute to higher levels of WTC, especially in Turkish preparatory school contexts.

In addition, participants underlined the role of peer support and collaboration in enhancing their engagement in communication. Group dynamics were regarded as a motivating

factor that increased their willingness to use English. Some students shared that being in a group facilitated their speaking abilities and made them feel more comfortable during discussions. These reflections correspond to the notable improvement seen in the “friend” subscale ($M = 73.36$ to $M = 87.89$). Based on this improvement, PBL also promoted WTC within peer relationships. Lubis et al. (2024) similarly noted that WTC during project lessons is closely linked to peer familiarity and conversational settings. In their study, students demonstrated greater interest in communication when they worked with peers who had similar interests.

Furthermore, some participants reported that they started acting as group leaders by organizing tasks or assigning roles. According to students, this sense of responsibility enhanced their communicative confidence and encouraged greater autonomy. These instances of proactive engagement illustrate how project work can empower students and foster positive communicative habits that extend beyond the boundaries of the classroom. In a different part of their study, Lubis et al. (2024) noted that students who took on leadership roles were more willing to use English than other group members during project lessons.

Taken together, these findings suggest that project-based instruction facilitated students' willingness to communicate not only through skill development but also via increased emotional growth, self-confidence, and social engagement. This aligns with Farouck (2016), who found that communicative project tasks such as presentations and interviews significantly reduced anxiety and enhanced EFL university students' WTC. Similarly, Dinda and Septiana (2024) reported that PBL positively influenced learners' motivation and engagement, which are closely associated with the concept of WTC. The current results are also consistent with Awamleh (2024) and Nguyen (2020), whose studies found that project work fostered learner autonomy, confidence, and meaningful participation, resulting in academic achievement and higher levels of willingness to communicate. The present findings highlight the role of project-based learning in promoting contextual, affective, and interactional gains that support students' willingness to engage in English communication both within and beyond the classroom.

5.1.3. Student Attitudes Toward Project-Based Language Learning

The third research question aimed to explore English preparatory class students' attitudes toward project-based language learning. Thematic findings indicated that students generally held positive views about the effectiveness of PBL in supporting English learning. They reported that the intervention increased classroom engagement and presentation performance, and also boosted overall motivation. Participants highlighted several affective and

cognitive factors that shaped these views, such as the benefits of performance-based tasks, improved delivery skills, and a noticeable shift from memorization to more spontaneous use of language.

One of the key points emphasized by students was gaining motivation through the grading procedure of projects. Several participants regarded project-based assessment not as a factor creating stress but as a motivational element that promoted more purposeful learning. Students expressed that receiving grades each week for their presentations helped maintain their effort and encouraged them to make effective preparations. These findings align with Mutanga (2024), who observed that tertiary-level students viewed continuous assessment and timely feedback as essential components of project work, contributing to significant academic improvement.

Another important aspect was the development of public speaking and presentation skills. Many students mentioned that their anxiety related to public speaking decreased after becoming familiar with presentations through continued exposure. Over time, they became more competent at maintaining eye contact, voice control, and managing the audience more efficiently. These experiences contributed to participants' self-image and allowed them to feel more confident and autonomous. This supports the findings of Ruslan et al. (2022), whose study indicated that although students sometimes experienced discomfort and frustration during project work, such emotional responses often encouraged them to improve their performance. In the present study, students similarly viewed presentation tasks as valuable opportunities to build confidence through repeated practice in front of others.

In addition to affective development, students noted improvements in their technical and organizational skills, which helped them deliver more qualified presentations. They learned to design well-structured, visually supported slides and prepared more selective content. This was seen as one of the most concrete benefits of continuous practice during project lessons. However, it is important to note that not all learners in similar contexts have reported equally positive experiences. For instance, Awamleh (2024) found that students in e-PBL environments often viewed technical limitations and instructional issues as challenges to active participation. Similarly, Aldobekhi and Abahussain (2024) reported that some students felt uncertain about the project structure and information-gathering process. These contrasting results may be explained by contextual factors, the level of instructor support, and the overall design and organization of the project-based learning process.

Another frequently mentioned benefit of PBL was the increased spontaneity and natural flow of speech. Although their earlier experiences were based on memorization, students began to use the language more freely and produced more natural content, supported by improved improvisation skills. They linked this progress to the authentic communication settings created by the project tasks. The tasks encouraged them to express ideas in their own words rather than depending on scripted speeches at all times. As a result, they found value in expressing their own thoughts, which they viewed as a reflection of the authentic nature of the project work. In this respect, Boardman and Hovland (2022) emphasized that learners appreciated opportunities to bring their own ideas into the classroom and highlighted the role of active learner involvement.

5.1.4. Overall Interpretation of the Findings

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that students had optimistic attitudes toward PBL, especially regarding motivation, self-expression, and performance development. These positive perceptions were shaped by both emotional aspects, such as increased confidence and reduced anxiety, and technical improvements in presentations. This interpretation finds strong parallels in the literature. For instance, Habók and Nagy (2016) emphasized that teachers using PBL perceived themselves as facilitators, as they created environments where learners could make decisions about the content and process. Similarly, Puangpunsi (2021) found that students appreciated the project-based learning method, which supports learner autonomy, promotes responsibility, and enhances personal involvement in the learning process. The present findings confirm that through structured support and authentic goals, PBL has the potential to lead to high levels of student engagement and foster meaningful communication and organizational skills in English preparatory contexts.

5.2. Conclusion

This section summarizes how the research questions were addressed and explains the overall results by comparing the quantitative and qualitative data. It also presents the key outcomes of the project-based learning approach.

This study examined the impact of project-based learning on English preparatory class students' speaking proficiency and willingness to communicate, and evaluated students' opinions about this method. It was structured according to an explanatory sequential design and aimed to analyze the effects of project-based learning holistically by collecting both quantitative

and qualitative data. The findings indicate that project-based learning has a positive impact not only on students' measurable speaking performance but also on their feelings, WTC levels, and overall perceptions of learning.

As part of the first research question, statistically significant improvements were found in students' speaking skills. This improvement was also confirmed through qualitative data, which underline aspects such as vocabulary acquisition, fluency, pronunciation, and strategic language use. Regarding the second research question, notable changes were observed in students' willingness to use English in various contexts. Students' opinions also supported this positive transition. Finally, within the scope of the third research question, it was found that students developed positive attitudes toward project-based learning overall. They stated that this approach motivated them, strengthened their public speaking skills, and made the learning process more meaningful by supporting spontaneous language use.

The originality of this study comes from its focus on a context that has received limited attention in the literature and from its simultaneous examination of project-based learning in relation to students' speaking proficiency, perceptions, and willingness to communicate. Although earlier research has mostly explored this method by concentrating on individual components like writing, vocabulary, or speaking, none of the reviewed studies focused on English preparatory class students, examined both speaking proficiency and willingness to communicate together, and adopted a mixed-methods approach. In this sense, the present study offers a contribution in terms of its content, research design, and context.

Consequently, when well structured, project-based learning can be regarded as an effective teaching method that supports not only academic achievement but also motivation, confidence, and communication skills. Specifically, in English preparatory class contexts where active participation and daily language use are emphasized, it serves as an alternative pedagogical tool that can be adopted. Additionally, through learner-centered approaches, the academic and personal development of language learners can be supported more effectively.

5.3. Implications for Future Research and Practice

This part outlines the key implications of the study in two main areas: suggestions for future research and practical recommendations for instructional design and classroom implementation.

5.3.1. Implications for Future Research

While the findings obtained through the study revealed that project-based learning has multifaceted impacts on English preparatory class students, testing these findings through different variables and in diverse contexts may offer valuable contributions to future research. First, controlled experimental designs that allow for the comparison of project-based learning with traditional methods can be utilized in future studies. In addition, incorporating teacher feedback and using data collection methods based on classroom observations can help address the process from multiple perspectives. Studies aiming to examine students' behavioral WTC through such methods may provide deeper insights into learners' real-time participation levels.

Additionally, the effects of project-based learning can be assessed across different student profiles. In this study, no significant difference was observed in terms of English proficiency levels. However, variables such as gender, socioeconomic status, academic achievement, and the type of high school attended can be explored more thoroughly in future studies with diverse samples. Investigating the impact of such variables on the effectiveness of project-based learning can provide valuable insights for pedagogical decision-making and inclusive instructional practices.

Another need is the implementation of long-term longitudinal research. Tracking the lasting impacts of project-based learning can be achieved by observing students' English performance at the faculty level after the preparatory year. This type of long-term follow-up study is valuable, as it allows for a holistic evaluation of the potential effects of project-based learning on communication confidence, learning habits, and language use throughout university life.

5.3.2. Pedagogical Implications

The pedagogical implications of the current study provide practical insights for instructional planning, classroom implementation, and project design. Observed experiences and outcomes during the intervention process highlighted several points for educators who aim to integrate project-based learning into English language classrooms.

Firstly, students' proficiency levels should be considered while working on project design. The tasks should be selected based on target language structures and suitable content. For students with lower proficiency levels, visual tasks and tasks necessitating more basic language structures should be carried out. In contrast, for students with higher proficiency levels, tasks supporting discussion and based on problem-solving should be preferred. This kind

of differentiation enables a learning environment in which each student can use their own language potential.

In addition to level-based task design, students' sense of responsibility throughout the process enhances their engagement. Since students produce their own products and take responsibility during the whole process, they feel more motivated in project lessons. Open-ended tasks and having the freedom to make choices starting from the planning stage to presentations foster authenticity. During project lessons, it is crucial for instructors to act as facilitators who manage and ease the process, rather than as the ones who only provide content knowledge. This student-centered approach imposes the responsibility of being an active learner on students.

Furthermore, organizing the preparation processes before the presentations is significant for increasing student motivation. Practices like rehearsals, preparing note cards, stating the utilized language structures, and peer feedback encourage conscious and controlled task implementation. For these reasons, the learning process should not only focus on the final product but also on the process, and all stages should be managed by the teacher attentively.

Moreover, the content of the projects is also crucial as it should reflect real-life situations and necessitate learners to carry out tasks like doing interviews, solving problems, presenting in front of an audience, and working collaboratively. In addition, project tasks should improve various 21st-century skills, which can help learners both in educational and work environments. Through critical thinking, creativity, and leadership, students can become the best version of themselves.

Finally, structured peer feedback improves peer learning and critical thinking. Participating actively in feedback sessions helps learners evaluate their own learning process. In this context, while carrying out project lessons, educators should not structure the assessment process only around teacher-based assessment but also utilize various sources.

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APPENDICES

Appendix-1. Detailed Breakdown of Participant Departments

Department	Number of Participants
Civil Engineering	2
Mechanical Engineering	4
Gastronomy	11
Computer Engineering	19
Tourism Management	11
Interior Architecture and Environmental Design	14
Electrical and Electronics Engineering	11
Economics	10
Business Administration	7
Psychology	13
Political Science and International Relations	3
Architecture	11
Industrial Engineering	6
Construction Technology	1

Appendix-2. Bilingual Version of the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Scale (adapted from McCroskey, 1992)

McCroskey, J. C. (1992). Reliability and validity of the willingness to communicate scale. *Communication Quarterly*, 40(1), 16–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01463379209369817>

Talimatlar: Aşağıda bir kişinin öğrendiği yabancı dilde (İngilizce) iletişim kurmayı ya da kurmamayı seçebileceği 20 durum yer almaktadır. Tamamen özgür seçim hakkınız olduğunu varsayın. Sol taraftaki boşluğa yüzde kaç oranında iletişim kurmayı seçeceğinizi belirtin (yüzde 0 - hiçbir zaman ile 100 - her zaman arasında olmalıdır).

Directions: Below are 20 situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate (in English). Presume that you have completely free choice. Indicate the percentage of time you would choose to communicate in each type of situation. Indicate in the space at the left what percent of the time you would choose to communicate (ranging from 0= never to 100= always).

1. ----- Talk with a service station attendant (Bir benzin istasyonu görevlisiyle konuşmak).
2. ----- Talk with a physician (Bir doktorla konuşmak).
3. ----- Present a talk to a group of strangers (Bir grup yabancıya bir konuşma/sözlü sunum yapmak).
4. ----- Talk with an acquaintance while standing in line (Sırada beklerken bir tanıdığınızla konuşmak).
5. ----- Talk with a salesperson in a store (Bir mağazadaki satış görevlisiyle konuşmak).
6. ----- Talk in a large meeting of friends (Büyük bir arkadaş toplantısında konuşmak).
7. ----- Talk with a policeman/policewoman (Bir erkek/kadın polisle konuşmak).
8. ----- Talk in a small group of strangers (Yabancılardan oluşan küçük bir grupta konuşmak).
9. ----- Talk with a friend while standing in line (Sırada beklerken bir arkadaşınızla konuşmak).
10. ----- Talk with a waiter/waitress in a restaurant (Restoranda bir erkek/kadın garsonla konuşmak).
11. ----- Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances (Tanıdıkların bulunduğu büyük bir toplantıda konuşmak).
12. ----- Talk with a stranger while standing in line (Sırada beklerken bir yabancıyla konuşmak).
13. ----- Talk with a secretary (Bir sekreterle konuşmak).
14. ----- Present a talk to a group of friends (Bir grup arkadaşınıza bir konuşma/sözlü sunum yapmak).
15. ----- Talk in a small group of acquaintances (Tanıdıklarınızdan oluşan küçük bir grupta konuşmak).
16. ----- Talk with a garbage collector (Bir çöp toplayıcı ile konuşmak).
17. ----- Talk in a large meeting of strangers (Yabancıların bulunduğu büyük bir toplantıda konuşmak).

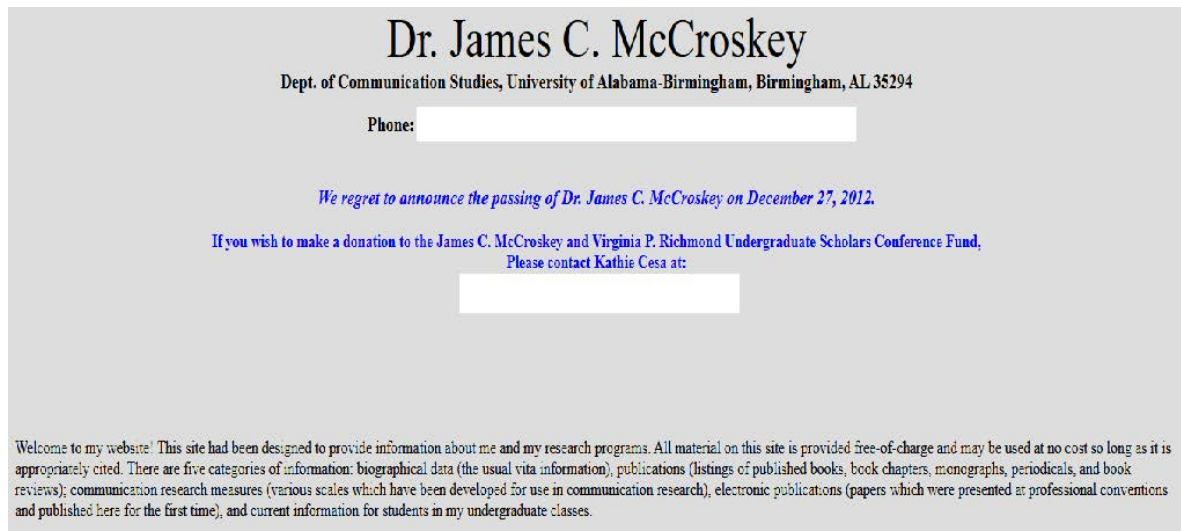
18. ----- Talk with a spouse (or girl/boyfriend) (Bir eřle veya kız/erkek arkadařla konuřmak).
19. ----- Talk in a small group of friends (Küçük bir arkadař grubunda konuřmak).
20. ----- Present a talk to a group of acquaintances (Bir grup tanıdıđınıza bir konuřma/sözlü sunum yapmak).



Appendix-3. Authorization to Use the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Scale

The figure below presents the public domain statement McCroskey (2007), confirming that the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Scale can be used freely for academic research purposes, provided proper citation is given. The relevant page was retrieved from his official website.

Source: <https://www.jamescmccroskey.com/>



Appendix-4. Scoring and Administration Guidelines for the WTC Scale (based on McCroskey, 1992)

McCroskey, J. C. (1992). Reliability and validity of the willingness to communicate scale. *Communication Quarterly*, 40(1), 16–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01463379209369817>

4.1. Directions

Below are twenty situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate. Presume you have completely free choice. Indicate the percentage of times you would choose to communicate in each type of situation. Indicate in the space at the left what percent of the time you would choose to communicate. 0 = never, 100 = always

Item No.	Situation
1	*Talk with a service station attendant.
2	*Talk with a physician.
3	Present a talk to a group of strangers.
4	Talk with an acquaintance while standing in line.
5	*Talk with a salesperson in a store.
6	Talk in a large meeting of friends.
7	*Talk with a police officer.
8	Talk in a small group of strangers.
9	Talk with a friend while standing in line.
10	*Talk with a waiter/waitress in a restaurant.
11	Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances.
12	Talk with a stranger while standing in line.
13	*Talk with a secretary.
14	Present a talk to a group of friends.
15	Talk in a small group of acquaintances.
16	*Talk with a garbage collector.
17	Talk in a large meeting of strangers.
18	Talk with a spouse (or girl/boy friend).
19	Talk in a small group of friends.
20	Present a talk to a group of acquaintances.

*Filler item

4.2. Scoring

The WTC permits computation of one total score and seven subscores. The subscores relate to willingness to communicate in each of four common communication contexts and with three types of audiences. To compute your scores, merely add your scores for each item and divide by the number indicated below.

Subscore Desired	Scoring Formula
Group discussion	Add scores for items 8, 15, and 19; then divide by 3.
Meetings	Add scores for items 6, 11, and 17; then divide by 3.
Interpersonal conversations	Add scores for items 4, 9, and 12; then divide by 3.
Public speaking	Add scores for items 3, 14, and 20; then divide by 3.
Stranger	Add scores for items 3, 8, 12, and 17; then divide by 4.
Acquaintance	Add scores for items 4, 11, 15, and 20; then divide by 4.
Friend	Add scores for items 6, 9, 14, and 19; then divide by 4.

To compute the total WTC score, add the subscores for stranger, acquaintance, and friend. Then divide by 3.

Appendix-5. Interview Questions and Their Intended Purposes

Interview Questions	Purpose
1. What are your thoughts on learning English through project-based learning?	To reveal participants' general opinions on the project-based learning method and on learning English through this approach.
2. What kind of characteristics did you gain by learning English through project-based learning?	To explore the characteristics participants developed through the project-based learning method and to identify the learning outcomes it provided.
3. How did the project-based learning process affect your English-speaking skills?	To analyze the relationship between project-based learning and participants' English-speaking abilities, to assess their awareness of this relationship, and to compare the results with the quantitative data collected.
4. How did the project-based learning method motivate you to communicate in English?	To investigate the relationship between project-based learning and willingness to communicate, gather participants' views and compare them with the quantitative data obtained through the WTC Scale, and examine the possible effects of project activities on participants' responses in real-life communication situations.
5. What do you think about the effect of project-based learning on your English presentation and public speaking skills?	To examine the relationship between project-based learning and English presentation/public speaking skills through participants' perspectives.

Appendix-6. Research Ethics Committee Approval

T.C.
AKDENİZ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Kurulu
KARAR

Toplantı Tarihi: 31/10/2023
Karar Sayısı: 446

Üniversitemiz Eğitim Fakültesi Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü öğretim üyesi **Doç. Dr. Mustafa CANER**'in danışmanlığını, **Birgen ZEYBEK**'in araştırmacılığını üstlendiği, *"Proje Tabanlı Öğrenimin İngilizce Hazırlık Sınıfı Öğrencilerinin Konuşma Yeterlilikleri ve İletişim Kurma İstekleri Üzerine Etkisi"* konulu çalışmanın, fikri hukuki ve telif hakları bakımından metot ve ölçeğine ilişkin sorumluluğun başvuruçuya ait olmak üzere, proje süresince uygulanmasının etik olarak **uygun olduğuna** oy birliği ile karar verilmiştir.

Appendix-7. Complete List of Implemented Projects

Project Title	Level	Main Task	Key Language Focus	Project Guidelines	Project Theme/Context
Interviews Across Generations	A1	Interviewing young and old people and shooting a video	Grammar: - Present simple tense - Positive, negative statements and questions Vocabulary: - Daily routine	1. Prepare 6 questions as a group (for morning and evening activities). 2. Every student asks these questions to one person and shoots a video. 3. Combine the videos. 4. On presentation day, show the video, then tell similar and different points. Example: Mustafa and Katerina both have breakfast (similarity) Hasan and Mohammad do not watch TV in the evenings but Mustafa and Katerina like watching TV (difference)	Daily routines
Interesting Buildings in the World	A1	Making a TV program	Grammar: - There is/are - Have/has Vocabulary: - Home - Furniture - Adjectives (nice, cool, spacious, great, big, small etc)	1. Do research about 5 interesting buildings. 2. Find pictures 3. Find information (location, rooms, purpose of the rooms) 4. Write sentences for each room.	Architecture/Buildings
International Sports Events	A1	Making an informative YouTube video	Grammar: - Present simple tense - Can/can't Vocabulary: - Sports and activities	1. Choose two sports events (Olympics Games, Wimbledon, Roland Garros, The UEFA champions league, Tour de France Cycling, Super Bowl, etc.). 2. Introduce them (place, time). 3. Write about one sport (soccer if you choose UEFA). 4. Give details (how many people play it, rules of the game). 5. Add pictures. 6. Show a short video of the game (max 30 seconds length).	Sports
Technology in the Future	A1	Presenting about three devices to be used in the future (through a PPT).	Grammar: - Will - Be going to - Can/can't Vocabulary: - Technology	1. Choose three areas where people can use advanced technology (health sector, police work, education, daily use, home, childcare etc). 2. Create one device for each sector and draw them. 3. Add details (features, their benefits, and reasons why people should use them).	Technology
Unusual Jobs	A1	Making a radio program about two unusual jobs and a printed brochure that shows pictures of them	Grammar: - Present Simple Tense - Should - Can/can't Vocabulary: - Career - Jobs	1. Choose two unusual jobs. 2. Add details - What is the job? Why is it unusual? - How do they make money? - Who do they help? - Do you need an education for it?	Jobs

				- Do they earn a lot? - Give some real examples of people.	
A Day in a City Park	A2	Reviewing some famous city parks in the world (Central Park in New York City, Hyde Park in London, etc.) and designing a city park with an original poster.	Grammar: • Simple Present Tense Vocabulary • benefit • amusing • common • laughter • outdoors • situation • nature • area	Plan the layout of the poster with a clear hierarchy of information, headings and subheadings and present in detail. - Where is the city park (country / city)? Is it inside or outside the city? Why? - Who is the target audience (children / adults / tourists)? - Decide on a theme for the park (nature-inspired / family-friendly / sports-oriented). - What are the essential elements of the park (active recreational activities like sports or passive activities like relaxation and picnics)? - How much is the entrance fee to the park? - What is your central message? Why are city parks important? - Find a slogan.	City Parks
Industries in the Past and Now	A2	Choosing one industry and comparing its changes from the past to the present. Preparing a PPT.	Grammar: • Simple Present / Past • Comparatives Vocabulary: • strategy • percent • attractive • product • trust • avoid • culture • cash • customer • message • influence • attitude	Compare: -Traditional farming with modern mechanized agriculture -Early computers with smartphones -Historical transportation methods (e.g. horse-drawn carriages) with modern transportation systems (e.g. high-speed trains). 1. What changes can you notice? 2. What interesting hints do the companies use to promote their goods? 3. Find some examples of interesting / funny / attractive ads and show them during the presentation.	Industries
Companies in the Past and Now	A2	Choosing ONE well-known company from any sector (food/beverage, automotive, entertainment, banking, etc.). Preparing a PPT.	Grammar: • Simple Present / Past • Comparatives Vocabulary: • strategy • percent • attractive • product • trust • avoid • culture • cash • customer • message • influence • attitude	Explain: -How has this company changed its advertising strategies from the past to the present? -What kind of approach did the company use in the past? -What kind of approach does the company use in the present? -What kind of a shift can you see when you compare these two periods? Highlight the changes in: - Slogans, jingles and memorable characters - Visual styles and messaging - Packaging designs - Color choices, fonts and graphics - Use of celebrities or influencers	Companies and Advertising

				- Discounts and limited-time offers - Use of emotional storytelling.	
Menu Design	A2	Designing a digital menu for a university cafeteria or a student friendly restaurant and presenting it in detail.	Grammar: • Simple Present Tense Vocabulary: • cuisine • typical • recipe • diet • dish • dessert • recipe • discount • ingredient • variety • affordable	Explain: - What types of dishes should be included in the menu? - What categories should be in the menu? (e.g., breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks) - How can we maintain a balanced diet? - Are there any sections for vegetarian, vegan, or gluten-free options? - How should we price the items to make them affordable for university students? - Are there any special prices for certain times of the day? (e.g., happy hour or student discount) - How can we use colors, fonts and images to make the menu easy to read? - How can we describe the dishes using simple language? - How can we make the menu culturally sensitive by adding dishes from a different culture? (e.g., Italian, Japanese, Indian, French, Greek, Mexican) - What should be the layout of the menu? (e.g., one-page, booklet-style)	Food and Drinks
Eco-friendly Living Areas	A2	Pretending to be an upper manager in a construction company focusing on building eco-friendly living areas. Selling houses built by the company. Preparing an advertisement that will present the houses and sites.	Grammar: • Simple Present Tense Vocabulary: • build • comfortable • deal with • heat • cool • construction • renewable • impact • source • remove • resident • zone • location	Design a poster and present in detail. • Principles of green building design. • Heating and cooling strategies. • Energy-efficient construction materials. • Practical tips for waste reduction. • Water-saving techniques. • Eco-friendly transportation. • Renewable energy sources. • Smart home technology.	Environment
Happiest and the Least Happy Countries	B1	Presenting about a country from the top five happiest or the least happy countries.	Grammar: • Modals Vocabulary: • Poverty • Necessity • Decent • Prevent • Disease • Common • Attitude • Occur • Consist of	Talking about these topics: • Common characteristics of these countries. • Give short information about these countries' economies, health, and education to comment on their level of happiness. • Provide recommendations	Happiness

				- for how a country can increase happiness in its citizens. - How can people's happiness affect the country's future?	
Artificial Intelligence in Popular Culture	B1	Choosing a movie about AI and preparing a presentation.	Grammar: - Conditionals Vocabulary: - Artificial - Capable - Innovation - Reliable - Practical - Replace - Impact - Gradual	Talk about these topics: Basic information about the movie. Summary of the plot. Time and place of the story. Main characters. Personal comments. Comparison to the probable future.	In the Future
Ancient Cultures	B1	Talking about different aspects of ancient cultures	Grammar: - Relative clauses Vocabulary: - Traditional - Aspect - Custom - Preserve - Region - Define - Actual - Disappear - Estimate	- Food - Music - Clothes - Belief systems and superstition - Lifestyle - How people earned their living	Ancient History
Experiments on Animals	B1	Discussing experiments on animals	Grammar: - Gerunds Vocabulary: - Concern - Endangered - Resource - Target - Cure - Knowledge - Disease - Specific - Possibility - Experiment - Laboratory - Invasive - Conduct	Groups focus on the question and its aspects, and present their findings: "Do you think it should be allowed to conduct medical experiments on animals?" 2 groups -> for (support the idea) 2 groups -> against (introduce counter arguments)	Animal Behavior
Food Waste	B1	Giving a presentation about food waste	Grammar: - Infinitives Vocabulary: - Appeal - Convince - Grain - Hunger - Recommend - Regional - Serving - Source - Varied	- Data about a country or continent. - Causes. - Effects. - Solutions (meal planning, portioning, sharing, feeding animals, etc.). - Things you personally do to avoid food waste (each student will talk about it).	Waste

Historical Ruins	B1	Acting as tour guides and tourists	Grammar: - Gerunds Vocabulary: - Dig - Reveal - Discovery - Ancient - Bury - Civilization - Tomb - Treasure - Ruin - Royal - Remains - Precious	Historical Ruins: - Side Ancient city - Phaselis - Ephesus - Chichén Itzá - Derinkuyu - Underground City - Etc. Students act tour guides and tourists and give information about the historical ruins. Alternatively, they can use virtual tours. 1 Tour guide 2-3 tourists	Ancient ruins around the world
Biomimicry	B1	Providing examples of biomimicry in real life	Grammar: - Passives Vocabulary: - Species - Trait - Adapt - Identify - Survival - Diversity - Advantage - Adjust - Industry - Unique	- What is the product? - Which animal or what aspect of nature gave inspiration for this product? - Explain features of animals/nature helped with the design of this product. - Support your presentation with suitable photos or videos.	Humanity and Nature
Business	B1	Presenting the success story of a worldwide company that has been a pioneer in its field.	Grammar: - All grammar structures Vocabulary: - Achieve - Appreciate - Confidence - Income - Found - Motivation - Persistent - Recognition - Failure - Evolve	Businesses - Starbucks - Coca cola - Facebook - Twitter - Google - Zara - Volkswagen - Etc. Information about the company and how it first started. Important people behind the success of the company. Challenges it has faced (competitors, financial problems, image problems, legal problems etc.). How has it succeeded and what has made this company more successful than its competitors?	Enterprise and Success
Globalization	B2	Analyzing the effects of globalization on different aspects of society and presenting balanced viewpoints.	Grammar: - Relative Clause & Reduced Relative Clause Vocabulary: 10 to 15 words from Units 1 & 2: Globalization - Education (e.g. consumption, obesity, multinational, establishment, motivation, interaction)	Each group is assigned a specific area impacted by globalization, such as: - Education - Healthcare - Food and Agriculture - Economy - Culture - Environment - Technology - Fashion and Consumer Goods - Entertainment Groups research both positive and negative effects	Global Influence and Integration

				of globalization in the chosen area. They need to use at least two credible sources to support their ideas (e.g., articles, videos, reports). Product creation: Presentation or a poster. ROLES: Each group member will have a specific role in the presentation as follows: 1. Introduction Speaker 2. Positive Effects Presenter 3. Negative Effects Presenter 4. Critical Thinking and Personal Connection Presenter 5. Conclusion and Discussion Leader	
Medicine	B2	• Researching an alternative treatment and exploring its scientific background. • Discussing how different cultures approach alternative and conventional medicine. • Presenting findings by • comparing the effectiveness of alternative treatments with conventional treatments.	Grammar: • Relative Clause & Conditionals Vocabulary: • 10 to 15 words from Unit 3: Medicine (e.g. cosmetic surgery, preventable illness, disease epidemic, complex, illegal, adequate)	Step 1: Research Choose an alternative treatment to focus on. (Each group will focus on a different topic.) 1) Acupuncture 2) Herbal medicine 3) Homeopathy 4) Aromatherapy 5) Reiki (energy healing) 6) Meditation and Mindfulness 7) Ayurveda (Indian traditional medicine) 8) Magnetic Therapy 9) Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) 10) Hypnotherapy Use reliable sources (books, scientific articles, websites) to answer the following questions: What is the treatment? How does it work? Is there any scientific research or evidence supporting the effectiveness of this treatment? (Look for studies, experiments, or expert opinions.) How is this treatment used in different countries or cultures? What are the benefits and risks of this treatment? Step 2: Compare with Conventional Medicine Step 3: Create a Presentation Prepare a Power-Point Presentation or Poster Presentation	Holistic and Modern Healing
Architecture	B2	Creating an engaging and informative podcast episode discussing various perspectives on "Architecture".	Grammar: • Noun Clauses Vocabulary: • 10 to 15 words from Unit 5: (e.g. function, environment, responsibility, conservation, skyscrapers, outskirts)	Perspectives: 1) Technology 2) Sustainability 3) Functionality 4) Social Life 5) Culture ROLES: Each group member will have a specific role in the presentation as follows: • Role 1: Host • Role 2: Researcher/Content Developer	Designing the Future

				• Role 3: Researcher/Content Developer • Role 4: Researcher/Content Developer PODCAST STRUCTURE: Introduction (1-2 minutes): Briefly introduce the group's perspective and outline the main points to be discussed. Main Content (6-7 minutes): Discuss the key aspects of your perspective, supported by research and examples. Conclusion (1 minute): Summarize the discussion and reflect on how the perspective influences the field of architecture.	
Environment & Energy	B2	Exploring a specific environmental problem related to energy consumption, finding solutions, gathering public opinion through surveys, and presenting the findings (Each group will focus on a different global problem).	Grammar: • It Constructions Vocabulary: • 10 to 15 words from Units 4 & 6: (e.g. natural, major, severe, fossil fuel, renewable energy, air pollution, consult, deliver, instigate)	1) "Overconsumption of Single-Use Plastics" 2) "Transportation and Fuel Consumption" 3) "Household Energy Waste" 4) "Industrial Energy Consumption" 5) "Food Production and Energy Use" Step 1: Research your group's problem and different solutions to it. Bring relevant information, statistics, and case studies to the group discussion. Create a survey to gather public opinions on the selected problem and proposed solutions (Google Forms etc.) Ensure the survey is distributed to at least 18-20 participants. Collect responses by the agreed deadline. Organize and analyze the survey results. Create charts or graphs to visually represent the data (e.g., pie charts, bar graphs, etc.). Step 2: Finally, prepare a Power-Point Presentation. ROLES: Each group member will have a specific role during the presentation as follows: • Presenter 1 (Project Manager) • Presenter 2 (Researcher) • Presenter 3 (Survey Coordinator) • Presenter 4 (Data Analyst)	Power and the Planet

Appendix-8. Instructional Context of the Project Lessons

Project lessons are an integral part of the curriculum in the School of Foreign Languages where the study was conducted. After becoming familiar with project-based learning, students complete one project per week throughout all modules except for midterm and final exam weeks and the first week of each module. New projects are assigned on Fridays. Thus, students have a week to work on them. They present their projects every Friday.

An average of five projects are completed and presented per module. The topics change weekly and are closely linked to the units covered in the coursebooks at each level. Students are asked to prepare various project materials, such as posters, PowerPoint presentations, audio recordings, and videos.

While preparing their projects, students constantly interact with one another and decide on the details as a group. Group work also promotes peer learning. Additionally, each student practices the main components of speaking, such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension (Harmer, 2007) to make effective presentations. Projects and presentations are expected to improve students' speaking skills as they necessitate real-life language usage. Regular presentations can also help with self-confidence, familiarize students with public speaking, and ensure effective use of body language.

The projects conducted at the School of Foreign Languages where the study was carried out are completed through specific predetermined processes:

1. The teacher assigns the topic and creates groups. Sometimes, students are given various topic options, and they choose the one that they want as a group.
2. Students divide the topic and do research about their individual parts at home.
3. Students combine their parts, prepare requested materials (posters, PowerPoint presentations, audio recordings, and videos), and send them to the teacher one day before the presentation day.
4. On the presentation day, students can be given some time (10-15 minutes) to do rehearsal and create notecards.
5. Before starting the presentation, students must inform the teacher about the vocabulary/grammar items they have used while creating the project. The teacher also checks notecards to see if there are full sentences (using full transcription means receiving zero).

6. When presentations start, all students must leave their mobile phones on the teacher's desk.
7. Both students and the teacher write their comments on the feedback template during presentations and share them later.
8. After the presentations, the teacher announces the grades.



Appendix-9. Holistic Speaking Exam Criteria

18-20	- Content completely meets the requirements of the question - Content is completely relevant, very well-developed and justified - Minor grammatical errors - Wide range of appropriate sentence structures - Very effective use of target vocabulary – Wide range - Fluent speech, no/few hesitations, no/minor pronunciation errors
15-17	- Content mostly meets the requirements of the question. - Content is mostly relevant, well-developed and justified - Few grammatical errors - Good range - Effective use of target vocabulary - Good range - Mostly fluent speech, occasional hesitations, few pronunciation errors
12-14	- Content adequately shows an attempt to fulfill the requirements of the question - Content is sufficiently relevant and expanded - Some grammatical errors which do not obscure meaning - Adequate range - Adequate use of target vocabulary - Adequate range - Somewhat fluent speech, some hesitations with some short pauses, some pronunciation errors
9-11	- Content shows limited attempt to fulfill the requirements of the task - Content is somewhat relevant but there is inadequate support and development - Some grammatical errors which sometimes obscure meaning – Limited range - Inadequate use of target vocabulary – Limited range - Slow speech, some hesitations with some short pauses, frequent pronunciation errors
6-8	- Content shows very limited attempt to fulfill the requirements of the task - Content is somewhat relevant but poorly developed or supported - Frequent grammatical errors which sometimes obscure meaning – Very limited range - Lexical mistakes often obscure meaning– Very limited range - Mostly slow speech, frequent hesitations with long pauses, frequent pronunciation errors
3-5	- Content shows almost no attempt to fulfill the requirements of the task - Content is mostly irrelevant and very poorly developed or supported - Frequent grammatical errors which often obscure meaning – Almost no range - Lexical mistakes obscure meaning – Almost no range - Very slow and disconnected speech, very frequent pauses and pronunciation errors
0-2	- No response or totally irrelevant

Appendix-10. Detailed Thematic Findings for Each Interview Question

Appendix 10.1. – Interview Question 1

This section presents the findings related to the first interview question: “What are your perceptions of learning English through project-based learning?” Based on thematic analysis, three primary domains were identified to reflect participants’ lived experiences: Language Experience and Perceived Progress, Cognitive-Affective Reactions, and Social Engagement through Learning Process.

Language Experience and Perceived Progress was a major domain frequently reported by participants. In particular, their vocabulary knowledge appeared to grow through natural discovery rather than mechanical repetition. Ten participants (n = 10) emphasized how researching unknown terms and applying them in meaningful contexts helped them internalize new vocabulary. Participant 5 noted: “Each project session allows me to learn different words.” Similarly, P4 said: “If I don’t know a word, I search for it through translations and online sources.” These reflections suggest that participants started to see language learning as an experiential process, which contrasts with traditional learning strategies based on memorization.

Improved fluency and clearer pronunciation were also described as clear advancements. Seven students (n = 7) noted that continuing practice in presentations and group discussions enabled them to speak more naturally. P14 said: “Projects may contribute to fluency in English,” while P12 added: “We strengthen what we call pronunciation.” These responses reflect participants’ growing sense of ownership over their oral skills, which seems to have been fostered by the low-stress speaking environment provided by the project-tasks.

Cognitive-Affective Reactions also seemed significant to participants. They described a gradual transition in their emotional responses toward speaking tasks. Seven participants (n = 7) stated that they felt more comfortable over time, mainly due to increased familiarity with project requirements and frequent presentation experiences. Participant 15 shared: “At the initial stages, we had a lot of nervousness, but now we don’t have this feeling as we got used to the process and made improvements.” This development in confidence highlights how repeated speaking opportunities help reduce anxiety.

Another theme under this domain was thinking strategies and spontaneity. Four students (n = 4) explained that their initial use of translation strategies helped them become more spontaneous in communication. P15 stated: “Thinking in Turkish first and clearing up our

sentences in English is more practical.” P7 emphasized: “I can speak spontaneously now.” These reflections suggest that personalized speaking processes may lead to practical thinking patterns over time.

Assessment-based motivation was identified as a key factor in students’ engagement. Participants perceived grading as a motivating factor rather than a source of pressure. Four students (n = 4) stated that structured evaluation increased their engagement with project work. As P15 noted: “You give grades for the project. This naturally creates a need to learn.” Viewing grading as supportive instead of punitive reflects a positive orientation toward project-based instruction.

The final category was related to Social Engagement. Peer interaction and collaboration were frequently mentioned across eight interviews (n = 8). Teamwork was seen to enhance students’ comfort in communicative situations. P6 commented: “I got used to both group work and the effort,” and P11 said: “We get the chance to speak with our friends in English.”

Presentation management was discussed by six students (n = 6). P13 remarked: “We have full control while presenting our projects.” This transition from initial hesitation to confidently managing the delivery of group work shows how project-based instruction can foster not only language use but also learners’ self-regulation and presence in presentations.

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Code Examples	Frequency (f)
Language Experience and Perceived Progress	Vocabulary Enrichment via Discovery	Research-based vocabulary, independent term search	10
Language Experience and Perceived Progress	Enhanced Expressiveness and Clarity	Improved fluency, articulation, clearer delivery	7
Cognitive-Affective Reactions	Evolving Confidence in Learning Context	Reduced anxiety, increased classroom confidence	7
Cognitive-Affective Reactions	Practical Thinking Patterns	Thinking first in native language, spontaneous production	4
Cognitive-Affective Reactions	Motivation Stimulated by Assessment	Learning driven by grading system	4
Social Engagement through Learning Process	Communicative Peer Collaboration	Group tasks, peer interaction	8
Social Engagement through Learning Process	Managing Presence During Presentations	Presentation skills, handling audience	6

Appendix 10.2. – Interview Question 2

This section presents the findings for the second interview question: “What kind of characteristics did you gain by learning English through project-based learning?” Four major developmental dimensions were evident in participant responses: Intrapersonal Growth, Academic and Linguistic Competency, Collaborative Leadership and Social Growth, and Technical Tool Familiarity. These categories represent the skills and personal qualities that participants believed they developed through the project-based learning process.

Intrapersonal Growth stood out as the most frequently mentioned area. Gaining self-confidence was reported by twelve participants ($n = 12$). Students stated that they overcame their fear of public speaking and gradually developed a strong sense of self-assurance. As P15 noted: “I can make authentic presentations now, without hesitation, utilizing everything I have learned during presentations.” This confidence was not viewed as limited to classroom tasks but as a lasting personal trait that could be transferred to various contexts. A closely related subtheme was Courage through Exposure. Seven participants ($n = 7$) explained that although their anxiety had not disappeared entirely, they still demonstrated the courage to engage in English tasks. As P3 stated: “We try to speak despite our nervousness. It contributes to us in terms of confidence and speaking naturally.” These reflections illustrate the transition from passive learning to active participation in classroom interactions.

Students also emphasized the importance of self-discipline and time management, particularly under the subtheme of organized study habits. Eight participants ($n = 8$) shared that project deadlines and responsibilities improved their ability to plan and manage their academic workload. P7 explained: “I was not a planned person before. However, with the help of projects, deadlines, and the preparation process, I learned to prepare on time and present the projects on a specific day.” Similarly, P4 noted: “Once the teacher assigns the projects, we mentally organize our schedule. That’s how we manage to stay organized.”

Academic and Linguistic Competency was also frequently emphasized by participants. Improvements in fluency and pronunciation were reported by nine students ($n = 9$). As P14 noted: “Projects helped me speak more fluently.” Participants attributed this progress largely to repeated speaking opportunities provided by project-based tasks.

Participants also reported noticeable improvements in presentation skills, as stated by eight students ($n = 8$). They specifically referred to their progress in public speaking and delivery. P2 stated: “Project work especially improved my oratory skills and eye contact.” P1 explained: “I was a person who did not like making presentations at all, but now I can present

with ease.” The ability to speak with confidence in front of others was regarded as a significant outcome of project-based instruction for many students.

Vocabulary and grammar awareness was emphasized by five participants ($n = 5$). According to them, exposure to diverse topics and frequent language use contributed to improvements in both vocabulary and grammar. P9 stated: “Our projects helped me learn new vocabulary items and improved my grammar.” These gains were seen as fundamental linguistic outcomes of the project-based process.

Collaborative leadership and social growth were frequently reported as key outcomes of the peer- and group-based project work structure. Seven participants ($n = 7$) stated that working in teams enhanced their interpersonal communication and promoted mutual support among classmates. Students explained that collaboration fostered a sense of shared responsibility and interpersonal trust. Participant 1 reflected on this experience by saying: “I think it helped me strengthen my relationships with others.” Similarly, Participant 7 commented: “I’m making new friends.” Participant 8 added: “I learned to communicate patiently with others.

Leadership and active participation were mentioned by six students ($n = 6$). They explained that they took responsibility during group work by organizing project steps or taking the lead in presentations. This experience helped them feel more in control and improved their planning skills. As P12 said: “I can say that it also strengthened my leadership qualities.” P15 added: “I’m usually the one who starts the group before we begin working.” These examples show that project-based tasks gave students opportunities to develop leadership in real-life group settings.

Finally, digital and technical skill development included the use of tools like Canva and PowerPoint. Four students ($n = 4$) stated that they became more confident using digital and visual presentation platforms. These tools also supported their oral performance by allowing them to present information visually. As P15 reflected: “I wasn’t very good at PowerPoint at first, but I watched tutorials and learned how to use Canva.” This example shows how project-based activities helped students become more familiar with widely used digital tools.

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Code Examples	Frequency (f)
Intrapersonal Growth	Self-Confidence as a Gained Attribute	Public speaking ease, belief in one's capacity	12
Intrapersonal Growth	Courage through Exposure	Speaking despite anxiety	7
Intrapersonal Growth	Organized Study Habits	Time planning, responsibility, deadline discipline	8
Academic and Linguistic Competency	Speaking Accuracy and Pronunciation	Smooth speech, clearer articulation	9
Academic and Linguistic Competency	Effective Presentation Techniques	Oratory skills, audience connection	8
Academic and Linguistic Competency	Language Awareness (Vocabulary & Grammar)	Improved vocabulary, conscious grammar use	5
Collaborative Leadership and Social Growth	Cooperative Participation	Peer communication, mutual help	7
Collaborative Leadership and Social Growth	Assuming Leadership Roles	Task management, guiding group processes	6
Technical Tool Familiarity	Digital Presentation Proficiency	Canva, PowerPoint, presentation software usage	4

Appendix 10.3. – Interview Question 3

This chapter presents the findings related to the third interview question, which explored the changes in students' English-speaking skills following their participation in project-based learning. Based on the thematic analysis, four main themes were identified: Spontaneous Speaking Ability, Pronunciation and Prosodic Awareness, Strategic Language Use, and Reduction of Speaking Anxiety. Participants' responses indicated that project-based activities improved their spontaneous speaking abilities, pronunciation, and intonation. Additionally, project-based learning was found to support students' use of strategic language and helped them speak more confidently by reducing speaking anxiety.

There were improvements in participants' spontaneity when speaking English. Twelve students (n = 12) indicated that they developed stronger spontaneous speaking abilities. They emphasized that this capacity contributed to more fluent and natural communication. This point is reflected in P4's comment:

"With the help of the project presentations, I can speak directly, without overthinking."

Pronunciation and prosodic awareness were reported by eight participants (n = 8). They stated that project work and presentations helped them feel more competent in applying correct stress, intonation, and pronunciation. This improvement particularly enhanced the clarity of their speech. This point is clearly reflected in P8's comment:

"I am better at stress and intonation. I used to speak flatly."

Strategic language use was stated by six participants (n = 6). Their responses showed that they developed the ability to maintain communication by using strategies such as fillers and self-correction. These strategies helped them sustain the flow of conversation without major interruptions. In this regard, P9 explained:

"I sometimes make mistakes while speaking, but I immediately correct them myself. I used to make pauses."

Reduction of speaking anxiety was emphasized by eleven participants (n = 11). They noted that their nervousness gradually decreased as a result of engaging in project work. This decrease helped them become more confident in speaking and ensured more comfortable and fluent communication. P1 reflected on this development by saying:

"At the beginning of the term, I felt nervous while making sentences. Now, the situation is just the opposite. I consider myself fluent, and I no longer pause to think while speaking."

Taken together, the findings regarding the third interview question suggest that project-based learning fostered notable improvements in students' spontaneity, pronunciation awareness, strategic communication skills, and overall speaking confidence.

Main Theme	Subtheme	Codes	Frequency (n)
Spontaneous Speaking Ability	Natural Flow During Speaking	Speaking without hesitation; Forming sentences spontaneously	12
Pronunciation and Prosodic Awareness	Improved Stress and Intonation	Correct pronunciation; Better stress and intonation control	8
Strategic Language Use	Use of Fillers and Self-Correction	Using fillers strategically; Self-correcting mistakes in real time	6
Reduction of Speaking Anxiety	Increased Emotional Comfort and Participation	Less nervousness; More relaxed speaking environment; Greater willingness to communicate	11

Appendix 10.4. – Interview Question 4

This section presents the thematic analysis of the fourth interview question, which aimed to explore the impact of project-based learning on students' motivation to communicate in English. Three main themes were identified: Confidence Building through Real-Life Use, Integration of English into Daily Life, and Reduction of Initial Hesitations. Based on the student responses, project-based learning was found to increase students' public speaking confidence, encourage the natural use of English in daily contexts, and visibly reduce language anxiety over time.

Students gained greater speaking confidence and motivation as a result of the real-life outcomes of their project experiences. Responses from twelve participants ($n = 12$) demonstrated that participating in project-based lessons helped them feel more confident when communicating in English. P2 reflected on this change as follows:

"In-class presentations enhanced my confidence to speak on stage. I used to want to present my projects at the very end. These days, I suggest to my friends that we present first. I no longer want to wait. I feel more assertive now." (P2)

P5 supported this perspective by noting:

"Thanks to our presentations, I learned how to speak in public. In the early stages, I would confuse some words with others. Now, I have regained my confidence." (P5)

Project-based learning made students integrate English into their everyday lives. Thirteen participants ($n = 13$) reported that they now use English more frequently in their social and daily interactions. P10 elaborated on this change as follows:

"I used to associate English only with exams, thinking that I could not use it in real-life situations. Now, I push myself to speak whenever I encounter a foreigner. One example happened recently. There was a foreign guy who needed help at the gym. Before he said anything, I initiated the conversation in English. He seemed surprised, and I was able to solve his problem." (P10)

P7 also shared their experience in this regard:

"Last week, I was at a mall when a piece of paper dropped from a tourist's pocket. I immediately intervened. I went up to the man and told him that he had dropped something. He seemed happy and said it was something crucial for him. I felt really happy after this incident because I was able to use what I had learned in the lessons." (P7)

Students were able to overcome their initial fear of speaking in English following the project-based learning intervention. Eight participants (n = 8) expressed that, over time, they began to speak more naturally and without fear. For example, P13 conveyed this change as follows:

P13 reflected on this development as follows:

"I don't hesitate to speak in English anymore. We have many foreign friends at our school. At the beginning of the school year, when we encountered them, we would only say hello. We held ourselves back. Now, we can speak with them fluently. I feel so happy about it. Project work contributed to our development by motivating us towards natural language use." (P13)

P6 added the following:

"I can make more natural sentences as I use English frequently during projects. Some processes have become routinized. I no longer pause at each sentence. English has become a part of my daily communication." (P6)

Main Theme	Subtheme	Codes	Frequency (n)
Confidence Building through Real-Life Outcomes of Project-Based Learning	Increased Speaking Courage	Greater ease in public speaking; Courage to initiate conversations/presentations; Reduced fear during communication	12
Integration of English into Daily Life	Using English in Real Contexts	Applying English in daily interactions; Communicating naturally with foreigners; Seeking practice opportunities	13
Reduction of Initial Hesitations	Overcoming Fear and Building Comfort	Decreasing anxiety; Speaking without overthinking; More spontaneous interaction	8

Appendix 10.5. – Interview Question 5

This section includes the thematic analysis of the fifth interview question, which aimed to explore the impact of the project-based learning process on students' presentation and oratory skills. The analysis revealed three main themes: Development of Presentation and Public Speaking Skills, Improvement in Technical and Organizational Aspects, and Enhancing Spontaneity for a More Natural Flow.

The findings suggested that project-based learning strengthened students' confident presentation skills, supported their ability to structure presentation content and materials effectively, and contributed to more natural and fluent speech through increased spontaneity.

Through project-based learning, students developed confident presentation skills and used their body language more effectively. Thirteen participants ($n = 13$) indicated that they felt more confident when speaking in front of an audience after becoming familiar with project-based learning practices. P2 conveyed this idea as follows:

"Before project lessons, I was afraid to speak in front of others. Now, I can make eye contact and manage my voice successfully. This has made me feel more comfortable." (P2)

Additionally, P5 described the development of confidence as follows:

"Just like how I make presentations here, I can now present anything anywhere with ease." (P5)

There were improvements in students' technical and organizational skills. Eleven participants ($n = 11$) reported making progress in areas such as preparing slides, designing posters, and structuring presentation content. P12 elaborated on this point as follows:

"I can say that I am now better at preparing PowerPoint slides. We learned many features to create high-quality presentations. For instance, I improved a lot in the preparation stages by watching YouTube videos about PowerPoint." (P12)

P9 also elaborated on this aspect as follows:

"While preparing presentations, I no longer use unnecessary texts. I support my presentations with visuals and relevant grammar topics. In this way, I can keep the audience's interest alive. I also learned how to design effective posters." (P9)

Similarly, P14 noted:

"Project-based learning improved my computer skills overall." (P14)

Students improved their improvisation skills and ability to use language more naturally over time. Nine participants ($n = 9$) reported noticeable progress in this regard. P6 described this change as follows:

"My first presentations were based on memorization. I felt nervous while speaking in front of others and was afraid of making mistakes, which might explain why. These days, I feel better, thanks to project-based learning. I make my presentations and speeches by utilizing what I have researched. This has made me feel more competent." (P6)

P13 also explained this process:

"In terms of oratory, I used to feel nervous and struggled with classroom management. I often did not know what to say. Now, I can deliver natural presentations while moving freely around the classroom." (P13)

Main Theme	Subtheme	Codes	Frequency (n)
Development of Presentation and Public Speaking Skills	Confidence Building in Presentations	Better eye contact, stronger voice control, audience engagement, reduced stage anxiety	13
Improvement in Technical and Organizational Aspects	Effective Use of Visual Aids and Structured Content	Slide preparation, poster use, logical flow of topics, visual support	11
Improving Spontaneity through Natural Flow	Performance Spontaneity and Speaking Naturally	Increased improvisation ability, more natural speaking flow	9

ÖZGEÇMİŞ

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